



Instituto Desarrollo Adoption of MDGs for Local Development

With the help of *Instituto Desarrollo* (ID) in Paraguay, the city of Carapeguá demonstrated how innovative use of the MDGs can strengthen local development.

SETTING THE SCENE —The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — which range from reducing extreme poverty rates in half to stopping the spread of HIV / AIDS to providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 — form a blueprint agreed to by all countries worldwide as well as the major global institutions working toward development. Although typically applied at a national or organizational level, one Paraguayan city has become the first in the world to use the MDGs as the basis of its own development strategy.

The municipality of Carapeguá, with 40,000 inhabitants, took the MDGs and adapted it to its local needs in an innovative way. This project, known as *Developing Carapeguá*, began in 2003 using a model promoted by Instituto Desarrollo (ID). During its first year of implementation, *Developing Carapeguá* resulted in significant debates among its citizens, the public and private sectors, community representatives, and authorities. It also received support from the local municipality and external donors, as a local office of the United Nations Development Program provided scholarships to train leaders on the design and implementation of human development projects.

Through the methodology of action research in the region, ID found that the MDGs can inform development plans that strengthen social capital and address problems specific to municipalities in areas such as education, infrastructure, public health, and economic development. The project, however, had limitations in terms of systematization and dissemination, and it is here where ID concentrated its efforts in 2009 with funding from the Think Tank Initiative.

WHAT ID DID —ID seeks to make an impact on public policy in the area of social and economic development, and its work covers a wide range of topics, including agricultural economics, education, and governance. With funding received from the Think Tank Initiative in 2009, ID was able to inform new audiences about the *Developing Carapeguá* model, by means of forums, publications, policy briefs, working papers, and media coverage. This created opportunities to share the model as well as to perfect it.

Between 2011 and 2013, the Institute organized several seminars and meetings for the purpose of promoting information exchanges and sharing the model's contributions to sectors such as education and health. ID released several



publications about its overall experience with *Developing Carapeguá*, along with specific examples in education and economic development. ID also worked at strengthening skills development by providing training to community leaders and citizens in project design and implementation.

As evidence of its success, the local development model has been spreading ever since. Other Paraguayan cities including Ñemby and Yaguarón have replicated it. *Developing Carapeguá* has even been shared with other nations and the University of Toulouse, in France, and the Universidad del Sur, in Argentina have incorporated it into the curriculum of their *Postgraduate Course in Territorial Development*.

THE OUTCOME —Today Carapeguá is perceived as an innovative city. The town adopted a ruling (ordinance) declaring the MDGs a priority municipal interest and forming a Development Council to implement relevant projects in health, education, poverty reduction, civic participation, community infrastructure, and environmental protection. The municipality has also allocated a minimum of 15% of its municipal budget to fund these projects by means of an ordinance that sets a precedent both in the country and the world.

The project, applied on a local scale, provided ID with sufficient knowledge and experience to work and design, together with the central government (through the Secretariat of Technical Planning), a *National Territory Development Plan* that was adopted as a model for the country as a whole as well as for regional governments (departments and municipalities).

In addition, since 2013, ID is offering technical assistance for policy and program planning and monitoring project implementation in Paraguay's Central Department, which includes 19 municipalities, to replicate the model under the name of *Developing Central*. An immediate and important milestone in this great effort was the *Citizen Dialogues* held in Paraguay's Central Department in August 2013. This was attended by over 100 people including mayors, municipal councillors, department heads, federal parliamentarians, trade union representatives, civil society organizations, and private companies — all interested in learning more about the proposed model for development in Central. Clearly, this model is spreading far and wide across the country and is encouraging innovative approaches to development.

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