



SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLICATIONS: CITIZEN OVERSIGHT OF CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES



Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) – a Latin American innovation – have now gained fame around the world for their effectiveness in promoting human development, fighting poverty and reducing inequality.¹ CCTs are social programmes that provide families with direct cash transfers, as well as other support, such as nutritional supplements and educational assistance, in exchange for complying with certain health- and education-promoting behaviours, such as sending children for medical check-ups and attending school regularly. Like most social programmes, though, CCTs are vulnerable to corruption and misuse of funds, such as local public officials or leaders manipulating beneficiary selection or using the transfers to curry political support. In Latin America, oversight initiatives have been developed, through which beneficiaries get engaged to oversee the appropriate delivery of the programme. The following selected publications illustrate and analyse a variety of experiences in which citizen participation is improving oversight of CCT programmes in the Latin American context.

► [Between Individual and Collective Action: Citizen Participation and Public Oversight in Mexico's Oportunidades Programme](#)

This publication offers a balanced assessment of the outcomes in terms of citizen oversight of one Latin American CCT programme, showing its limitations and the challenges faced in designing effective oversight mechanisms. The author points out flaws in the design of mechanisms that were meant to empower beneficiaries to oversee the programme, and their sometimes unintended negative effects. In addition, the author demonstrates the importance of effective prevention, control and punishment of authorities' abuse of power, which requires both capable institutional structures and citizens committed to engaging collectively. The paper closes with lessons learned that might be useful for those working on citizen participation and oversight initiatives, either with CCTs or any social programmes, in other countries.

Full Citation: Hevia de la Jara, F. 2007. Between Individual and Collective Action: Citizen Participation and Public Oversight in Mexico's Oportunidades Programme. *IDS Bulletin* Vol 38, No. 6.

¹To learn more about other issues related to CCTs in the region, read the [ELLA Guide to CCT Programmes: An Overview to the Latin American Experience](#), which includes a list of all of the knowledge materials developed on this theme.



▶ [Control and Accountability in Conditional Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean: Key Topics and Areas for Further Improvement](#)

This World Bank note presents some of the key oversight and accountability topics and trends in CCT programmes in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. The main aim of the publication is to provide CCT practitioners with concrete examples of tools and good practices from a variety of countries in the region, so they can strengthen the accountability systems of their programmes. It highlights key factors to be considered when choosing from different oversight mechanisms, and demonstrates the importance of complementing top-down mechanisms, such as auditing, with bottom-up ones, such as Brazil's Social Control Committees.

Full Citation: Basset, L., Blanco, G. 2011. *Control and Accountability in Conditional Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean: Key Topics and Areas for Further Improvement*. World Bank, Washington, DC.

▶ [Direct or Mediated Relationships? Civic Involvement and Social Accountability in the Bolsa Familia Programme](#)

This short paper summarises in an effective way the measures implemented by the Brazilian *Bolsa Familia* CCT Programme to reduce the risks of political clientelism and political appropriation of benefits. For example, some of the measures the author examines are the Social Accountability Boards, which monitor appropriate implementation of the programme, and steps taken to eliminate intermediaries, since these are known to facilitate patron-client relationships. The concrete examples of how Brazil has effectively improved citizen participation and oversight of its CCT programme will likely be useful for other regions as well.

Full Citation: Hevia de la Jara, F. 2010. *Direct or Mediated Relationships? Civic Involvement and Social Accountability in the Bolsa Familia Programme*. One Pager No. 106. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, Brasilia.

▶ [Padlocks and Counterweights: The Protection of Programmes, Policies and Social Rights in Mexico and Latin America](#)

This book aims to show how both the design and implementation of social programmes affect the relationship between the State, democracy and citizens. The first chapters deal with CCT programmes' vulnerability to being manipulated for political and electoral gain and discuss the need to regulate and improve the accountability of these programmes. The chapter of most interest is the one showing the need to guarantee mechanisms of citizen participation, social oversight and civic education, in particular, as it analyses these mechanisms in Mexican and Brazilian social programmes, including their respective CCTs, *Oportunidades* and *Bolsa Familia*. This last chapter will also be of interest as it deals with eliminating corruption and vote-buying behaviours in social programmes.

Full Citation: Gómez-Alvarez, D. (ed.) 2009. *Candados y Contrapesos: La Protección de los Programas, Políticas y Derechos Sociales en México y América Latina (Padlocks and Counterweights: The Protection of Programmes, Policies and Social Rights in Mexico and Latin America)*. ITESO, Guadalajara.



► [Social Oversight of the Bolsa Familia Programme](#)

This powerpoint presentation, developed by the Brazilian government agency responsible for oversight of its CCT programme, provides a detailed description of the monitoring committees, a mechanism created to strengthen oversight of one of the earliest and largest CCT programmes in the region, Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*. The presentation examines the characteristics of the committees, their responsibilities, as well as the responsibilities of all government levels in promoting and strengthening citizen participation in oversight of the programme. It will likely be of interest to policymakers and civil society organisations seeking to improve citizen participation in CCT oversight in their own countries.

Full Citation: Secretaria Nacional de Renda de Cidadania (National Secretary for Citizen Income). [Social Oversight of the Bolsa Familia Programme](#).

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To learn more about other aspects of Citizen Participation in Latin America, read the [ELLA Guide](#), which has a full list of the knowledge materials on this theme. To learn more about other ELLA development issues, browse other [ELLA Themes](#).

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