# VOLUNTEERING ORGANIZATIONS & DELIBERATIVE GOVERNANCE: LATIN AMERICAN CASE STUDIES

## Case Studies for the 2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report

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# VOLUNTEERING, ORGANIZATIONS AND DELIBERATIVE GOVERNANCE: LATIN AMERICAN CASES

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*Final Version*

### 1. Research overview and methods used

This report presents the main findings from the case studies carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme's State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2022, conducted by a consortium of researchers led by the University of East Anglia (UEA).

Four cases were carried out, comprising one maxi case study and three mini study cases. They were selected in agreement with the consortium as they are 'telling' case studies that can address the topic of volunteerism's role in deliberative governance. The research set out to investigate the extent to which available spaces and strategies are aligned with people's and governments' interests towards decision making processes. The focus was particularly on the relationships between organizations, volunteers and governments across a substantial area of Latin America.

The maxi case study selected was the ***Futuro Latinoamericano* Foundation (FFLA, from Spanish).**[1] The organization was created in 1994 and is based in Ecuador. It aims to generate capabilities and leadership in sustainable development in Latin America through good governance, institutional empowerment and conflict resolution. While all permanent staff of FFLA are paid, organisations part of the foundation involve community-based volunteers. Primary data was collected from FFLA staff members some of whom engage with volunteers in various capacities. The ten participants were first separated by role: two leaders and eight technical members of staff. Three group interviews were conducted, jointly agreed by the researcher and all FFLA's permanent staff

One group consisted of the two leaders and the other two consisted of four technical staff members each (see the following table for names, roles, roles within FFLA and interview dates).

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| Team | Focus Group (FG) | Date | Member's roles |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leader Team | FG 01 | July 21st, 2021 | Executive Director |
| | | | Natural Resources and Climate Change Program Coordinator |
| Technical Teams | FG 02 | July 19th, 2021 | Projects Coordinator |
| | | | Programs Assistant |
| | | | Technical Analyst |
| | | | Gender Specialist |
| | FG 03 | July 19th, 2021 | Accounting Technician |
| | | | Communication Consultant |
| | | | Regional Coordinator |
| | | | General Accountant |

The intention of the focus group discussions was to collect personal impressions from the organization's staff members regarding the topic of deliberative governance. A list of general questions was prepared to explore the relationship between the organization and governments and expectations for the future. These were shared with the organization before the focus groups took place.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewees were told that the group interview would be very informal. They could participate as much or as little as they were comfortable with. They were also told that the researchers were interested in their personal impressions, not their institutional views. All participants agreed for the group interviews to be recorded for research purposes.

There was a high level of participation and engagement in all three group interviews. Occasionally, one participant would begin to monopolize the conversation, at which point the researcher encouraged the other participants to join in.

All interviews took place online, using Microsoft Teams. The main reasons for this were budget constraints, the distribution of the interviewees in different locations (including Ecuador and USA) and the travel restrictions in place due to the Covid19 pandemic. The advantages of conducting the research online were that there were no time constraints. FFLA was a willing and highly obliging research partner and there were no language-related issues as all those involved were fluent users of Spanish, the language of research.

The three mini case studies were of the following Latin American organizations: **The Volunteer Center of Trinidad and Tobago (VCTT)**, The **Integrated Care Model for Rural Areas** based in Colombia, the **Laboratory of Social Innovation in Digital Government**, based in Uruguay. Data for these case studies is secondary, comprising information on the organizations' own websites and a literature review, focusing on deliberative governance in these organizations, especially volunteers-organization-state relationships.

This report begins by describing the context of the research. Each case is then presented separately, followed by a cross-case analysis. It concludes with some policy recommendations.

### Regional context

In Latin America, the modern concept of "volunteer" has similarities to precolonial concepts related to communal work for the benefit of the community (Johnson, McBride and Olate, 2004). Indigenous words such as *yanapacu*, *ayni*, *mingas* and *tékio*, originating from pre-Columbian societies in Peru, Ecuador, Mexico and Guatemala, refer to the practice of supportive assistance to others through mutual aid, in a spirit of solidarity (Menon, McBride and Sherraden, 2003).

During colonial times, volunteerism was encouraged and supported by the Catholic Church. The creation of brotherhoods, sisterhoods and fraternities, helped to institutionalize this practice (Thompson and Landim, 1998). Following Latin America's political independence across the 19th and early 20th centuries, volunteerism was focused on the provision of medical care and assistance to the unemployed and disabled. In this period, other formal institutions besides the Catholic Church, such as trade unions and

professional associations (Bettoni and Cruz, 2002), promoted volunteerism. Nonetheless the Catholic Church continued to be an important facilitator.

The consolidation of Latin American countries as politically independent nations during the 20th century, reinforced volunteerism as a state institutionalized practice. In the 1930s, for example, the Mexican government implemented the *Servicio Social*, a program that sent medical students to remote rural areas. This appealed to patriotic ideals and became mandatory for all university students in 1945. The practice was soon followed by other Latin American countries, mostly for medical students (Sherraden and Eberly, 1990).

"Militant" volunteerism or "transformative" volunteerism emerged in the 1960s according to Bettoni and Cruz (2002) and was associated with solidarity and development. Traditional forms of voluntary action were associated with *asistencialismo* - a popular expression in Latin America, which means the support of the poor and the non-privileged groups. It has been criticised for its lack of attention to the  practical conditions that maintain socio-economic dependence and disempowerment, usually due to political and demagogic interests. The new kind of volunteerism is referred to as social volunteerism. This is contrasted with the Catholic Church-based volunteerism which is seen as the "hobby" of the wealthy, and as failing to address the causes of social problems (Johnson, McBride and Olate, 2004). The burgeoning social volunteerism experienced restrictions in as much as it could be – and was -viewed as facilitating insurgency.

In a context of globalization, the democratization of Latin American countries in the late 1980s was followed by an influx of national and international organizations that aimed to promote social responsibility and civic participation through volunteerism (Toro and Moret, 2000). Furthermore, an urgent need for people's engagement through volunteer participation was generated as a result of the perceived political fragility of new democracies and all the consequent social, economic, and environmental challenges, generated (Korten, 1990).

Thus, volunteerism in Latin America should be viewed in the context of the development of civil society and democratic empowerment. Civil society can be understood as a space operating between the public, government and private sectors (Johnson, McBride and Olate, 2004). It involves new, different kinds of relationships between citizens, governments, NGOs, associations and networks in addressing cultural, political, social and economic issues. In turn, civil society is no longer an

extension of the government regarding social policies, but an independent actor able to influence the government policy agenda.

The majority of NGOs in Latin America currently deliver development, social and humanitarian services (Johnson, McBride and Olate, 2004). They are able to focus on specific social problems, mobilize resources and partner with national and international governments and organizations (Toro and Moret, 2000). According to the UNV (2018), Latin America has established new schemes of volunteering focused on the development of capabilities and citizenship through networks, platforms and coordinating bodies. Through the use of innovative methods, technology and the increasing participation of the private sector, volunteerism has also played an important role in engaging groups which have often been left behind. At least 16 Latin American countries have introduced legislation, policies and institutional arrangements to formally recognize, support and encourage volunteerism (UNV, 2018).

At the same time, in a continent as diverse as Latin America, it is not possible to make generalizations about the role of volunteerism. The countries of Latin America present different levels of development and have different political and democratic institutions. Nonetheless, some patterns can be found, including the trend towards inter-organizational efforts and public-private partnerships (McBride, Benitez and Danso, 2003).

**Cases**

**Maxi study case**

The selected maxi study case focuses on Futuro ***Latinoamericano* Foundation (FFLA)**, a non-profit, private organization founded in 1994, just after the publication of the Earth Charter document[2]. Based in Ecuador, this organization aims to promote dialogues, capabilities and sustainable development through strengthening policies and institutions in Latin America.

The foundation promotes a culture of collaborative dialogue between multiple stakeholders and sectors in various countries in Latin America. FFLA's mission is to enable these stakeholders to find alternative solutions to their needs. It has a particular

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[2] The Earth Charter document was an international declaration published in 1994 which presented values for a sustainable society in the 21st century. Endorsed by differenc civil society organizations from the whole world, it focused on environmental protection, human rights, human development and peace, being approved by UNESCO in 2000.

focus on sustainable development. The organization also seeks to: generate new capacities; strengthen the process of public policy construction in relationship with the state; and transform conflicts into collaborative situations. A strong intention within the foundation is to promote innovative mechanisms of good governance in Latin America and to integrate sustainable models at a regional level.

A key element in FFLA's strategy is the promotion of dialogues between different stakeholders (beneficiaries, organizations and governments) **based on the idea of "sustainable territories"[3].** Therefore, a fundamental part of FFLA's work is to create spaces for dialogue (meetings, conferences, documentation etc) and make them available to between governments, beneficiaries, social organization, academics, NGOs, minorities and non-privileged groups. It also has expertise in conflict resolution. This enables a diverse range of opinions and views (formally and informally expressed) about social and public policies to be validated by different sectors of society.

Therefore, the construction and availability of spaces for dialogue (meetings, conferences, documentation etc) between governments, beneficiaries, social organization, academics, NGOs, minorities and non-privileged groups is a fundamental part of FFLA's work. It has expertise in conflict resolution, under the umbrella of sustainable development, which allows the inclusion of a diverse range of opinions and views (formally and informally expressed) into social and public policies validated by different sectors of society.

Structurally, FFLA is composed of sections: there is a monitoring and communication section and a financial management, which coordinates a program of natural resources and climate change management and another of dialogue for sustainable development. FFLA is run by 12 permanent members of staff.

Besides the permanent staff, composed of 12 professionals, FFLA also has access to a board of trustees with a wide range of expertise and experience from different countries of Latin America. They support the foundation and make the final decisions within the organization**.** The foundation also has an advisory board of nominated members to whom it submits an annual report and accounts.

FFLA's activities focus on two main topics: natural resources and climate change management; and dialogue for sustainable development. FFLA contributes to these in two ways. Firstly, it is invited to participate in government where it promotes dialogue about sustainable development. It also organizes its own programs to facilitate dialogue

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[3]  "Sustainable territory" means the joint socio, economic, cultural and political aspects of a regional level.

with other stakeholders (NGOs, civil society organizations, programs beneficiaries, academics). The organization also provides consultation on the following areas: strategic planning; monitoring and evaluation of projects; systematization of experiences and impact evaluation; courses related to natural resources management; sustainable development and the Agenda 2030; and resolution of socio-environmental conflicts to interested audiences.

The foundation has a permanent team of volunteers. Some are then integrated as staff members for very specific projects, depending on volunteers' own professional and personal interests. The organization has to also take into account Ecuador's regulations which limit the number of volunteers in a foundation like FFLA[4].

FFLA is recognized across Latin America for its experience in dialogue processes, in capacity development and conflict resolution. The organization has promoted more than 65 dialogues in the region. These have focused on natural resources management in different countries of Latin America. They have included public policy formulation with multiple stakeholders, including governments. The role of FFLA staff has been to offer the spaces (meetings, conferences, collective documents etc) and facilitate the dialogues. In addition, it has held over 100 training courses for politicians, businesspeople, social leaders, diplomatic members and academics on how to facilitate political dialogues for sustainable development, conflict resolution and territorial management.

FFLA's other main role is to connect governments with civil society and, somehow, to create a space for dialogue between them. There is no set formula: dialogues can take place through meetings, the publication of documents, workshops and indirect communication channels (advocacy, for instance). FFLA's intention is to intervene in governments' policy making, by giving voice to societal perceptions.

FFLA also manages funds for a variety of programs and other initiatives for sustainable development. Since 2010, it is the regional facilitator in Latin America of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN); since 2018, it coordinates the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) in the region, and it acts as global partner of the Adaptation Fund NGO Network. Lastly, FFLA also manages the funds of partners such as local NGOs, indigenous groups and subnational governments through permanent financial and technical monitoring of projects. One example is the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) that funds environmental policies in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. A joint initiative of the French Development Agency, the

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4          As a "foundation", FFLA is not legally allowed to have volunteers in its staff, differently from NGOs. Similar regulation applies to other Latin American countries.

International Conservation, the European Union, Japan's government and the World Bank, FFLA's role is to coordinate the allocation of resources from the CEPF across different eligible projects related to sustainable development.

A key component in FFLA's work across these diverse activities, is governance, in particular the relationship between government and other partner organizations:

> *"FFLA is present in a variety of international networks of organizations, so we like to be in networks with others with similar intentions. Regarding the beneficiaries of our job, we are always working with them because they give feedback that, from the technical point of view, we cannot see" (Accounting* Technician).

CDKN is a global network that aims to support policy makers from developing countries to implement development policies that are aligned to their climate necessities, generating and sharing knowledge through South-South cooperation. In the following quote, *FFLA's* Accounting Technician describes FFLA's focus on maintaining a good relationship with government:

> *"Regarding the governments, it is important to have their 'stamp' on our work, so it is important to work with governments or to have their acknowledgement. It also gives confidence to the beneficiaries. We do not have a formal relationship with governments, but we try to keep a good relationship with them"*.

Similarly, FFLA's Regional Coordinator, emphasizes that there is a genuine intention to understand the government's priorities:

> *"It is more than getting the government's stamp but being aligned with their priorities. Governments have specific needs and strategic lines of work and we try to contribute to them. We like to work in alliance."*

This work with governments is facilitated by the fact that sustainable development is currently well established in governments' agendas. In this context, FFLA's main role is to connect people with policy makers in addressing Latin America's sustainable development issues more effectively, as its accounting technician explains:

*"I think our job is to generate a connection between the action and the policy makers. As an organization, we aim to generate a link between the beneficiaries and policy makers to make official initiatives more durable."*

FFLA's Gender Specialist explains how FFLA's approach fosters good governance:

*"The relationship with governments is key since we try to include our priorities into official public policies. Eventually, local initiatives encourage governments to practice better governance; at the national level, we are constantly focusing on dialogue and participation to make the authorities appropriate our topics and transform them into policies. We also engage with other organizations, academia and social movements. Our approach is multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level, trying to find synergies between all these actors, which can be very complex., But we are convinced that good governance does not work without it. There is resistance sometimes, for sure, but we then need to be transparent because there are always interests in common."*

These dialogues take place in spaces where the stakeholders (governments, beneficiaries, NGOs, social organizations, academics, minorities and non-privileged groups) can meet, debate and align expectations, concerns and objectives. For example, at the time of writing, FFLA was mediating the Urban Sustainable Development Alliance (ADUS, from the Spanish), which brought together a multi-actor committee (stakeholders from the public and private sectors, academia and civil society) to elaborate Ecuador's sustainable housing plan. FFLA has facilitated dialogues between them and compiled the main findings to submit to the general multi-actor committee. The focus has been on the mobilization of stakeholders and on the exchange of their experiences. FFLA connects governments and those social groups that FFLA identifies as particularly relevant. The views of groups with different priorities can be challenged and the groups can also challenge government.

In turn, the "resistance" that FFLA's Gender Specialist refers to seems to be the greatest challenge and barrier for FFLA's work, particularly government resistance. This phenomenon is closely related to the fact that the third sector in Latin America is

intimately and historically linked to the public sector. As alluded to in the context section, since colonial times, volunteerism in Latin America has been promoted by the Catholic Church, state institutionalized and usually practiced by the wealthier classes - those more commonly linked to the state. Therefore, when volunteerism acts against the interests of the dominant social groups present in government, there is resistance from them. The current political instability in Latin America adds to the complexity of addressing this resistance:

> *"It's a tough job since we have to constantly convince ministries, technicians etc. There are changes in government, people change, and then we also have to convince the funders. Unfortunately, there is a short time to plan for the long term. There are no political components in our work because, if we attach ourselves to a specific political view, in a matter of hours, we will need to change the 'colour of our clothes'. The political instability in our continent is definitely a barrier. Sometimes it is a mix of political ideology and ideological fundamentalism regarding certain topics"* (FFLA's Executive Director).

FFLA also has to work hard to ensure equal participation and to stop any one stakeholder monopolizing the debate or using the space to promote their agenda, as FFLA's Projects Coordinator explains:

> *"Sometimes governments try to monopolize the debate. Our role is to mediate and guarantee everybody (beneficiaries, NGOs, social organizations, academics, minorities and non-privileged groups) has a voice and, for that, we start all processes with transparency. This generates trust. We have already started processes with many criticisms from governments, or sometimes the political agents try to use the processes as a space for self-promotion and to include their own political interests. Other times governments are not interested in joining us as they do not want to become a target of criticism. Our role is to find ways to avoid these conflicts."*

In its approach to deliberative governance, FFLA is very focussed on the inclusion and the participation of minorities and non-privileged groups, particularly the participation of women:

> *"When we create a project, we think about quotas for women, indigenous people etc, to allow them to participate. This includes paying for their transport, for a place where they can leave their children. We need to generate practical conditions for them to participate"* (FFLA's Gender Specialist).

FFLA currently does not provide specific spaces for these groups in their governance bodies but these groups are always considered when the FFLA initiates projects:

> *"It is important to make sure they are represented in the projects. This concern is reflected in the project proposals we make. We always have them in mind, in a kind of mental checklist"* (FFLA's Executive Director).

Working with minorities both directly and in an advocacy role, are central to the foundation's mission:

> "*For us, it (to work with minorities) is key. Sometimes, in some projects, we work directly with these groups. Other times, we aim to generate awareness, to sensibilize about the existence and importance of these groups, to include them. We do it through the strengthening of capabilities in an intersectoral way with a multi-dimensional view. We do it, for example, through courses to strengthen capabilities to do with climate change and gender" (FFLA's* Regional Coordinator).

According to staff members, FFLA has contributed in innovative ways to the following areas: deliberative governance; capacity building; conflict avoidance; aligning expectations through dialogue; and providing spaces for all stakeholders. One member described how FFLA has been a pioneer in terms of creating spaces for dialogue before sustainable development initiatives are implemented:

> *"We have been pioneers in recent years with our open letter about sustainable development in the region. This was an initiative of the advisory board. The innovative component was to gather people around the theme of sustainable development in Latin America, with initiatives related to a circular economy, the Agenda 2030 and SDGs. We have also worked on Ecuador's sustainable development plan with other organizations. I guess this is very innovative because we give*

*space for dialogue before implementing initiatives in a Latin American*
*context"* (FFLA's Communication Consultant).

Communication is another key innovative feature of FFLA's approach to deliberative governance:

> *"The way we manage knowledge is also very innovative.*
> *Knowledge and communication go together in order to reach different*
> *audiences and to make information useful"* (FFLA's Regional
> Coordinator).

In this case, communication means the exchange of information about social and public policies between governments, beneficiaries, NGOs, social organizations, academics, minorities and non-privileged groups and other interested stakeholders who can express their concerns and objectives. FFLA's role is to mediate these information exchanges. FFLA staff help to maintain the focus on the sustainable development issue. They look for concerns and interests in common and look for opportunities to be innovative at the moment when these spaces are created and made available. In Latin America, such spaces have been rare.

During the Covid19 pandemic, communication for deliberative governance of social and public policies has become even more important. The pandemic is seen by some staff members as having led to them reaching out to more beneficiaries online. Others highlight the loss of the more personal, direct and close face to face contact. However, there is general agreement that communication is now recognised as far more important than before the pandemic:

> *"Communication was quite devalued before the pandemic. Right now,*
> *we have learnt that communication is key. What is not communicated*
> *does not exist!"* (FFLA's Communication Consultant).

An example of this was a campaign conducted on social media in 2020 about the about the Alliance for sustainable urban development (ADUS). FFLA used social media communication to mobilize stakeholders and to generate awareness about Ecuador's sustainable housing plan.

The use of remote kinds of communication brought by the pandemic has allowed social groups to participate who for various reasons had not been able to attend, when meetings, conferences and documentation required them to be physically present. Some voices, such as those of some indigenous groups, were heard for the first time. Their presence in the conversation has legitimized their perspectives. It has also made it easier to align their interests with the social and public initiatives. Having said that, not all groups have been able to access the Internet, and this has been a serious drawback. Furthermore, FFLA staff said that they missed the personal contact with stakeholders during the pandemic. Nonetheless, the move to remote channels of communication has generally considered to be a positive side effect of the pandemic.

Finally, FFLA's members see a future of both tensions and opportunities: the foundation will need to maintain its ideals and targets whilst adapting to and facing new challenges:

> *"Our mission is and remains important and there are opportunities. Our thirty years of work reinforces this. It is a moment of reflection when we have to think about what the world requires. I am optimistic. We have a good and skilled team and I hope governments and society understand the need for organizations like FFLA"* (FFLA's Accounting Technician).

The capacity to innovate is seen as essential if FFLA is to retain its relevance:

> *"We have to be creative and to see things in other ways and this generates new opportunities, new ways of working. The future is uncertain, the pandemic has not finished, and its economic consequences will remain. We have to find ways to recover, but also to reinforce the topics we work on climate change is key, sustainable development is key. We need to keep working. There are opportunities, but funds will probably diminish too. We work on key and important topics and we need to keep generating awareness about them"* (FFLA's Regional Coordinator).

**Mini study cases**

The three mini case studies selected for this report are: The Volunteer Center of Trinidad and Tobago (VCTT); the Integrated Care Model for Rural Areas (ICMRA), from Colombia, and the Laboratory of Social Innovation in Digital Government (LSIDG), from Uruguay.

**The Volunteer Center of Trinidad and Tobago (VCTT)** is a platform which aims to connect volunteers and organizations. Its aims are to make engagement accessible to volunteers so as to develop high impact volunteerism; and to use volunteerism as a tool for economic progress, with a focus on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The idea behind VCTT is that the platform itself works as a kind of agency by identifying projects and then providing spaces for interaction between governments and people. Projects are selected that are aligned to the SDGs and with the potential to deliver sustainable results through the identification of scalable actions. The role played by VCTT is to collaborate with partners through a volunteer assessment process which identifies volunteers' needs and matches them with critical areas for support interventions in the public or private sector, aiming for highest impact.

VCTT also runs the V. Challenge project, a three-week educational program funded by the JB Fernandes Memorial Trust II, which aims to strengthen the capabilities of Trinidad and Tobago's students in secondary schools through volunteerism. A key component of this program is civic education, encouraging participants to engage in public life and democracy, to be conscious of their rights and discharge their responsibilities with knowledge and skills. The role of VCTT is to identify the competencies required for active citizenship in the country and translate them into volunteer community-based activities. In addition, it teaches participants the principles of active citizenship and the importance of volunteering. It seeks to rebuild youth leaders' trust in the government with the aim of achieving more legitimate and effective public decision-making.

VCTT is innovative in that it focuses on improving the relationship between youth leaders and government, thereby potentially promoting deliberative governance through volunteerism. It connects volunteers with high impact projects. It uses volunteerism as a channel to both improve people's trust in government and the idea of citizenship.

Finally, in 2016, VCTT conducted the National Survey on the State of Volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with the UNV and the Caribbean

Research Cluster for Population and Sustainable Development. The survey sought to understand the reasons why people volunteer and their formal and informal experiences. It provided a qualitative and quantitative understanding of the current situation of volunteerism in the country and pointed to opportunities of growth for the sector.

The **Integrated Care Model for Rural Areas (ICMRA)** is located in the region of Sumapaz, the rural area of Colombia's capital, Bogota. The program was implemented in 2001 by Bogota's public health system company (Subred-Sur). It aims to improve access to and the quality of rural health care, through intersectionality and an integrated approach to health.

The population in this region is dispersed and isolated. Access to health services is limited. In this context, the family-oriented program initially aimed to encourage community participation in the identification of priorities, the design of strategies and working with others (such as education and social integration) to provide solutions and promote access to health. The program includes an environmental perspective: it works with medical plants which are familiar to the community and promotes home gardens, organic waste use and healthy diets.

A key element in this initiative is the synergy between the health system and the community. Through this relationship, the community comes into close contact with government policies. More broadly, the initiative recognises the importance of the relationship between different actors and organizations. It acknowledges the importance of establishing networks to overcome barriers and increase the positive impacts. Furthermore, it uses a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach and promotes the social appropriation of knowledge. Its mechanisms of knowledge transfer are based on understanding the needs of the specific locality. Solutions are then developed that fit into the specific characteristics of the locality where it is based.

The ICMR is innovative because it promotes deliberative governance through engaging with and being responsive to local needs and local practices. ICMR is implemented by a team of Subred-Sur's paid district employees and the direct beneficiary community members (non-volunteers). It has succeeded in encouraging the participation of beneficiaries and including their voices in public policies. By facilitating a closer relationship between beneficiaries and local government actions, it has generated accountability and trust.

Colombia's best indicators in terms of maternal quality, perinatal mortality, pneumonia mortality, infant mortality, mortality due to neither maternal or perinatal malnutrition and chronic malnutrition, are found in Sumapaz. ICMR has been recognised as responsible for these outcomes.

The **Laboratory of Social Innovation in Digital Government (LSID)**, based in Uruguay, is the result of a collaboration between Uruguay's Electronic Government and its Information Society Agency. LSID is a space for collaboration between the government and citizens. Specific methodologies are applied that make use of technology institutes to identify needs and create innovative solutions from the perspective of users and in a specific social context.

Deliberative governance is promoted through providing transparency, through being flexible /adaptable and through collaboration. LSID is innovative as it provides a digital space for collaboration between government and citizens to generate solutions that address problems identified by citizens. In so doing, it creates a closer relationship between government and citizens; it enhances citizens' trust in government actions; and it increases citizen participation.

### Cross-case analysis

This section comparatively analyses the presented case studies. Commonalities and differences are identified, and these are discussed in the context of the Latin American continent.

A central commonality is that all these cases address deliberative governance in some way. The organizations and programs provide spaces and implement strategies that align people's and governments' interests towards decision making processes. The result is a reduction in the distance between people and public policies. in the case of FFLA, this is done through conflict resolution for sustainable development. ICMRA uses governance methodology, while VCTT and LSDG use technology.

These strategies have to be understood against the historical context of Latin America. Although the idea of volunteerism and communal work has been present on the continent since pre-colonial times (Johnson, McBride and Olate, 2004), the relationship between people and government has been one of tension since then. From colonial to current administrations, the third sector has made efforts to take on tasks that governments have been unable to take and build trust through diverse deliberative governance approaches.

Organizations like FFLA are not only participating in public policy debates and influencing the government agenda. Through their participation, they are giving a voice to people and groups who have been historically excluded. Social participation in governments' agendas and individuals speaking and having their voices heard result in a sense of ownership. This does not necessarily increase trust, but it does mean that

individuals can deal with the distrust through seeing that they can intervene in governments' actions and hold them to account.

Another commonality is that in all these case studies, a bottom-up approach is used in elaborating and implementing government policies. They aim to encourage and mediate the participation of civil society in the formulation of public policies through their different strategies – through creating spaces for dialogue; through direct connection with the community and by enabling them to access the technology. In other words, technology is both the means and the end. This kind of mediation is innovative in Latin America, a continent where historically, the relationship between society and state has been a distant and tense one.

The pervasive distrust in a number of governments and their public policies in Latin America comes from the fact that, historically, the third sector – and volunteerism – has been in a kind of "government construction". The volunteerism encouraged and promoted mainly by the "colonialist" Catholic Church, was followed by institutions such as trade unions, professional associations and mutual aid societies (Thompson and Landim, 1998, and Bettoni and Cruz, 2002). The first volunteerism initiatives in Latin America were promoted by governments through appealing to patriotism. In this context, participation was not in fact voluntary but mandatory (Sherraden and Eberly, 1990). As a result, volunteerism was viewed with the same suspicion as was directed towards governments.

As discussed in the introduction, the rise of so-called "militant" volunteerism came about as an alternative to volunteerism seen as a "hobby" of the wealthy classes (Johnson, McBride and Olate, 2004). Both strands have influenced how Latin Americans view volunteerism. Today, the third sector has to negotiate both legacies as it seeks to establish deliberative governance and improve the relationship between its citizens and government.

Thus, volunteerism in democracy is a new reality for Latin America and deliberative governance plays a key role in it. In the last thirty years, there has been an influx of national and international third sector organizations on the continent. This has generated the need for deliberative governance strategies that aim to (re)build trust in Latin American society in the third sector on the one hand and in governments on the other. Without such trust, FFLA cannot influence public policy agendas. FFLA's Executive Director is positive in his assessment of the third sector today:

*"The last fourteen years of government have forced the nationalization of society: public was good, private was bad, and we, social organizations, were in a limbo. Now we have more opportunities, now we are more comfortable. And civil society is playing an important role because it is more rapid, practical and imposes arguments on the governments. Now it is time to put our ideas into practice."*

Volunteerism in Latin America has a significant contribution to make in strengthening democratic practices and institutions; and in linking people, governments and the private sector (Johnson, McBride and Olat 2004). The influence of the third sector is possible because of the spaces for dialogue where those in power can be held to account. The contact between civil society and governments forces the latter to be more responsive to social demands which, in these spaces, can be expressed and aligned with the government's own interests.

In this challenging context, innovation is extremely important. This is another common feature of these cases. Innovative aspects in FFLA include: its use of capacity strengthening as a way to avoid conflicts; its use of dialogue to align expectations; its use of deliberative governance as central to its activities; and its provision of spaces for all stakeholders. It has been able to link people and policy makers around a single sustainable development agenda; it has facilitated the participation of minorities and non-privileged groups in the debate; and it has addressed the historic public distrust in governments and institutions. The innovative deliberative governance initiatives promoted by FFLA have fostered a closer relationship between society and government. It continues to pursue its aim of establishing a sense of confidence and partnership between the two that has no precedence.

Similarly, the Integrated Care Model for Rural Areas, in Colombia, uses similar innovative strategies in implementing its health policies. The intention is to bring together policy makers and policy beneficiaries – and other social sectors - through deliberative governance spaces of dialogue and participation. This initiative has generated a deeper sense of participation and belonging by internalizing community practices, habits and cultural elements. Examples include the use of medical plants, promoting knowledge transfer and strengthening people's confidence in public policies.

The Laboratory of Social Innovation in Digital Government, from Uruguay, has similar objectives but has been using technology to collectively identify social needs and suggest public policies. Here, deliberative governance is facilitated through a digital tool.

The result is the same, in terms of reducing the gap between people and government. The tool increases citizens' participation in government decisions. The adoption of innovative and collaborative solutions has increased trust between them.

The Volunteer Center of Trinidad and Tobago also consists of a digital tool for deliberative governance, but it focuses more on the relationship between volunteers and volunteer organizations, to make volunteerism accessible for high impact projects. Its innovative component consists in the use of volunteerism as an instrument for generating active citizenship, (re)building the trust of young leaders in government and as a result, strengthening the legitimacy of the public decision-making process.

In their own ways, all these organizations and projects propose innovative approaches to deliberative governance. These approaches bring together people, organizations and governments to address the historic distrust that has characterised these relationships. As FFLA's Technical Analyst states, these organizations take the long view, recognising that these objectives require long term commitment:

> *"There are constant struggles. We need to see how to involve the actors interested in certain themes who have to be involved, and the constant change of authorities, fund sources, leaders… We are always running. It can be a bit frustrating, but it is our passion. We need to generate confidence and long-term outcomes"*.

All the case studies include the generation of spaces and opportunities for dialogue. Through the joint construction of solutions, trust is built between the different actors. Innovation has been a common feature of all these cases and its importance has been reinforced by the Covid19 pandemic. Innovation is also perceived as necessary for the future, as the Accounting Technician from FFLA explains:

> *"In the current world, to be innovative is mandatory. There are many other organizations already doing what we do, so we must always innovate. The pandemic changed many of FFLA's means of action which were quite consolidated. We had to look for new means of carrying on doing what we did before."*

FFLA's Communication Consultant also emphasizes the importance of flexibility and a willingness to adapt:

*"We need to be in constant innovation in a system which forces you to grow. Personally, you need to look for alternatives, not to look for your essence, but to keep you updated."*

In the context of a widespread and historic distrust in politics in Latin America, the common challenge in all these cases seems to be the need to constantly innovate deliberative governance strategies to keep being able to do their work.

**Conclusion and policy recommendations**

This report has presented and analysed four case studies from Latin America, as a contribution to UNV's State of the World's Volunteerism Report. The maxi study selected was *Futuro Latinoamericano* Foundation (FFLA), based in Ecuador. Its aims to are to generate capabilities and leadership in relation to sustainable development. Three mini cases included the following Latin American organizations: The Volunteer Center of Trinidad and Tobago (VCTT), the Integrated Care Model for Rural Areas (ICMR), from Colombia, and the Laboratory of Social Innovation in Digital Government (LSID), from Uruguay.

The main focus of the analysis was deliberative governance. The analysis set out to identify the strategies that these organizations have used and continue to use, to align people's and governments' interests spaces and towards decision making processes. Of particular interest was the impact of such spaces and strategies on the organizations-volunteers-government relationships.

For the maxi case study, semi-structured group interviews were conducted to collect personal impressions and perspectives from the organization's members on the topic of deliberative governance. Participants were asked how their organization addresses and promotes this issue, deals with difficulties and barriers and what they expect for the future.

It is clear that deliberative governance is central to the action strategies in all these cases. All of them, in their own way, bring together society, organizations and governments to find solutions to social problems. This is particularly important in Latin America because the continent has a long history of conflict between people and their governments. In addition, the third sector and volunteerism have historically been used to promote political interests. Therefore, FLLA, the Volunteer Center of Trinidad and Tobago, the Integrated Care Model for Rural Areas and the Laboratory of Social Innovation in Digital Government are examples of attempts to bring together actors

around common objectives in the current democratic environment, whilst acknowledging the distrust of the past.

For that, innovation is an essential feature. Being innovative seems to be what has enabled these organizations to implement effective strategies of deliberative governance. Innovation is what will maintain these organizations and enable them to be effective players in strengthening deliberative governance on the Latin American continent. Their acceptance of the world in constant and rapid transformation and particularly their response to the realities of the Covid19 pandemic, show their ability to adapt and their long-term commitment.

In addition, these organizations can be seen as taking on the role of mediators between society and state. In the Latin American context, this is intrinsically innovative. The gap we have referred to which has alienated people from government's decisions and policies has a very specific history in Latin America. The third sector can be seen as currently attempting to bridge that gap. This model is consistent with the regional characteristics. These organizations from the third sector are stepping in to a social and political environment where the ties between society and state are still to be made. It is a model that has the potential to promote dialogue, to resolve conflict, to create new capabilities for the exercising of citizenship and to strengthen governance systems. Furthermore, this model seems to be an important tool in the consolidation of Latin America's democracies.

That said, the following general policy recommendations are proposed, as a contribution to consolidating the third sector and volunteerism in Latin America through the strengthening of deliberative governance:

| Principle | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| Strengthening the third sector and volunteerism cannot be separated from the strengthening of its democratic institutions. The trust between people and governments can only be regenerated by practising democracy. | The maintenance of democratic institutions and practices should be a condition of support from international volunteering organizations, according to international political standards. |
| Governments need to implement long term objectives and agendas. The constant change of governments' political priorities and, consequently, public policies, weaken the capacity of the third sector to act in a consistent way. | The establishment and implementation of long-term government plans should be a condition of support from international volunteering organizations |

| | |
|---|---|
| Innovation must be supported and encouraged, particularly regarding deliberative governance. | Spaces for dialogue during the processes of public policies elaboration must be innovative to allow the greatest participation possible, including that of minorities and non-privileged groups. Spaces for voluntary direct democracy, with the support of technology, could be created and encouraged. |
| The third sector must be clearly separated from governments. The mix of third and public sectors carries the risk of the former being used and perceived as a political arm of the latter, since conflict of interests may be present. Although government support is welcome and indeed, necessary, the third sector must be able to walk alone, and the civil society must be seen as an actor of change by itself. | States should have clear regulations separating government and third sector roles. In addition, government budget for the third sector should be limited by regulations and the private sector's participation in the third sector could be encouraged by fiscal policies (tax benefits, for instance). |

The future is challenging for Latin America and is also full of opportunities. Regarding volunteerism, the third sector and deliberative governance, much has already been done but much is still possible. All three elements are absolutely essential for the development of the continent. This report ends with quotes from the interviews with FFLA's staff members, about the role of the third sector. The quotes illustrate their optimism and commitment to being major players in the development of Latin America, while at the same time recognizing the challenges:

*"The realities of the national and international context suggest that there will be many territorial and environmental conflicts in the future, between and within local and indigenous populations. The economy is destroyed, and corruption is increasing. As an organization, it is a challenge and an opportunity to apply innovation to dialogue and conflict resolution"* (Gender Specialist).

*"I am concerned about the future, of course, but FFLA has a role, and the crisis has also created opportunities. And the theme of sustainable development remains"* (FFLA's Programs Assistant).

> *"We have had to recreate ourselves, to see things in other ways and this brings new opportunities, new ways of working. We could be more inclusive, and this is important for FFLA. The future is uncertain, the pandemic is not finished, its consequences will remain. The economic consequences will remain for too long. We need to see how to recover, but we need to reinforce the topics we work on climate change is key, sustainable development is key. We need to keep working. There are opportunities* (FFLA's Regional Coordinator).

Finally, Latin American civil society must be considered as the vehicle for the social changes that the continent needs. The third sector and volunteerism must be empowered and be seen as instruments for economic and political development. The challenges and opportunities are on the table:

> *"We live in a good moment and we cannot go on without improving ourselves. Difficult times are still coming but we have to support ourselves as Latin Americans. If we do not support ourselves, nobody else will"* (FFLA's Communication Consultant).

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