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	I HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW **Ana María Pino Yáñez** Librarian Chilean Library of Congress e-mail: apino@bcn.cl
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Abstract:

Citizen participation is a serious challenge for modern democracies. This especially applies to Chile, which is currently undergoing a process of state modernisation. Citizen participation has been designated as one of the top priorities of this process, and promoting greater social involvement implies fundamental changes in education and comprehensive training of the citizenry.

To achieve this, citizens must have access to primary sources of information, such as those available through libraries, one of the neutral and reliable pillars of the educational process. Furthermore, citizens must have access to multiple, multidisciplinary points of view on topics that affect their everyday lives, so that, on the basis of that "listening", they can develop informed opinions that will allow them to engage in dialogue and debate with the authorities, and, through this process, society in general can build the kind of country in which everyone wants to live.

Citizen participation involves several interrelated processes, such as: participatory decision-making; contributing to community development; and receiving the benefits of the social participation system. In this context, the Chilean Library of Congress has sought to promote citizen participation and strengthen citizen linkage to the legislative branch. This process began in 2003 with the First Citizen Consensus Conference. The success of that experience led to further citizen participation projects in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

In 2006, a series of events, such as round tables, seminars, regional forums, and radio programmes were conducted, addressing the following topics: Access to Justice; Citizen Security; Access to Public Information; Public Policy on Social Security (health, poverty, insurance); Environmental Policy; and Citizen Participation, among others.

- The objectives of these events included the following: opening new spaces for exchanging points of view; articulating networks; and sharing experiences and knowledge, all with the aim of advancing civic engagement.
- Open up interactive and flexible spaces to promote co-responsibility among social agents in the decision-making process.
- Strengthen the citizen-Congress-academic community ties, through a process of multidisciplinary listening.

What is Citizen Participation in a Democracy?

Democracy has been defined in the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy as a "political doctrine favourable to the intervention of the people in the government". The Italian philosopher, jurist, and political thinker Norberto Bobbio, stated that: "A democracy, regardless of how elemental it is, always refers to an ascendant model of the organisation of social power; one that is built from the bottom up, on the basis of the

recognition of absolute equality before the law and full autonomy of the constituents of the 'demos'." Democracy requires social inclusion to sustain itself over time.

Various sorts of exclusion have impeded this equality throughout history. Exclusion based on gender, wealth, literacy, ethnicity, race, access to information, etc. Today the market brings new, more subtle, almost invisible forms of exclusion.

Democracy possesses an expansive logic, which being founded on equality in the political sphere, gives impetus to its various political entities to spread this same dynamic to every aspect of the society and the economy

For their desire for social inclusion, great world leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Salvador Allende, and many others, have paid with their lives.

Currently citizen participation is one of the greatest challenges of modern democracies, not only as a way of neutralising the disagreeable authoritarian habits from the past that oppose democratisation, but also as a way of providing solid grounding for institutions of popular election, which sustain and give life to the spirit that bolsters the legitimacy of democratic regimes.

Citizen participation is one of the core themes of all democratic systems, because it is instrumental in ensuring that institutionally established rights and duties are recognized and carried out. This demands the "citizenising" of the democracy, creating a strategy for just and fair human development, promoting civic participation, and generating public value, meaning that citizens are satisfied with public institutions and their actions.

With regard to participatory democracy, the citizenry has to assume co-responsibility with the state. The people have fundamental rights that political institutions must respect, just as there are duties that must be performed by the citizens to maintain social order. Rights and duties are necessarily linked together.

The right to information is a fundamental right of human beings. The act of informing, the access to information that allows one to be informed and express opinions based on reliable information is a right that must be guaranteed by the state and must be protected by civil society. This right has two basic and complementary components: a.- The right of citizens with respect to the state; and b.- The duty of the state to deliver information to the citizens.

In this sphere, there are several interrelated processes, such as: empowering the citizen to contribute to the community that he/she belongs to, participating in decision-making with an informed opinion, and, finally, receiving the benefits of a participatory social system, one in which the individuals and the institutional authorities play active, valid roles in the social process.

Having analyzed the conceptual framework, we will now take a more direct, concrete look at the situation in Chile, pointing out the inequalities that still exist and presenting the efforts that are being carried out to reverse the information gap.

How has Chile advanced in social inclusion?

Chile, considered to be a developing country, has implemented a process of state modernisation orientated at improving public administration, designed to make it more dynamic, efficient, and responsive to the needs of its citizens. This reform aims to create a citizen-centered state with greater equity and more social inclusion.

Social policy is being focused on the poorest sectors of the country. The Survey of Socioeconomic Characterization (Casen) 2006, carried out by the Ministry of Planning, indicates that, although there is still a large gap between the rich and the poor, there has been improvement in household income distribution for the first time since 1990. The Gini coefficient for Chile has fallen to 0.54. Compare this to 0.33 in South Africa, an average of

between 0.25 and 0.40 in northern industrialized countries, and 0.469 in the United States in the year 2005.

http://www.mideplan.cl/final/categoria.php?secid=25&catid=124

Social inclusion allows for fundamental changes in the overall education and formation of the citizenry, changes that enable people to break the social and digital gap produced by the inequality of income distribution. To do this, it is crucial to view this as an issue of education policy, in which we must not only consider promoting equity in formal education, where everyone can count on receiving a quality education, but also equity in access to information, where everyone can count on having access to the sources of information and adequate technological tools.

Facing this challenge of educational and informational inequity, in 1990 Chile began to carry out changes with the purpose of improving the overall quality of learning and its social distribution, making this one of the top priorities. Beyond the academic and cognitive aspects, one of the main aims was to channel education toward the development of personal, social, and informational skills among the poorest socioeconomic sectors of the population, since without adequate development of these skills; the cognitive learning of these people is limited.

Recently the government of Chile formed the Presidential Advisory Council for the Quality of Education, a body comprised of a wide spectrum of people involved in the field of education. Their mission is to debate, analyse, and propose initiatives that will result in better quality education for all. Furthermore, they are working on two legislative bills aimed at profound institutional and regulatory reform of the education system. They propose a new General Law of Education (Presidential Address Nº 55-355, to the Chamber of Deputies) that "recognizes the right of all citizens to a quality education, assigning to the

state the duty of ensuring this by providing adequate conditions and continuous verification as to its fulfillment."

With regard to bridging the digital gap, the government has planned the Digital Agenda 2006-2010, providing free, open-code software as a strategic tool to contribute to the social and technological development of the country, which, in turn, will increase competitiveness and innovation.

I will supply some background on the current situation with regard to digital policy. The incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into public administration has placed Chile and its electronic government among the 25 most developed nations (UN), with 600,000 beneficiaries of the digital literacy program, 400 thousand beneficiaries of the infocentre network, 5.3 million internet users, a figure representing a third of the total population of the country, 2.5 million students, 140,000 companies, and 10 million mobile phones.

Among the goals of the government for 2010 are digital inclusion, the expansion of electronic government, the deepening and strengthening of digital technologies in education, and the emergence of a strong ICT industry in Chile, all aimed at providing our country with the qualitative leap it needs to become a truly digital country that can say, "Access to information in modern society is not a privilege of the few, but rather a basic resource for development, equity, and democracy."

http://www.bacheletdigital.cl/presentacion/siframes.html

Another concern, one that directly affects social inclusion, is the promotion of reading. Near the end of 2006, The National Council of Culture and the Arts designed a national plan called ***Chile wants to read***, with the aim of promoting reading, creating circumstances where all citizens have access to the various mediums of reading (from physical books to

Internet, etc.), strengthening public and school library systems, providing incentives to publishing companies, and generally giving impetus to strategies for the promotion of reading. Other programme is ***"Maletin literario***", that consist in giving to a group of families between 10 or 20 books as an initial collection. This programme is going to be implemented in 2008.

As this process of substantive social change unfolds, many questions arise with respect to how citizens commit themselves to the process and become integrally involved in carrying out the change: How can we become active participants and have an impact on our everyday lives? How do we truly become informed? Where can we find reliable sources of information? With whom do we communicate? Who will listen to us? How can we receive satisfactory answers to our concerns as citizens?

As places of public access, libraries are one of the fundamental centres of support in the educational and formative process. They provide access to an enormous wealth of informational possibilities to anyone who seeks it. These institutions are characterized by their neutrality and trustworthiness. For the common citizen, this trust translates into a commitment of mutual respect and credibility.

How do libraries develop closer ties to citizens?

Today libraries have begun to change direction and are transforming themselves into linking organizations, into places of encounter for the interchange of opinions. Today libraries have expanded their mission to include creating and articulating social networks, using participatory methodologies in which common citizens with informed opinions can interact, learn, and broaden their vision of the world, as well as make their needs known and air grievances about matters that concern them.

Seen from this perspective, we can say that these institutions can contribute to the empowerment of citizens, not only by providing information, but also by developing skills that allow citizens to participate in government, not as onlookers, but rather as protagonists in the design, execution, and supervision of policies that affect everyday life. In this way, all the citizens of the society, working together, can build up the country in which they live, and in which they want to live.

How has the Library of the National Congress committed itself to citizen participation?

In this innovative context, the Library of the National Congress (LNC) acts as a democratizing agent of knowledge, promoting citizen participation, especially through its connection with the legislative branch of the government. This effort began in earnest with the 1st Conference on Citizen Consensus in 2003. The success of this conference led to other similar projects in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

What goals do we aspire to?

- Open flexible, interactive spaces that promote the co-responsibility of citizens and government in decision-making.
- Strengthen relations among the citizenry, the Congress, and the academic world, through a process of multidisciplinary dialogue.
- Develop closer ties to the citizenry by making LNC a place of public access that opens up opportunities for personal growth.

- Empower the citizenry by providing information and knowledge in specific areas by means of various instruments and technological tools.
- Contribute to the process of democratization by providing a platform where local and national issues can be freely discussed and debated.
- Create strategic alliances with public institutions, social organizations, the academic community, and private enterprise at the regional and national levels.
- Generate networks of knowledge in specific topic-related areas.

How have we found the right path to follow?

Carrying out these projects of citizen linkage and participation has not been easy for the Library of the National Congress. Due to the lack of a sufficient number of public libraries throughout the country, the LNC has had to assume the functions of a public library, assisting in various public services, just as some university libraries do. This has led to an expansion of our mission and our commitment to the citizenry, as traditionally our services were directed more toward the members of Congress, the principal users of the LNC.

To help carry this commitment forward, a program of live events was planned. This was considered a good way to provide information to the public and give impetus to the political participation of the citizens, the formation of public opinion, the dissemination of regional cultures and identities, and cooperation with the educational system.

These activities have been carried out within the framework of the BCN-Innova Project, financed by the Interamerican Development Bank (BID) and backed by the Chilean government.

In Chile a majority of both public and private institutions seem distant and unreachable to the common citizen. Sometimes one has the impression that the more one talks about participation, the weaker and more tenuous relations become with those who hold public office. To combat this, we have adopted a social model in which no institution, whether it be a political party, a labor union, the church, or any other organization, has a monopoly on representing the people. We want individuals to create their own identity and not reflect preordained patterns. We want them to be involved in a continuous search of discovery and self-realization, as well as to develop deep commitments with the society in which they live.

The political parties in Chile have been losing the ability to influence the citizenry. As Eugenio Tironi writes in his book,"El sueño chileno"(The Chilean Dream), Chilean political parties no longer play the role they did in the past, when identity was often projected through a political party, which one had often joined merely out of tradition, without thinking, and generally for life. Fewer and fewer people are registering to vote in the election processes and decide on the goals Chile wants to reach as a nation. Private individuals look more to their personal interests than to the interests of the community. By way of illustration, in 2006, 31.8% (32.4% of men and 31.3% of women) of young people of voting age, between 18 and 34 years of age, were registered to vote, whereas in 2000, 55.3% (56.1 of men and 54.5 of women) of this same age group were registered to vote, a drop of about 20% in the number of registered voters.

www.servel.cl/servel/controls/NeoChannels/NEO_CH112/images/EinscritosGE.xls

The poor perception of public institutions extends to the National Congress, even though it may seem contradictory, since it is the citizens themselves who elect the representatives that serve in Congress. Thus, this sense of alienation and distance from the Congress must

be resolved by means of linking mechanisms that can generate better relations between the Congress and the citizenry. Ways must be found to instill a sense of belonging and create circumstance in which the citizens can openly express themselves to members of Congress. Citizens must have direct dialogue with their representatives and feel free to state their needs and concerns about specific issues.

To illustrate this, I will refer to a national survey about the "Image of the National Congress", which the Library of the National Congress conducted in March, 2006. It is based on a sample of the views of 1,201 people from 134 municipalities, and is available on the Internet at:

http://www.bcn.cl/noticias/bcn-realiza-primera-encuesta-sobre-imagen-del-congreso-nacional.

Among its conclusions are the following: "Those surveyed indicated that the quantity of information available with respect to the work of the members of Congress is insufficient (68% to 78%)", and "…17% of those surveyed have at one time or another tried to contact a member of Congress or someone on his staff. Of these, 44% never received a response, and 29% received a response and generated changes. Of those surveyed who have never attempted to contact a member of Congress, 51% said that they believed it would be a waste of time; 65% of the least educated stated this as the reason"**.** These conclusions corroborate the fact that citizens lack information about the legislative work being done in the Congress, and that there is a high degree of distrust as to the commitment the members of Congress have with their constituencies.

Another aspect that we must consider in this analysis, one which will help us better understand this lack of information and communication between citizens and legislators, is the fact that members of Congress neither have the time nor the advisory assistance

necessary to adequately assimilate and discriminate among the enormous quantity of documentation and information they constantly receive on the wide variety of subjects brought before their legislative bodies. This encumbers their work and makes it quite difficult for them to carry out their function in an efficacious manner.

Given the above, the Chilean Library of Congress www.bcn.cl, has proposed as one of its goals for the year 2007, the creation of a Parliamentary Advisory Service, dedicated to supporting the members of Congress in their legislative work, and composed of the following five topic areas: 1) Legal Support; 2) Government and Economy; 3) Social Themes; 4) Natural Resources, Science, Technology, and Industry; and 5) Foreign Relations, Defence, and International Economy.

For each topic area there will be four categories of specialised support: 1) Topic-related Observations; 2) SIIT, Integrated System of Territorial Information; 3) Centre of Statistics; and 4) Parliamentary Portal.

The Parliamentary Advisory Service will provide: 1) Information summaries on specific topics; 2) Reports; 3) Tables of Analysis, similar to round table discussions; and 4) Closed seminars for legislative committees.

It is hoped that in the near future a majority of the research work on legislative matters will be carried out and delivered to the committees before the issues are presented for discussion; thus the legislators will be better informed on the topics before they are officially dealt with in committee. However, this project is still in its early stages. The presidents of the various committees of both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies will be charged with establishing contact with the Chilean Library of Congress.

Currently citizens can have contact with their congressional representatives through audiences that are granted to special interest groups and invited guests, whose opinions are

sought on a certain topic; for example, when legislating on educational reform, people from various sectors (professors, students, et al.) and with varying points of view will be invited to appear before the committees in order to obtain a macro vision of the issue. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done to provide common citizens with opportunities to interact and offer opinions on issues that affect their everyday lives.

That is why, as a way to improve relations between the Congress and the citizens of Chile, the Library of Congress has taken a more holistic approach to its mission, taking into account not only its principal user, the legislators, but also the common citizen.

In 2003, the Library of the National Congress began an innovative process in its management, assuming a more public role. This consisted of carrying out a series of activities designed to link the various players that interact with the legislature. We want to organize and coordinate interactions between institutions and develop channels of mutually shared knowledge between members of Congress and the citizens. The aim is to bring decision-makers, experts, special interest groups, and the academic community, among others, together, not only to present their views about future strategic policies on public administration, resources available for making decisions, or knowledge about certain matters, but also to provide a forum for learning about the real needs of the people by listening to the authentic opinions of the citizens.

How have we made these dreams of opening new spaces for citizen participation come true?

To achieve our objectives, a set of cross-sectional activities were implemented that allowed for the application of various methodologies and instruments designed to stimulate citizen participation. Specifically, the cross-sectional activities were:

Choice of Topics: The selection of topics coincided with those on the legislative and national agenda, which allowed participating citizens to stay up-to-date with respect to the citizen agenda.

Creation of Institutional Networks: 57 institutional networks were created during the year 2006, from both the public and private sectors, which sponsored events and provided logistic support. The results were positive, with high levels of attendance and participation, even among public workers. This was noteworthy because public employees are generally perceived as being apathetic and difficult to stimulate, typically following a "home to work, and work to home" routine, with minimal participation in outside activities. This situation is changing in Chile. These events demonstrated that public employees are moving away from being passive agents, towards becoming active players, participating in public acts and taking advantage of the right to express themselves.

Selection of Panelists and Presenters: The panelists and presenters were selected according to their specialization, their function, and the posts they were occupying at the time of the events. They were chosen from the executive and legislative branches of government, the academic community, and directors of organizations in civil society, for example, ministers of state, presidents of the legislative bodies, deans of universities, and other officials involved in high level decision-making.

Selection of Topic-related Experts: A majority of these were selected from among the academic community, along with experts from special interest organizations. They were asked to send professional articles and other writings. These writings were included in the Micro Site associated with the specific topics and were disseminated to the various committees and legislators working in these areas. This provided them with a range of

diverse points of view on the topics, giving them a broader vision of the issues involved, thus allowing them to consider all the important factors before making decisions.

Profile of Guests:

Senators and Deputies

Governmental Authorities (e.g., Ministers, Subsecretaries)

Heads of Party Delegations

Heads of Committees

Legislative Advisors

International Organisations

Academic Community (professors and university students)

Professional Institutes

LNC Functionaries and its network of contacts

Public Functionaries

Foundations and Assistance Organisations

Directors of Political Parties

Directors of Civil Society and members of NGOs

Heads of participatory programmes

Candidates for public office

Directors of community organisations

Citizens

Convocation: Broad spectrums of people were invited to attend the events. Over the years a database had been built up with more than 4,500 registered users. Multiple formats were used to contact and invite people (letters, e-mail, blogs, etc.).

Dissemination: Posters and brochures were produced, distributed, and posted in governmental offices, universities, cultural notice boards, and other appropriate places throughout the country.

To publicize the events, the organizers sent out press releases, arranged radio interviews and television appearances with panellists and other participants, placed reports in newspapers and other institutional bulletins and newsletters, as well as using other mediums of dissemination. In the capital, Santiago, the reception by the media was less than optimal, but in the regions there was good coverage of the activities.

Virtual invitations and programmes were sent to numerous citizen-related websites, using the Division of Social Organisations of the Secretary General Ministry of the Government as the main point of dissemination. In addition, NGO websites, civic organisations, citizen blogs, and other mediums helped in dissemination, allowing for extensive national coverage of the events.

As the events were carried out, audiovisual materials were produced. Afterwards these were presented to the television channels of both legislative chambers and to the legislators who attended the events, for their eventual dissemination in regional offices and in public sites throughout the country. Attendees from the participating institutions also received these materials, and, as a way of spreading the knowledge to as wide a group as possible, were assigned the task of disseminating the contents to their colleagues who were unable to attend the events. Audiovisual materials were likewise produced and distributed to local

participants for dissemination, with the purpose of generating further discussion and debate of local issues.

Information File: Every participant received an Information File with content that varied according to the topic, but typically contained information such as: the current legislation associated with each issue, referential articles, profiles of the panelists, and a list of articles related to the topic that appeared in the press prior to the event.

Creation of a Micro Site: A prototype of a Micro Site was created in the website of the Library of the National Congress, with the purpose of promoting each issue. The content was continuously updated as the event played out. It consisted of the following icons:

- Online Invitation and Registration
- Programme Timetable
- Profiles of the Panellists
- Topic-related Documents by national and international experts
- Bibliography
- Topic-related Legislation
- Press a.- Lists of topic-related articles that appeared in the national press; b.- Press Releases; c.- Event-related articles that appeared in the national press
- Recommended Topic-related Links
- Photographs
- Questions asked by citizens to the presenters during the events
- Responses given to the above questions

Production of Digital Films: In order to preserve a historical record and for future electronic or paper publication, every event was filmed. These films are available in DVD and CD format.

Recording and Transmission of Radio Programs: During the year 2006 a new radio program, called "Citizen Forums", went into production. It was transmitted on 77 local radio stations throughout Chile, with the purpose of extending coverage of the issues dealt with in the events. These programs gave the inhabitants of the remote areas of the extreme north, for example Toconao, and the extreme south, for example Puerto Aysén, an opportunity to hear public debate on issues that affect their lives.

Each program was coordinated according to the discussion topics selected for the year 2006 (Access to Public Information, Public Policies, Access to the Justice System, Institute of Human Rights/ Ombudsman, Social Responsibility of Business, and Citizen Security). The program followed the same structure as the live events, inviting the same guests and covering the most important issues in accordance with the legislative agenda and LNC regulations.

Seven 30-minute programmes were produced and made available for listening on the Citizen Forum website (www.forociudadano.cl), which is also linked to the LNC website.

Reports: A report of the essential content of each radio programme was drawn up following the programme and published immediately on the website www.forociudadano.cl, which can also be accessed via a Chilean Library of Congress link.

Filming the Radio Programs: These radio programs were also filmed for the purpose of transmitting them over the television channels of the Congress and of making them available for use and dissemination by legislators.

Evaluation: As a means of evaluation, a survey was carried out at each event. This survey determined the profile of the attendees and the needs of the citizens with respect to the topics being discussed.

Production Team: The production team was coordinated by a librarian and consisted of two principal journalists and a production assistant. The journalists were in charge of producing audiovisual materials, as well as communicating and disseminating materials and information to the media.

What participatory methodologies have we used?

Various methodologies, described below, were employed and incorporated in keeping with the way citizens responded to the Library of the National Congress as a space for learning and growth, a space in which they not only listen to the discussion, but also are listened to and are empowered to participate in an informed debate.

1. CONFERENCE OF CITIZEN CONSENSUS

The Danish Parliament originally created one participatory tool that was used in Denmark. It consists of bringing together a group of citizens from different backgrounds and holding a conference in which a multidisciplinary team of experts present information to the group on a specific topic. Each expert represents a distinct approach to the material. The group of citizens, now fully informed with respect to the topic, discusses and debates the issues, eventually developing their own opinions about the topic. The final product of the

conference is a document containing the informed opinions of the citizens, which is delivered to the members of the Danish Parliament as reference material as they legislate on the topic at hand.

The First Conference of Citizen Consensus, the first ever held in Latin America, was held in Chile in 2003. The topic was "How to manage your medical records". The Chilean Library of Congress, both legislative branches, the Ministry of Health, and the National Council of Science and Technology (CONICYT) collaborated in organising this event, which is available on the Internet at: http://sdi.bcn.cl/consenso

2. ROUND TABLES

These consist of bringing together legislators, experts, and civic-minded citizens for discussion, dialogue, and reflection on important issues. Twelve Round Table discussions were conducted from 2004 though 2006, on the following topics:

"The Figure of the Ombudsman in Chile", "Transparency and Probity in Chile", "Access to Public Information", "Lobby", "Financing of Election Campaigns", "Financial Disclosure Statements by Public Officials and Employees", "The Senior Citizen", and "The Social Responsibility of Business".

To illustrate the action dynamic of these events, I will make specific reference to the series of events entitled, "The Social Responsibility of Business: a contribution to the sustainable development of human capital". The series was comprised of three Round Tables, all carried out during 2006:

1st Round Table: "Transparency and the Social Responsibility of Business"

2nd Round Table: "Gender and the Social Responsibility of Business: The key to civic ethics"

3rd Round Table: "The Social Responsibility of Business and Community Development"

The Social Responsibility of Business (SRB) was a particularly relevant issue that year because it was part of the legislative agenda. Currently Chile is actively participating, along with other countries, in drawing up Standard Practices of Social Responsibility ISO 26000 (www.inn.cl), through the National Institute of Standardization. The Executive Branch, by way of the General Secretary Ministry of the Government, proposed SRB "*As a new way for business and labour to relate to one another, which will generate sustainable development in the future*". It is of primary importance to the government because *"SRB helps strengthen the social dialogue among equals"*. In addition, many of its basic elements, such as transparency, access to information, and accountability, cut across boundaries and apply to all sectors.

At this time in 2006, the legislature was discussing the Bill on Subcontracting, including the modifications sent by the Executive Branch, which focused on the social responsibility of companies toward their employees, especially with regard to clarifying contractual obligations, employee benefits, and the status of labour, that is, whether they were working under direct contract or a form of subcontract to the company.

SRB was also chosen, www.chileresponsable.com, because it was a concept whose definition was still taking shape, whose core principle revolved around the value of human beings, and whose application impacts the lives of all citizens. Discussion on this topic has had a positive effect, leading companies to assume greater responsibilities and commitments to their employees, not only in the workplace, but also in the community they belong to. Applying ethical principles to business and showing greater respect to employees has, in turn, led to improved relations with consumers, by raising the quality of products and aiding community development. SRB has become a process of cooperation between the

business community and civil society in general, providing value added to those companies that adopt this concept, by making them more competitive and offering greater protection to the rights of employees and consumers.

As a way of extending this discussion to a wider audience, the Chilean Library of Congress organized these Round Tables, which were carried out on dates that paralleled legislative discussion on the Bill of Subcontracting in the Congress. The objectives of the three Round Tables were: to promote networking among the various social players involved; present the opinions of the legislators on the subject; and, in turn, expose the legislators to a variety of opinions from common citizens in order to promote and enhance the level of discussion in the Congress.

The panelists on the Round Tables included senators, deputies, business people, academics, and directors of social organizations associated with SRB. In addition, a presentation was given by the manager of the project "Partnership Today" of CEMEX, the Mexican company that received an award from the United Nations for its outstanding contribution to the field of SRB.

3. SEMINARS

This included presentations, reading papers, and attending national and international conferences. During the years 2005 and 2006, three seminars were held dealing with the following topics: "Citizen Participation in Public Management: A Challenge for Chile"; "Public Policies that Impact Citizens"; and "The Right to Culture: A Fundamental Right?" In this document we refer only to those seminars held in 2006.

Following up on the successful experience of the First Seminar on Citizen Participation held in July 2005, LNC organised two more seminars in 2006.

The Second Seminar on Citizen Participation: "Public Policies that Impact Citizens", on the 13th and 14th of July 2006.

A wide range of guests were invited to participate, especially those institutions and people that had shown interest in the efforts of the LNC to reach out to the general citizenry and offer them an opportunity to become better informed and more involved in matters of importance to the country.

The profile of the participants broke down this way: 27% academic community; 20% public employees; 13% NGOs; 6% Social Organisations; with the rest representing a diverse mix of occupations, professions, and interests. Among the panellists were 2 Ministers of State, 2 Subsecretaries, the Presidents of both the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress, and the internationally renown expert on public policy and Doctor in Political Science, Professor Joaquim Brugue of the Universidad Autónoma of Barcelona, Spain. In addition, 80 experts on public policy were asked to send in articles to provide a better grounding in this topic. Approximately 70 articles were received, all of which can be found in the Micro Site of the Chilean Library of Congress website www.bcn.cl.

Public policy has been an emblematic theme of the administration of President Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010), and covers such areas as social welfare (health, pensions, and poverty), the environment, and citizen participation.

One of the objectives was to promote a more in-depth analysis and debate on public policies related to social welfare, which have a direct impact on the basic needs of all

citizens, such as health, social programs, pensions, and overcoming poverty. All were, and are, key issues for the Bachelet administration, but at that time a special commission had been formed to study the pension fund system. It was called the "Marcel Commission", after the head of the commission, Mr. Mario Marcel. The report of the commission was released one day before the Seminar was held, and one of the members of the commission, Mr. Alejandro Ferreiro, currently Minister of the Economy, was part of the seminar panel that discussed "Public Policy of Pension Funds".

The above reflects the well thought out planning that went into organising the seminar: a) dealing with a topic that is a high priority to the present government and of vital importance to the society at large; b) timing the event to coincide with the official report of the special commission; and c) obtaining the participation of one of the key players of the commission. Furthermore, it illustrates the development we have experienced in providing citizens with timely, high quality public forums, which, in turn, result in gaining public confidence and encouraging citizens to express themselves more actively and with greater commitment.

After each panel discussion, those in attendance could ask questions to the panelists. Due to time constraints and the large number of questions, people were asked to write out their questions, which were presented to the corresponding panelist. 94 questions were received from the citizens, and 18 of the 28 panelists (67%) responded to the questions. Both the questions and the answers were then made available to the general public by entering them in the Library of Congress website.

Seminar: "The Right to Culture: A Fundamental Right?" 11th of August 2006.

Although invitations were sent primarily to people and institutions associated with the arts and culture, a majority of the attendees were common citizens, with 30% from the academic community, 20% independent, and 20 % from cultural organisations.

Among the panellists were the Minister President of the National Council of Culture and the Arts, a member of Congress, and the international expert and director of UNESCO programmes on Cultural Rights, Dr. Edwin Harvey, from Buenos Aires, Argentina.

http://www.educ.ar/educar/servlet/Downloads/S_BD_POLITICASCULTURALES/UNESCO01.PDF

The discussion of this topic was timed to coincide with discussion being carried out in Congress with respect to the institutionality of the new governmental cultural entity.

4. CONFERENCE AND PANEL

Two Conference and Panel events were held in 2006. As the name suggests, they consisted of, first, a conference, led by a national or international expert, followed by a panel discussion, in which a group of panelists provided commentary and critical analysis of the conference topic.

Conference and Panel: "Electoral Systems: The Case of Chile", 8th of August 2006

One of the topics of discussion on the national agenda has been the reform of the binominal electoral system currently in place in Chile. For the purpose of clarifying the debate, the

National Congress invited an international authority on electoral systems, Dr. Dieter Nohlen, Professor of Political Science of the University of Heidelberg, Germany,

http://www.nohlen.uni-hd.de/es/publicaciones.html

to be the main speaker at the conference, present his expert opinion on the matter, and lead the following panel discussion.

The Chilean Library of Congress, as a support institution for legislative work, organized this Conference and Panel, to open a space for debate and reflection on electoral systems in general and Chile in particular. Legislators, representing the full spectrum of political views, and citizens in general, could hear substantive arguments from the knowledgeable academic perspective of Professor Nohlen and ask questions during the panel discussion. This was the only opportunity for the public at large to attend in person and participate.

Conference and Panel: "The International Figure of the Ombudsman, and Perspectives on the Defender of the People in Chile", 5th of October 2006

At the time of this event, the Bill proposing the creation of the position of Ombudsman, or Defender of the people, had once again been presented before Congress for debate. Both the Executive Branch and Legislative Branch, by way of the Committee on Human Rights of the Senate, had requested that action be taken on this matter with the utmost urgency. The government viewed this as the best way to institutionalize human rights, which is a sensitive issue in Chile. In this context the Chilean Chapter of the Ombudsman, a social organization whose aim is to insinuate this issue within the legislative agenda, asked the Library of the National Congress, through its Unit for Citizen Linkage, to organize this Conference and Panel. The conference leader was Carlos Constenla, President of the Association of Defenders of the People of the Republic of Argentina.

http://www.adpra.org.ar/Opinion.htm#3

In the conference, he presented the concept of the Ombudsman from an international perspective, which was followed by the panel discussion, where the role and need for such a figure was contemplated.

The special feature of these Conference and Panel events, was that the sponsoring institutions, in this case, the National Congress and the Chilean Chapter of the Ombudsman, were in charge of inviting and funding the trips of the international experts, which meant the Chilean Library of Congress did not have to spend any of its own financial resources on these events. I mention this to point out the benefits and importance of establishing interinstitutional alliances.

5. REGIONAL FORUMS

Several regional forums were conducted throughout the country with the purpose of developing better networks and relations among the legislators, local officials, the local academic community, and the citizens of the various regions.

The Chilean Library of Congress, reflecting the need to decentralize governmental processes, a concern which had been frequently manifested by many legislators, governmental officials, and citizens, opened its doors to the people from the regions, who lived far from metropolitan areas, and organized these forums, whose aim was to act as a platform to allow local officials and citizens to interact directly with their legislators and exchange opinions on important local issues.

Another objective was to train the people who attended the forums how to use blogs. The idea was to interconnect the citizens of the local communities with their regional officials, so that they could provide input, either collectively or individually, on specific matters of

regional importance. A main trunk line for blogging was created, called Digital Democracy Network, hosted on the website of Biblioredes of the Directorate of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (DIBAM), http://www.biblioredes.cl/BiblioRed/Nosotros+en+Internet/Red+Democracia+Digital/inicio.htm, and with links to the website of the National Access Network to the Justice System, http://www.redjusticiaforja.cl, and the Library of the National Congress, http://www.bcn.cl. Each blogger group had a coordinator, who could be contacted by e-mail in order to activate the network. A total of 33 blogs were created in the three regions where the forums took place. Unfortunately, it wasn't possibility to provide continuous follow-up on this network, so in the future we will need to review the situation and ensure that it is carried out in an effective manner.

Cycle: "I Have a Right to Know"; September, October, and November 2006

During the year 2006, a cycle of nine forums, with the theme, "I Have a Right to Know", were held in three regions de Chile: the 2nd Region of Antofagasta, the 6th Region of Libertador Bernardo O'Higgins, and the 10th Region of Los Lagos. This was a collaborative effort involving the regional governments, the regional universities, and the Regional Coordination of Public Libraries, a component of the Directorate of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (DIBAM), and consisted of conducting three forums in each region, dealing with the following topics: "Access to Public Information, Access to the Justice System, and Citizen Security".

The convocation was extended by way of the media (local radio, regional television channels, and the local press), governmental offices (Regional Government, Division of Social Organizations of the Secretary General Ministry of the Government, etc.), and

regional universities. Regional governmental officials, heads of local universities, members of local social organizations, specifically those associated with citizen security, members of the armed forces involved in law and order, local police officers, and members of police investigation departments were invited to participate in these forums.

The regional universities served as sites for these encounters, a fact that proved to be attractive to the citizens in attendance, who value these educational institutions as places of learning that they aspire to attend, but which are often out of their reach. This added a sense of dignity not only to the forums themselves, but also to the people who attended them.

Another favourable outcome of these forums was the positive reaction of the regional university officials, who appreciated the role of the LNC in coordinating the events and generating links between all the regional universities, and expressed enthusiasm in carrying out more collaborative, interinstitutional activities in the future.

Did we really have an impact? The participants have the last word.

1. Impact on the citizenry

- Citizen empowerment through information and technology, contributing to the formation of free expression of public opinion within a context of political diversity, a fundamental requisite for a democratic state.
- Citizens value these events as free and open spaces, where they can be heard and which will eventually provide solutions to their concerns.

- Relations among the citizens, the politicians, and the experts reflected a respect for the values of freedom, equality, and pluralism, producing positive feedback among the participants.
- Citizens felt closer to and gained confidence in politicians, academics, and the community of experts.
- Citizens in the regions strengthened their regional identity, and appreciated the fact that they could insert themselves into the national debate from the setting of a regional university.
- The blog training in many cases served as digital literacy. For many people who had never used a computer before, this was a qualitative leap that allowed them to have a common intergenerational language; for example, grandparents who will be able to improve communication with their grandchildren through technology.
- These activities reached a wide spectrum of people (local leaders, public employees, directors of organizations, students, et al.) in all thirteen regions of the country and from all socioeconomic levels, via their transmission on local radio stations, sometimes the only means of receiving information.
- The positioning of issues on the national political agenda that are related to the everyday life of people.

2. IMPACT ON THE PANELISTS

- For the panellists these events provided a setting in which they could listen to and be listened to by their peers, in which they could not only teach, but also learn by

being exposed to diverse points of view that opened up new lines of exploration for them.

- The legislators who participated in the events, especially in the regional events, encountered more informal settings that enhanced interaction with their constituents, settings that afforded better accessibility to citizens and were more conducive to working together to find solutions to specific local issues.
- The academic community that participated in the events valued these discussions, providing setting in which the topics were dealt with from a more practical perspective. In turn, they were able to complement the discussion by bringing theoretical approaches to bear on the issues.

3. INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

- In the year 2006, fifty-seven institutional networks were created, which exercised a multiplying effect among the citizenry.
- The institutions that participated in the events generated new interinstitutional relations and offered to make their resources available for future encounters. In one of the regional forums, the creation of an advanced program of study on the Justice System and Local Security was proposed, to be implemented at the university that sponsored the event (Forum of Access to the Justice System, 6th Region, sponsored by University Santo Tomas).
- The Ministry of Justice, through the Nation Network of Justice, recognised the work of the Chilean Library of Congress in organising, conducting, producing, and

disseminating the information and materials related to “Regional Forums on Access to the Justice System”, by honouring it with an award of special distinction.

What did we learn?

- This was an educational experience in which the multidisciplinary, multifocused work of the panelists opened up new horizons to the citizens.
- This represents the democratization of knowledge, not only for the inhabitants of urban centers, but also for the most remote communities of the country.
- Training citizens in technological platforms, such as blogs, will allow them to have increased interconnectivity in the future.
- The profiles of those who attended the events cover a great functional diversity, a wide range of age groups, varying socioeconomic levels, and different educational levels, all of which will help us extend more invitations and reach a wider audience in the future.
- The instruments of evaluation (surveys) were favourably received by the citizens. These surveys gathered valuable information for carrying out future encounters and strengthening networks.
- The dissemination of the events was carried through governmental and non governmental citizen portals, through databases constructed from the information provided by the citizens who participated in the events,through digital portals of participating institutions, and by means of posters distributed by these same institutions.

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Metadatos

DC.creator. Ana María Pino
DC.title. Tengo Derecho a Saber
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DC.description. Citizen's participation is a serious challenge for modern democracies and in this context also for Chile within the process of State's modernisation, that is one of the reasons why citizen's participation has been included as a central priority. Moreover, social involvement implies a fundamental change in education and integral citizen formation.

To close this gap between the every citizen must have access to the primary sources of information, such as those available through Libraries, one of the neutral and reliable pillars of the educational process, and be able to hear multiple, multidisciplinary points of view on topics that affect everyday life, so that, on the basis of that "Listening" and an informed opinion, he/she can participate in dialog and debate with the authorities and, thus, society in general can construct the country in which everyone will wish to live.

Citizen participation involves several interrelated processes, such as: participative decision-making; contributing to the development in which one lives; and receiving the benefits of the social participation system.
In this context, the Library of the National Congress has sought to promote citizen participation and citizen linkage to the Legislative Branch. This process began in 2003, with the First Citizen Consensus Conference. The success of that experience led to further citizen participation projects in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

In 2006, Round Tables, Seminars, Regional Forums and radio programs were implemented, around the following topics: Access to Justice; Citizen Security; Access to Public Information; Public Policy on Social Security (health, poverty, insurance), Environmental Policy; and Citizen Participation, among others.

The objectives of this service included: opening spaces for exchanging point of views, articulating networks and sharing experiences and knowledge, under the light of social involvement, including specifically:

DC. subject. PARTICIPACION CIUDADANA CHILE, PARTICIPACION SOCIAL, PARTICIPACION POLITICA, DEMOCRACIA CHILE, REDES SOCIALES CHILE, DEMOCRACIA PARTICIPATIVA, CIUDADANIA CHILE, ORGANIZACION DE LA COMUNIDAD
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