

EVALUATION REPORT – FINAL
WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION GRANTMAKING IN MEXICO

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1. Executive summary

The retrospective evaluation (Section 2)

The **purpose of the retrospective evaluation** of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's grantmaking in Mexico over 23 years was two-fold: 1) to tell a comprehensive and detailed story that describes the evolution of the foundation's strategies, the nature of support to different types of organizations and networks, and the socio-political context of the country, and 2) to assess the extent to which the Hewlett Foundation contributed to the organizational strengthening of grantees and social change in Mexico.

This retrospective evaluation seeks to:

- Document and assess the assumptions of the Hewlett Foundation's evolving strategies that guided its grantmaking in Mexico, especially focused on advancing transparency, citizen participation, and accountability in government.
- Assess progress towards the objectives described in strategy documents.
- Document and assess the types of support (financial and non-financial) that the Hewlett Foundation provided to organizations in Mexico.
- Document challenges and/or success stories from the foundation's support of civil society organizations; synthesize actionable insights for private foundations and civil society organizations that work in Mexico.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen current monitoring and learning practices at the Hewlett Foundation and among select grantee partners working in Mexico.
- Document and assess the Hewlett Foundation's recent efforts to support the diversity, equity, and inclusion goals of grantee partners.
- Identify opportunities to improve the foundation's support of Mexican civil society organizations, including coordination with other funders and grantmaking that is international in scope.
- Identify opportunities to support program staff to stay abreast of contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of grantmaking strategies and the work of grant recipients.

While the methodology for the retrospective included political and economic analyses to explore the influence that the Hewlett Foundation has had, and the link between the foundation's history and the growth of Mexican civil society, the evaluation used an outcome mapping approach to identify, carefully trace and critically understand the contributions made by the foundation to both organizational development and social change outcomes.

Evaluation findings

The Hewlett Foundation in Mexico (Section 3.1)

During the 23 years of the Hewlett Foundation's presence in Mexico there have been three programs: the USLAR Program (1997–2003), the Global Development Program (2004–2010) and the Global Development and Population Program (2011 to date); and two main overarching

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strategies: the Transparency and Accountability Strategy (2007–2014) and the Transparency, Accountability and Participation Strategy (2015 to date).

The transition between programs and strategies is well described in the retrospective. (See separate *Retrospective* report). Both programs and strategies were largely developed at Menlo Park, in response to the foundation’s vision for how it could best “advance ideas and support institutions to promote a better world”. As the strategies inform the foundation’s global work, the strategies and programs do not respond directly to any specific national context.

In the case of Mexico, during the early years of the program, grantmaking responded to emerging opportunities and challenges in the political and civil society environment. **Between 2001 and 2012, the Mexico strategy was therefore shaped by the context, and the work in-country was informed by the strategy.** An important characteristic of Hewlett Foundation funding, however, is that while the strategies frame overall thinking, Program Officers (POs) have significant autonomy in making final decisions about their choice of grantees, the types of grants awarded and the final portfolio composition.

In the early years of the Hewlett Foundation’s grantmaking, the foundation’s physical presence in Mexico was central to its grantmaking in the country as it opened up its ability to support networks, identify key players, understand the issues and identify policy priorities. The foundation initially shared office space with the Ford Foundation, and eventually was located in the same building as the Kellogg Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. The close relationships between the Hewlett Managing Director and the POs and representatives from the other donors meant that they would regularly get together to discuss the context, alignment of strategies and support to grantees they had in common.

The decision to close the Mexico office was made by Hewlett’s leadership. It responded to a desire to align Hewlett’s financial and human resources for Mexico to those for other countries in the global portfolio. However, the effect on Mexico grantees was felt, and while they still consider the support by Hewlett POs unique based on their level of knowledge and engagement, grantees interviewed agreed that the proximity of the country office enabled important achievements, such as the development and nurturing of the transparency and accountability community of practice, which led to many milestones and is still highly visible.

On diversity, equity and inclusion (Section 3.2)

At the start of Hewlett’s work in Mexico, **diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)** considerations did not inform grantmaking. The focus was to identify strong, highly reputed organizations to implement the program of work that aligned with the USLAR strategy. This tended to translate into elite think tanks or academic institutions that did not necessarily have DEI objectives. While gender and diversity were not among the issues on Hewlett’s agenda, other organizations such as the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation were, at the time, much more focused on women’s rights. However, a clear shift in the composition of the Hewlett Mexico portfolio took place when a new PO with a strong feminist background and interest joined the Mexico office in 2013. The new PO started to focus much of her grantmaking on feminist organizations with work

in the transparency, participation and accountability (TPA) sphere, and these organizations were different in focus and structure to the elite think tanks that made up a large part of the portfolio until then. While she did not have a specific strategic vision around DEI, the hypothesis informing her grantmaking was that it was important to ensure new grantees reflected a vision of extending transparency and access to information to all, particularly those whose rights had been most affected by lack of access to public information, which included women. The share of funding going to feminist organizations grew from zero in 2012 to 51.6% in 2017, and after a drop in 2018, it reached 70.43% in 2019.

Leading up to the newly approved TPA strategy in 2015, and stemming from renewed focus on DEI, the Hewlett portfolio had started to focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups by bringing TPA work closer to local communities who would benefit the most from accessing information to hold authorities accountable for basic service delivery.

In Mexico, this greater focus on DEI was also reflected in its push for more diversity within grantee organizations. While it was never a condition, it became part of the conversation that POs engaged grantees in, providing orientation on the relevance of having more diverse staff composition. Hewlett's efforts on DEI in Mexico have clearly grown in strength and depth over the years, positioning its grantees to embed DEI and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) thinking into their programs and strategies to better deliver on the TPA strategy.

On the role of Program Officers (Section 6.3 p. 15)

Hewlett's Program Officers (POs) are given significant autonomy for making decisions on grantmaking practices, selection and renewal processes, portfolio development and exit strategies. POs in Mexico have all had deep knowledge of the Mexican context, either as Mexican nationals or as foreigners (mainly Americans) who had spent a significant amount of time working and living in Mexico. The profiles of the Mexican POs were diverse and rich in professional and personal experiences that shaped their grantmaking. This led to complementary perspectives and approaches to grantmaking, which was often beneficial to the grantees as well as enabling the POs to learn from each other.

While the story of coalition building and communities of practice was a constant refrain throughout the foundation's grantmaking in Mexico, the difference in PO approaches combined with different interpretations of strategic goals and outcomes at different moments in time contributed to a portfolio that had some outliers that did not appear to be aligned with the strategic outcomes. While POs communicated their approach and discussed ways to complement one another, each PO took a unique path to deliver on the strategy.

This has been partly addressed by the introduction of the TPA Strategy. Prior to 2015 the portfolio represented a variety of projects with strategically selected organizations. However, there was often a lack of clarity on the connections between organizations and how their achievements contributed to the implementation of the Hewlett Foundation strategies. Since the introduction of the 2015

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TPA Strategy, strategic alignment has improved, and grantees are all closely aligned with strategic outcomes and the five grantmaking areas.¹

On learning (Section 3.4)

The Hewlett Foundation's work in Mexico has been grounded by an implicit **learning agenda** from the outset, and the values of reflection and learning were embodied by POs from the beginning of the foundation's engagement in Mexico. POs were at the center of the foundation's ability to learn and adapt as they were closely engaged in relationships with grantees and were constantly learning and adjusting to changes in the context.

However, there was a clear difference in how the Mexico Program was able to learn and adapt with and without the Mexico office. Proximity was instrumental to POs' ability to take the pulse of the situation and shape the strategy accordingly. While POs continued to facilitate connections and play the trusted broker role, it was harder after the office closed. POs who transitioned from the Mexico office to Menlo Park found the transition difficult as they took on a global portfolio of projects, increasing the volume of grants under their purview, and leaving less time for them to stay abreast of contextual changes in Mexico.

The Hewlett Foundation's presence on the ground was a significant factor that contributed to the POs' ability to foster and nurture coalition building and the development of communities of practice. The brokering role Hewlett POs played in the **Transparency Breakfasts** was a major contribution to facilitating learning. These regular gatherings with Hewlett Foundation grantees, primarily the directors from grantee organizations working on TPA, provided the space for both elite technocratic organizations, as well as others with a more grounded focus on accountability through participation, to come together to co-design research, multi-stakeholder engagement strategies, and advocacy campaigns. This joint work had the aim of broadening the transparency agenda to expand its use for macro level accountability as well as to strengthen citizens' knowledge of and access to their rights. It was the combination of the foundation's presence in Mexico and the commitment of POs to working "beyond the grant" that made the coalitions such a signature feature of Hewlett's contributions to Mexico. In turn, the coalitions became the catalyst that enabled many social change contributions to be realized. Some examples of these can be seen in the "social change case studies" analyzed for this report.

Given the foundation's track record with the Transparency Breakfasts, in 2018 Hewlett decided to pilot the **learning sub-strategy's emphasis on peer learning and not merely academic**

¹ **TPA Strategy 2015: OUR NEW APPROACH.** Through our Transparency, Participation, and Accountability grantmaking we strive to support organizations that inform and empower citizens to engage with governments to improve public services. **ENABLING ENVIRONMENT.** Create and reinforce norms and standards that enable greater transparency and participation. Ensure information on resources and service quality is available and can be used (and in some cases generated) by citizens

ORGANIZED CITIZENS + RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT. Strengthen citizens' ability to speak and act collectively around service delivery challenges. Build and strengthen channels that provide citizens constructive ways to engage with all levels of government.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME. Transparency, participation, and accountability approaches increase government responsiveness so that public services better meet the needs of citizens.

ULTIMATE OUTCOME. Citizens receive high-quality public services leading to better outcomes.

research through peer-to-peer exchanges of the organizations it supported in Mexico. To seed this, COMETA was hired to facilitate peer-to-peer horizontal learning exchanges on how change happens in Mexico and good organizational effectiveness practice. While the national peer-to-peer workshops have indeed contributed to strengthening the technical knowledge of grantees, they have been less successful at high-level networking. COMETA organized one international workshop on “The link between gender in TPA for civil society” that generated some important lessons for both Mexican and African civil society organizations (CSOs) participating, and created the space for them to engage on knowledge sharing around issues of common interest. However, there has not been any follow up on possible results of this knowledge exchange over time.

On organizational development (Section 3.5)

While the Hewlett Foundation’s strategy in Mexico evolved to include an explicit focus on strengthening the health and organizational sustainability of civil society organizations, **organizational development objectives** have been more implicit throughout its strategies. Some POs have embodied organizational development in their overall grantmaking approach more explicitly while other POs have taken a more subtle, less directive approach to organizational development. The institutional development plans that many organizations developed with Hewlett support have provided a useful roadmap for organizations to prioritize their own organizational improvements and have facilitated discussions between POs and grantees.

In 2004, the foundation introduced the organizational effectiveness (OE) grant modality to provide dedicated funding exclusively targeted at strengthening the organizational effectiveness of grantees. The areas of organizational development most commonly addressed through OE grants have been: strategic planning, leadership transition processes, strengthening governance practices, documenting internal procedures, communications and engagement strategies and monitoring and evaluating program outcomes.

On social change (Section 6.6)

Hewlett’s most notable contribution to the field of transparency and accountability in Mexico was consistently identified as its ability to **foster an ecosystem of strong and professionalized organizations** working on the TPA agenda. The Hewlett Foundation financially supported strategic collaborative work through the Colectivo por la Transparencia (from 2005 to 2009) and later through the Red por la Rendición de Cuentas (2011 to date), providing the resources and the mental space for civil society organizations, academic institutions and autonomous public bodies to generate research, use evidence and engage with authorities on transparency and access to information, and use these mechanisms to promote accountability (see Annex 3: Social change case studies). The foundation’s support to individual grantees within these TPA networks contributed to strengthening the evidence base for advocacy and the transparency infrastructure in the field, with some areas of funding having more successful results than others. However, the approach of this evaluation was not to assess the success of specific grantmaking areas but rather to examine the foundation’s contribution to relevant social change outcomes.

Mexico joined the international **Open Government Partnership** (which receives Hewlett Foundation funding at the global level) in 2011 as one of its eight founding member countries. Eight

organizations joined the initiative (six of which were Hewlett grantees): Artículo 19, Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo (CIDAC), CitiVox; Cultura Ecológica, Fundar Centro de Análisis e Investigación, Gestión Social y Cooperación (GESOC), Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad (IMCO) and Transparencia Mexicana. Together, the initiative pushed for an equal partnership with the government aimed at achieving change in open government practices. Given the current governance context in Mexico, some open government spaces are among the few ways in which organized civil society can still bring citizens' concerns and interests to bear in debates with policymakers.

When the Hewlett Foundation started working in Mexico, transparency in **budget and spending** information was not even a subject of public debate. Today, through transparency and access to information laws, public budget and spending data is publicly available. Budget and spending decisions by authorities at the national and local level can now be scrutinized. This information has formed the basis of previously absent public debate on spending. It is useful to hold policymakers accountable for their decisions (for instance, showcasing how in the midst of the pandemic, there has been an underspend in the health sector in contrast with an overspend in the “Tren Maya”, one of the president’s flagship infrastructure programs) and in some instances this information has enabled the prosecution of high-level corruption cases, where resources in state-level budgets have been siphoned off to governors’ personal wealth. The collaborative work of CSOs, think tanks and academic institutions funded by Hewlett has remained focused, resulting in greater accountability and the reduction of loopholes against corruption. However, some results have been hindered, including by the challenging political context: the National Anticorruption System, spearheaded by the Red por la Rendición de Cuentas, has faced resistance at the national and subnational level and has garnered limited commitment, restricting its full implementation.²

Lo Justo es Que Sepas is an alliance of civil society organizations led by EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres, which during 2019 and 2020 through their research, evidence use and coalition building, was able to successfully advocate for the reform of the 2015 General Transparency Law, to broaden the definition of judicial sentences that are of “public interest” and hence make all sentences public.

These are concrete examples of how Hewlett-funded work on transparency and accountability that began at a macro, highly technical level, was necessary to set up the transparency and access-to-information infrastructure that underpins the evidence-based legal tools that are needed to move the agenda to users.

Hewlett Foundation grants have also financed downstream work, where some of its contributions to social change are perhaps the most tangible for the lives of citizens. Through its support of organizations working directly with grassroots initiatives and citizens, it has brought transparency and access to information closer to the users it was meant to benefit. Such are the cases of Fundar’s **Subsidios al Campo**, Sonora Ciudadana’s **Rebelion de los Enfermos**, Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (ILSB)’s **Lo Público es Nuestro** and **Controla tu Gobierno**, which supports grassroots organizations using access to information rights.

² Monsivais-Carrillo (2019) “Innovación institucional para la rendición de cuentas: el Sistema Nacional Anticorrupción en México”. Íconos. Revista de Ciencias Sociales, núm. 65, 2019. FLACSO 2019.

In addition to the success on TPA, there were also significant social change contributions made in other programs, such as the work led by the Environment Program on **improving access to clean air** and others described in Section 6.6. While the retrospective documents the evolution of all programs, the evaluation focuses on the TPA program.

On the future (Section 7)

As is described in the Forward Context section, the national environment for civil society in Mexico is going through one of its worst moments in history. The current political context is challenging for civil society organizations, particularly those working in the transparency, access to information, accountability and anti-corruption spheres. Civic space has significantly closed down, autonomous public institutions face budgetary cuts, have lost voice in the public discourse and are under constant threat of being co-opted by political interests. Checks and balances in the federal system have been debilitated and freedom of expression is under threat.

Despite this adverse scenario, it is clear that the Mexican civil society underwent a growing and transformative process over 20 years that strengthened its capacities and enabled social change. This strength has enabled civil society to raise its voice to challenge the narrowing of civic space and to push for institutional checks and balances to remain in place.

This transformation would not have been possible without the support of international foundations, like the Hewlett Foundation, as there is virtually no national philanthropy in support of this field. However, the work achieved by civil society with the support of the Hewlett Foundation is at risk of sliding back; institutional mechanisms set up require protection and support to withstand political threats. Continued engagement and financing by the Hewlett Foundation, as well as by other donors, is therefore essential for organized civil society to continue making significant strides in the fight against corruption and to effectively demand accountability from all levels of government.

2. Purpose, scope & audience

This retrospective evaluation seeks to:

- Document and assess the assumptions of the Hewlett Foundation's evolving strategies that guided its grantmaking in Mexico, especially focused on advancing transparency, citizen participation, and accountability in government.
- Assess progress towards the objectives described in strategy documents.
- Document and assess the types of support (financial and non-financial) that the Hewlett Foundation provided to organizations in Mexico.
- Document challenges and/or success stories from the foundation's support of civil society organizations; synthesize actionable insights for private foundations and civil society organizations that work in Mexico.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen current monitoring and learning practices at the Hewlett Foundation and among select grantee partners working in Mexico.

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- Document and assess the Hewlett Foundation's recent efforts to support the diversity, equity, and inclusion goals of grantee partners.
- Identify opportunities to improve its support of Mexican civil society organizations, including coordination with other funders and grantmaking that is international in scope.
- Identify opportunities to support program staff to stay abreast of contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of grantmaking strategies and the work of grant recipients.

The findings and learning generated from the retrospective evaluation in Mexico will feed into the concurrent evaluation of the global Transparency, Participation and Accountability (TPA) strategy and will inform the TPA strategy refresh process.

The **scope** of the retrospective evaluation is two-fold:

1. **Retrospective:** Document the story of the Hewlett Foundation's journey over 23 years supporting a broad range of initiatives in Mexico in order to understand the evolution of the foundation's strategies, the nature of support to different types of organizations and networks, and the socio-political context of the country.
2. **Evaluation:** Assess the foundation's progress towards achieving and sustaining outcomes and effectiveness of its grantmaking in Mexico. This will include assessment of key hypotheses and analysis of the effectiveness of the foundation's general operating support (GOS), project support, and organizational effectiveness (OE) support, as well as "beyond the grant dollar" activities, such as convening grantees for joint learning and sharing.

As for the **audiences**, the evaluation considers multiple stakeholders. Firstly, the evaluation aims to inform internal Hewlett Foundation strategic and grantmaking decisions, and is therefore partly aimed at the Global Development & Population (GDP) program director, and the GDP program officers (POs). The second internal stakeholder group consists of POs from the Effective Philanthropy Group, who may be particularly interested in the assessment of organizational development outcomes. The third audience is the cohort of Hewlett Foundation grantees in Mexico as well as other Mexican CSOs for whom the social change outcomes will be of particular interest. The fourth audience are other funders working in Mexico who may be interested to learn from the Hewlett Foundation evaluation, in order to reflect upon and improve their own strategies and grantmaking. The fifth audience are CSOs in other countries interested in learning about Hewlett Foundation support to Mexican grantees and specifically what lessons could be relevant for their contexts. The final audience are the OTT Consulting team and the Dalberg team undertaking the global TPA evaluation and strategy refresh.

3. Key findings

3.1 Hewlett Foundation strategy and grantmaking

Links between Hewlett strategies and the Mexican context

During the 23 years of the Hewlett Foundation's presence in Mexico, there have been three programs: the USLAR Program (1997–2003), the Global Development Program (2004–2010) and the Global Development and Population Program (2011 to date); and two main strategies: the Transparency and Accountability Strategy (2007–2014) and the Transparency, Accountability and Participation Strategy (2015 to date). The transition between programs and strategies is well described in the retrospective (Annex 5). Both programs and strategies were largely developed at Menlo Park, in response to the foundation's vision of how it can best “advance ideas and support institutions to promote a better world”. As they inform the foundation's global work, they do not respond directly to any specific national context.

Nevertheless, as part of the learning and cross-fertilization that takes place within the specific programmatic and strategic areas, there is scope for experiences and work carried out at the country level to inform the strategy. In the case of Mexico, during the early years of the program, grantmaking responded to emerging opportunities and challenges in the political and civil society environment. The initial work on transparency and accountability emerged from a policy window after the approval of the Federal Transparency and Access to Information Law (2004) and the creation of the Federal Institute for Access to Information (IFAI, 2005). The context was ripe with organizations interested to work in this field, and the Hewlett Foundation had its feet on the ground with the only country office the foundation has ever had. This enabled a deep engagement with the context and organizations which led to many positive experiences built on the basis of collaboration fostered through Hewlett's presence (as explored in the section on social change outcomes below). This experience in Mexico contributed to informing the transparency and accountability sub-strategy in the Global Development Program, which in turn helped shape work in other countries through an informal exchange of good practices. For instance, Controla Tu Gobierno's work with the supreme auditing institution has served as an example for African accountability organizations that have not yet incorporated government audits into their work. Similarly, issues of government advertising (*publicidad oficial*) and Fundar's campaign to address this have provided insights for Baraza Media Lab in Kenya and Media Foundation for West Africa. Both Kenya and Ghana are facing increasing editorial intervention by the government.

Similarly, as work by Mexican CSOs such as Fundar shifted to working more closely with citizens engaging their participation in the use of access-to-information tools to hold public officials to account, their achievements informed the new strategy, of which the “participation” dimension was critical for the success and sustainability of the TPA agenda.

The country strategy was therefore shaped by the context and the work in-country was informed by the global strategy. An important characteristic of Hewlett funding, however, is that strategies frame thinking but POs have significant autonomy in making final decisions about grantees, types

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of grants awarded and portfolio composition. This means that, in practice, it is Hewlett POs' ability to understand the reality of the country and their capacity to fund grantees that are able to meet the country's demands that ultimately shapes the success of the portfolio. In Mexico, POs have had deep knowledge of the country and a strong ability to respond to its context, and have chosen a portfolio of grantees that, for the most part, have risen to the challenges presented during the 23 years of Hewlett presence in Mexico. The analysis presented in the sections below explores this.

Mexico office

The Mexico office was set up in 2001 and closed in 2012. It had an informal, country-specific strategy that responded to the issues identified as priority resulting from engagement with partners.

Hewlett's presence in Mexico was central to its grantmaking in the country as it opened up its ability to support networks, identify key players, understand the issues and identify policy windows. The close engagement of the Mexico office director and the POs were highly appreciated by grantees, who valued and trusted their support. However, the reality was that as part of a global foundation, the Mexico strategy and associated budget was an outlier in the global portfolio in both structure and budget, with Mexico having received the highest amount of grants for a national portfolio. At the time of the decision to close the office, Mexico accounted for 5% of the GDP annual budget, totaling US\$5 million of the annual GDP budget of US\$100 million.

The decision to close the Mexico office was made by Hewlett's leadership in response to this imbalance, deciding to align Hewlett's financial and human resources for Mexico with those for other countries in the global portfolio. However, the effect on Mexico grantees was felt, and while they still consider the support by Hewlett POs unique based on their level of knowledge and engagement, grantees interviewed agreed that the proximity of the country office enabled important achievements, such as the development and nurturing of the transparency and accountability community of practice, which led to many milestones and is still highly visible.

Programmatic changes by grantees in response to Hewlett strategic shifts

During the first ten years of the Mexico office the number and types of grantees did not seem to form a critical mass of organizations working in alignment to a shared strategic goal. This period of diversity in grantees was affected by the transition from the USLAR Program to the Global Development Program, resulting in some grantees contributing to USLAR objectives alongside other grantees aligning with the Global Development Program objectives. During the transition to the Global Development Program, POs had to assess whether existing grantees could contribute towards the transparency, access to information and accountability work and, where they could not, grants had to be sunsetted. Over time, the portfolio narrowed with more focused support to grantees that were part of the Hewlett-fostered community of practice delivering important achievements on the transparency and accountability front.

After 2015, with Hewlett's move towards participation as a key dimension of TPA, grantees were encouraged to foster citizen participation in ways in that aligned with their own agenda. Many grantees were either already actively engaged at the grassroots level fostering participation or were

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able to make this shift to align with the TPA strategy. Feminist organizations in particular developed strong projects for which participation was central, such as EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres and Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (ILSB) as well as others working more directly with citizens such as Controla Tu Gobierno and Artículo 19.

Four sub-strategies have resulted from the global TPA strategy's broader thinking: 1) Fiscal transparency, 2) Governance channels, 3) Service delivery monitoring, and 4) Learning. These four sub-strategies have been developed by Hewlett Foundation POs in consultation with current grantees around the world. Three sub-strategies launched in 2016 and the learning sub-strategy launched in 2018. The only new grantee to enter the portfolio after the launch of the sub-strategies was Controla Tu Gobierno (2016), which explicitly aligned with the service delivery monitoring sub-strategy. While no additional grantees have entered the Mexico portfolio since then, it is possible to map some of the newer grants and even the longstanding grants for Mexico within the sub-strategy priorities, which align well with the work Hewlett prioritizes as part of the TPA strategy.

3.2 Diversity, equity and inclusion

At the start of Hewlett's work in Mexico, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) were not concerns informing grantmaking. The focus of Hewlett was to identify strong, highly reputed organizations to implement the program of work that aligned with the USLAR strategy. This tended to translate into elite think tanks or academic institutions which at that time did not have DEI objectives (although this has changed over time with, for example, think tanks such as México Evalúa now having a gender lens in much of its work). While gender and diversity were not among the issues on Hewlett's agenda, other foundations, such as the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, were much more focused on women's rights. When Hewlett's work on transparency and accountability began taking shape in 2004 to 2005 the focus remained on identifying grantees that had the expertise to deliver on what was seen as a technical field, so most grantees working initially on TPA were elite, highly technical research organizations based in Mexico City. Over its 23 years in Mexico, the foundation awarded most of the funds (70.46%) to organizations based in Mexico City, followed by the states of Baja California (10.43%), Chihuahua (4.59%), and Nuevo León (3.72%). The other ten states received only 10% of the total amounts awarded by the foundation in Mexico. Among grantees on the environment program, there was more diversity in terms of smaller organizations as more were based outside Mexico City. Within the work undertaken by grantees between 2005 and 2010, Fundar and Proyecto Comunidades implemented by IFAI did make explicit efforts to engage with grassroots organizations, trying to move transparency and access-to-information tools closer to citizens in more vulnerable settings.

A clear shift in the composition of the Mexico portfolio took place when a new PO with a strong feminist background and interest joined the Mexico office in 2013. While she did not have a specific strategic vision around DEI, the hypothesis informing her grantmaking was that it was important to ensure new grantees reflected a vision of extending transparency and access to information to all, particularly those whose rights had been most affected by lack of access to public information, which included women. The share of funding going to feminist organizations grew from zero in 2012 to 51.6% in 2017 and, after a drop in 2018, it reached 70.43% in 2019.

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In 2013 EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres, a feminist organization that wanted to use transparency and accountability tools to improve women's access to justice, became a new grantee. In 2014 the Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida (GIRE) and, in 2015, the Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (ILSB) were also given Hewlett grants. Their focus was on transparency and access to information to strengthen access to sexual and reproductive rights. Through Hewlett's support these feminist organizations were able to tap into a network that was new to them, since their natural network was among feminist organizations. The Hewlett-fostered community of practice allowed them a space to reach out to other TPA grantees and share the research and advocacy work they had done on transparency and accountability from a feminist perspective, as well as learning from the work of other organizations more squarely focused on the TPA agenda. This engagement was important as, until that moment, the more technocratic members of the community of practice did not understand the potential that feminist approaches could have to achieve their objectives. They have since then formed strategic alliances with feminist organizations to pursue changes in legislation and outreach to citizens with more innovative approaches than those they had typically used. The most recent example of this is the successful work to amend the Transparency Law to make all judiciary sentences public, an initiative that started with EQUIS' work to showcase the gender bias and inequality in sentencing and was then taken on by other organizations which understood this as a centerpiece of broader judicial accountability.

This successful initiative was the result of a well-developed evidence-based advocacy strategy led by EQUIS and implemented through a collective effort of organizations that included other Hewlett grantees- such as Mexico Evalúa- which were part of the TPA community of practice. The evidence back bone of the initiative was the background research on barriers to the justice system for women and other vulnerable groups conducted by EQUIS for close to four years prior to the initiative with the support of Hewlett grants. In 2019 EQUIS, along with other organizations, published a report analyzing 100 judicial sentences called "No es Justicia" (It's Not Justice) showcasing biases in judicial sentences. EQUIS and México Evalúapresented and discussed this evidence with legislators, as well as other partners who could work directly with legislators to back the reform in both chambers. The communications strategy that supported the push for the amendment to the law, financed in part through Hewlett's project support, was also successful under the hashtag #LoJustoesQueSepas. The diversity of the coalition pushing for this legislative change was a source of strength, since each organization had different contacts, constituents, and social media followers, which in turn triggered a much wider reach for the campaign and its messages. The law initiative, backed by legislators who took ownership of it, moved quickly through both legislative chambers, and was approved in August 2020.

From 2017 DEI featured directly in the global TPA strategy. It was included as a sub-strategy, reflecting the success of the integration of feminist organizations in Mexico's transparency, accountability and participation agenda.

The Hewlett Foundation began taking an institution-wide look at matters related to DEI around 2015, starting with its own operations and culture. Following a year-long series of small-group

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conversations aimed at building trust and awareness, it took a number of actions, including the establishment of a cross-functional taskforce to make recommendations about policies and practices that could lead to a more inclusive workplace. DEI in fact became one of the foundation's guiding principles. The foundation stated explicitly why these values are important both internally, in its hiring process and organizational culture, and externally, in its grantmaking and related practices.

Leading up to the launch of the new TPA strategy, the foundation had already strengthened its focus on citizen participation and the inclusion of vulnerable groups by bringing TPA work closer to local communities who would benefit the most from accessing information to hold authorities accountable for basic service delivery. EQUIS and PODER received their first grants in 2013, ILSB joined the portfolio in 2015 and the portfolio focus was further bolstered with the addition of Controla tu Gobierno in 2016. Derived from this new attention to participation, Hewlett grantees felt a nudge by the foundation to find ways of working more closely with grassroots organizations. While some of them struggled to refocus as they did not see grassroots-level work as a natural dimension of their more macro-level technical expertise, others embraced this opportunity. This was the case, for example, of Artículo 19 which began a project working directly with indigenous women in marginalized states.

In Mexico, this greater focus on DEI was also reflected in its push for more diversity within grantee organizations and, while it was never a condition, it became part of the conversation that POs engaged grantees to provide orientation on the relevance of having more diverse staff composition. Hewlett grantee organizations today are more diverse than when they started to work with Hewlett. This has also been reflected in some cases in an increased diversity within board composition, which used to largely consist of older white males and, with time, has become more inclusive of women and persons from different socio-economic backgrounds. This process has coincided with a time of a growing push for diversity and inclusion within Mexican society, so it is difficult to establish a direct cause–effect relationship with Hewlett insights. However, interviewees suggested that Hewlett POs triggered internal reflections about the value of staff reflecting the diversity that exists in Mexico, adding depth and more grounded perspectives to their work.

In 2018, the foundation set aside US\$2 million for the launch of a grantmaking fund specifically focused on organizational effectiveness related to DEI, with some of those grants supporting work in Mexico. The purpose of those operating effectiveness (OE) grants was for the foundation to signal its support to work in this area and to generate a space for organizations to focus on DEI concerns. For instance, in 2019, Fundar and seven other human rights organizations began a collective process of critical reflection and participatory action research, which resulted in a model protocol that is recognized as good practice being adopted by other organizations in the sector. The grant was used for Fundar staff to collectively develop a prevention protocol and plan for action in cases of discrimination and gender violence as well as targeted and untargeted sexual harassment incidents. Also in 2019, the ILSB received a DEI OE grant to support the diversification of their board. As a feminist organization with a mandate to work on diversity and inclusion, it felt the need to ensure the board composition reflected its mission.

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The Hewlett Foundation's commitment to further understanding of gender and social inclusion in Mexico was reflected in the choice of the theme for the first international pilot Peer-to-Peer Learning Exchange in Mexico City in 2018: sharing experiences, methodologies, tactics and learnings on how organizations were working with and through the link between gender and TPA processes and outcomes. Lessons derived from this peer-to-peer learning exercise helped organizations reflect on ways of maximizing this link, and were shared with other members in the community of practice whose work straddles the TPA and gender agendas.

Overall, Hewlett's efforts on DEI in Mexico have clearly grown in strength and depth over the years, positioning its grantees to embed DEI and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) thinking into their programs and approaches to better deliver the TPA strategy. These two areas of work best illustrate how the TPA-related work can have direct social impact on citizen's lives, beyond macro and legislative level changes, by providing citizens with concrete tools and information about their rights in specific areas such as access to sexual and reproductive health for indigenous women and adolescents (through the work of ILSB or GIRE, for example), or about land and water rights for vulnerable citizens in rural areas (through the work of Controla tu Gobierno and Fundar, for example), and enabling them to hold authorities accountable and have their rights fulfilled.

3.3 Role of program officers

As has been explored in the section on grantmaking practices at the Hewlett Foundation, program officers are given significant autonomy for making decisions on grantmaking practices, selection and renewal processes, portfolio development and exit strategies. There is limited grantmaking or good practice guidance for POs, so decisions are often discretionary on the part of the PO as long as a strong rationale is presented and decisions align with foundation values and strategy. One PO shared that the foundation provided limited guidance for new POs, which gave them considerable angst as they were new to grantmaking and working for foundations. "When I joined in 2012 there was really no training on good grantmaking. The former PO had left a transition binder with profiles of all grantees itemizing the challenges, strengths, weaknesses etc. This became my reference document for the first few years and I was grateful for the PO's thorough hand-over as this was not a common practice required by all POs at the end of their tenure." A potential benefit of this autonomy is that POs provide a tailored approach built on their strengths and experiences that are typically complementary to approaches of other POs. The potential down-side is that this autonomy can result in inconsistencies across the portfolio, lack of transparency and inconsistent messaging for grantees.

Program officer profiles

POs in Mexico have all had deep knowledge of the Mexico context, either as Mexican nationals or as foreigners (mainly Americans) who had spent a significant amount of time working and living in Mexico. Beyond meeting criteria in standardized job descriptions, the profiles of the Mexican POs were diverse and rich in professional and personal experiences that shaped their grantmaking. There were a few POs whose career paths had provided them with a diversity of opportunities as grantmakers from US philanthropies. They brought extensive experience with strategic portfolio development, strategic-focused philanthropy practices, and a profound understanding of philanthropy culture and values. Other POs had worked in the Mexican public sector, led CSO

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organizations, or had formerly been Hewlett Foundation grantees working on TPA issues in Mexico. Regardless of their background, their lived experience shaped their PO role and informed their approach to being an effective grantmaker.

One PO who had led a CSO in Mexico, and understood the challenges of building a healthy organization, was particularly aware of the value of organizational strengthening efforts and this became a central focus of their grantmaking practices. Another PO had extensive experience working to empower citizens to use access to information and right to information to hold governments accountable for improved service delivery. This PO sought to extend the reach of Hewlett Foundation grants to citizen groups and local grassroots organizations. Throughout the foundation's history in Mexico, there were usually two POs managing the portfolio; typically, one PO was a Mexican national and the other was an American PO with extensive knowledge of US philanthropy. This led to complementary perspectives and approaches to grantmaking, which was often a benefit to the grantees as well as allowing the POs to learn from each other.

Portfolio alignment with strategy

Since the nature of TPA work is unpredictable (affected by a range of political, socio-economic factors), a certain level of portfolio diversity is useful as one cannot predict what will work and what will not. As such it may be unrealistic to talk about portfolio coherence and strategic alignment for every grant all the time. The foundation relied on the close-to-the-ground insights of their POs, which was the best possible approach to working in a fundamentally complex environment and in favor of a fundamentally complex goal. Although there could be some guiding principles or storylines to pursue in the long run, short-term incoherence in the portfolio was a sound strategy.

On the other hand, the difference in PO approaches contributed to a portfolio that at times lacked a coherent story, since each PO's decisions were informed by the combination of their professional knowledge, skills, experience and personal values rather than being shaped by a set of guiding principles. While POs communicated their approach and discussed ways to complement one another, each officer took a unique path to deliver on the strategy, and used grantmaking modalities inconsistently. For example, one PO did not advocate or promote the use of general operating support for feminist organizations who were using TPA tools to promote improved access to justice. Because they were not systematically using TPA as a mechanism across their organization, the PO did not think it squarely aligned with the TPA strategy. However, another PO consistently made the case for general operating support (GOS) grants, often channeled to Northern organizations with national presence, so long as there was a defensible connection between the grantee organization's work and the Hewlett Foundation's strategy.

Prior to 2015, the portfolio represented a variety of projects with strategically selected organizations; however, there was often a lack of clarity on the connections between organizations and how their achievements contributed to the implementation of the Hewlett Foundation strategies. Since the introduction of the 2015 TPA Strategy, strategic alignment has improved and

grantees are all closely aligned with strategic outcomes.³ Some are working to make TPA tools usable for citizens and often linked to service delivery, while feminist organizations are using TPA tools in pursuit of their objectives.

While earlier strategies provided an overarching roadmap for the types of organizations and the types of projects that the foundation sought to support, the portfolio is now better aligned with the current strategy and there are few outliers. Despite this evolution in strategic alignment, there remains a dearth of practical guidance or good practice to help POs with grantmaking decisions. Since 2015, it is evident that POs have had a strategic vision for where they want to take the TPA portfolio in Mexico, such as the efforts to shift grantmaking to target organizations that could strengthen the TPA ecosystem in Mexico.

Despite closer strategic alignment in recent years, one PO confirmed that the foundation is not clear on its approach to exiting long-term relationships, and in the absence of guidance to inform exit or sunseting decisions, POs are left to decide on appropriate rationale and timing. As a result, there are several examples of grants being transitioned from GOS to project support where grantee objectives are no longer aligned with foundation strategies. For example, PODER had previously been awarded GOS grants for their work on citizen-led corporate accountability including the scrutiny of illicit networks, human rights, abuses by corporations and state capture. However, in 2017, PODER's strategy was not deemed to be closely aligned with the refreshed TPA strategy, so POs shifted to project support for work on the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. Despite identifying cases where grantees' work is no longer strategically aligned with the foundation, these organizations continue to receive support from the foundation in other forms, which suggests that the foundation may need to give more clarity on its exit strategy to empower POs to make the difficult decisions on exiting/sunseting grants.

Although the Mexico portfolio may have lacked coherence throughout its history, the POs' autonomy allowed them to respond to emerging opportunities in a complex environment and ensured they had the freedom to test the water when required. In this spirit, portfolio incoherence in the short-term was strategically sound; however, more efforts could have been made to assess portfolio coherence ex post. For example, more frequent moments when POs come together with management to discuss and decide which storylines/plots/approaches/individual interventions should continue, which should be given "a bit more time to prove themselves", and which should be closed, would be beneficial. Through this process, the foundation POs could co-create the narrative that demonstrates how/when individual grants add up to a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

³ **TPA Strategy 2015: OUR NEW APPROACH.** Through our Transparency, Participation, and Accountability grantmaking we strive to support organizations that inform and empower citizens to engage with governments to improve public services.
ENABLING ENVIRONMENT Create and reinforce norms and standards that enable greater transparency and participation. Ensure information on resources and service quality is available and can be used (and in some cases generated) by citizens.
ORGANIZED CITIZENS + RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT Strengthen citizens' ability to speak and act collectively around service delivery challenges. Build and strengthen channels that provide citizens constructive ways to engage with all levels of government.
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME Transparency, participation, and accountability approaches increase government responsiveness so that public services better meet the needs of citizens.
ULTIMATE OUTCOME Citizens receive high-quality public services leading to better outcomes.

Evolution of adaptive learning approach

Because of this autonomy and independence, POs were on the frontline demonstrating the foundation's ability to learn and adapt to an evolving context. For example, POs were closely engaged in relationships with grantees, and insights from grantees as well as POs' own observations (especially during the in-country period) enabled POs to push for changes and adjustments to individual projects, and more importantly to broader agendas. One PO broadened the portfolio to include more feminist organizations who could pursue their objectives on sexual and reproductive health and rights or gender-based violence by adopting the TPA tools as mechanisms to hold government accountable and advocate for these rights. Another PO made significant efforts to expand the portfolio to be more inclusive of smaller, grassroots organizations, albeit with mixed results due to structural limitations in the foundation's grantmaking toolkit. POs who set the tone for the program's roll out in Mexico had the flexibility and independence to adapt, and POs who joined later have also been able to take advantage of different opportunities because of the autonomy and discretionary decision-making structure. It is evident from POs that so long as they presented strong rationale for decisions, program directors typically rubber-stamped PO recommendations. The eight-year PO terms combined with the individualized PO approach means that some learning is inevitably lost when POs leave the foundation. More formalized guidance to encourage the outgoing PO to develop a hand-over document for the incoming PO to help smooth the transition would go a long way to reducing the amount of PO knowledge that exits the foundation.

There was a clear difference, however, in how the Mexico program was able to learn and adapt with and without the Mexico office. Proximity was instrumental to POs' ability to take the pulse of the situation and shape the strategy accordingly. The Hewlett Foundation's presence on the ground was a significant factor that contributed to the POs' ability to foster and nurture coalition building and the development of communities of practice. POs were actively engaged in listening to grantees, learning about the context, facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges and brokering the iterative process of movement building. The approach was largely informed by the style of individual POs who saw value in the connections and spaces between individual organizations' contributions. It was the combination of the foundation's presence in Mexico alongside the commitment and style of POs to working "beyond the grant" that made the coalitions such a signature feature of Hewlett's contributions to Mexico.

The first Hewlett Foundation country director who set up the Mexico office shared the benefits of working more in partnership with grantees and co-developing ideas, projects and influence strategies. The convening and brokering of coalitions was a natural role when the foundation had POs on the ground, as they were able to take advantage of their proximity to strengthen CSO networks, foster communities of practice and remain on top of the agenda in the field. From a broader scan of the foundation's programming, it is evident that the foundation's approach to coalition building is not unique to Mexico. It has been used to connect grantees working on other issues across regions and countries such as the Ouagadougou Partnership that connects grantees working on global health issues across nine west African countries.⁴ While POs made efforts to

⁴ <https://hewlett.org/three-secrets-behind-the-ouagadougou-partnerships-magic/>.

maintain their role in coalition building, to facilitate connections and to play a trusted broker role after the office closed, the level of engagement gradually diminished over time as PO responsibilities were spread across global portfolios. POs that moved from the Mexico office to Menlo Park found the transition difficult as they took on a global portfolio of projects, increasing the volume of grants under their purview, and leaving less time to stay abreast of contextual changes in Mexico. The years spent as dedicated Mexico POs had enabled them to develop a deep understanding and knowledge of the issues in Mexico, which was difficult to maintain with their added responsibilities. In fact, this was an explicit strategy for cross-fertilization of lessons and ideas within the foundation, and POs were assigned to Mexico and other countries/projects. The POs' perception of the relationships shifted from one of mutual and shared ideas, opportunities and challenges, to grantees providing POs with intelligence and updates on the context. Despite the changes to the relationship between POs and grantees, POs have been able to remain proactive and engage closely with organizations to provide advice, connections, and so on. This has likely been feasible because the POs worked closely with many of these organizations during their time working in Mexico; however, for future POs who have global responsibilities, it will be challenging to replicate these types of grantee-donor relationships.

Grantee perceptions of POs

Mostly consistent with PO perspectives, key informants from grantee organizations described their relationship with Hewlett Foundation POs as open, trusting relationships, that were based on mutual respect and on co-creating ideas and projects together. Most informants agreed that communication was largely transparent, and they felt comfortable sharing both successes and challenges with POs. Most grantees appreciated POs' knowledge of and experiences from Mexico, but also experiences from the US and internationally. They expressed genuine appreciation for the thoughtfulness of ideas, often cross-fertilizing ideas and connecting grantees to others working on complementary issues. These findings are consistent with longitudinal data from a Grantee Perception Survey (GPR) administered by the Center for Effective Philanthropy every three years (2006–2018) that shows a consistently strong rating on the quality of interactions with POs correlates with the approachability, responsiveness, and openness of POs. There was only one key informant who expressed a difficult relationship with a PO that lacked trust and respect, and this informant felt that power asymmetries played a role in this counterproductive dynamic. This coincided with Grantee Perception Survey data from the same period (2006 and 2009) when grantees flagged concerns regarding a top-down approach, a need for greater humility, and a desire for deeper contact with Hewlett staff. This data did not surface in future GPR surveys. Despite this feedback, overall, grantees have expressed a positive regard for Hewlett Foundation POs, often saying that they are quite unique among donor POs given their engagement, legitimate interest in strengthening organizations and helping them succeed, as well as for the knowledge, expertise and insights they bring to the table.

With respect to the relationship between POs and grantees after the office in Mexico closed, grantees perceived that their relationship with the foundation became more arms-length as POs had diminished capacity to identify timely and relevant coalition building approaches and/or advocacy strategies, and POs were less adept at helping to identify emerging policy priorities. It also meant that the connections through Transparency Breakfasts and face to face conversations

were significantly diminished. The closing of the Mexico office made POs' work with Mexico more challenging, with less dedicated time for Mexico grantees and limited time to engage in the context. While POs have tried to remain close to and on top of the agenda, and seek to provide insights and advice to grantees that draw on their global knowledge and experience, enhanced by Mexico-specific knowledge, this mix of skills and knowledge will be difficult to replicate with future POs that have responsibilities for grantmaking at a regional or global level. These findings have been triangulated with data from the GPR survey from 2015 and 2018 that convey grantees' appreciation for interactions with program officers, particularly the clarity they provide about Hewlett's goals and their openness to grantees' ideas and input. This came after less favorable GPR survey data from 2013, which was conducted after the announcement of the office closure, when survey data confirms a sense of uncertainty over the closing of the Mexico office and fear over loss of local PO knowledge.

3.4 Learning agenda

The Hewlett Foundation work in Mexico has been grounded by an implicit learning agenda from the outset, and the values of reflection and learning were embodied by POs from the beginning of the foundation's engagement in Mexico. POs were at the center of the foundation's ability to learn and adapt as they were closely engaged in relationships with grantees and were constantly learning and adjusting to changes in the context. Their own observations during the in-country period and insights from grantees enabled them to push for changes and adjustments.

Communities of practice

The style of the early POs enabled the active facilitation of learning about the emerging field of transparency and accountability through collective sharing and exchange of ideas and strategies. A major contribution to facilitating learning was in the brokering role⁵ Hewlett POs played in the Transparency Breakfasts. These regular gatherings with Hewlett Foundation grantees, primarily the directors of these organizations, provided the space for both like-minded as well as organizations from different ends of the spectrum to come together to share information about the context, share experiences, and eventually co-design research, multi-stakeholder engagement strategies and advocacy campaigns. At the outset, these gatherings were an efficient way for Hewlett POs to learn about the context and have a chance to interact with grantees, without exclusively having bilateral meetings with grantees, while also enabling CSOs and think tanks in a relatively new field to learn from each other.

During the Transparency Breakfasts, there was an explicit effort by Hewlett POs to bring in experts or to ask grantees to present on key policy issues to foster joint learning. While some informants felt the Transparency Breakfast agendas were overly structured and became a space for self-promotion and competition between grantees, most informants agreed that the most valuable learning occurred informally through exchanges between grantees who saw the space as providing them with the connection, network and ability to build trust with organizations working towards complementary objectives.

⁵ The brokering role was a deliberate, hands-on approach to connect Mexican CSOs that fostered trust and contributed to the building of social change coalitions. The brokering role continued after the Mexico office closed, however its intensity and engagement was less attuned to context and therefore less influential.

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These spaces evolved into communities of practice where directors from different organizations leveraged the relationships developed at the Transparency Breakfasts to pursue particular influence agendas. The communities of practice and coalition building efforts became a signature feature of the Hewlett Foundation in Mexico and led to several important outcomes (see social change case studies). Through Hewlett's support, EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres was able to tap into a network that was new to it since its natural network was among feminist organizations. The Transparency Breakfasts provided a space for EQUIS to reach out to other TPA grantees and share the research and advocacy work they had carried out on transparency and accountability from a feminist perspective, as well as learning from the work of other organizations more squarely focused on the TPA agenda.

One notable result of the networking that took place at the Transparency Breakfasts was the creation of the Lo Justo es que Sepas coalition. This coalition sought to bring down barriers in access to justice for the most vulnerable populations, and with the facilitating power of the Hewlett network enabled advocates to share their research and best practices on transparency legislation to inform amendments to the 2015 General Transparency Law, which sought to broaden the definition of judicial sentences that are of "public interest" and hence make sentences public. This engagement was important as, until then, the community of practice did not understand the potential that feminist approaches could have to achieve their objectives.

After the closure of the Mexico office and the reallocation of PO time, now shared between the Mexico portfolio and global TPA portfolio, there were fewer practical opportunities for convening and facilitating peer learning through the breakfasts, which did continue but more sporadically. Once the office closed, peer learning was facilitated by Colectivo Meta (COMETA), an international consulting firm based in Mexico City that provides services to strengthen the capacities and strategic processes of its clients.

Mexico experience informed global strategies

The program learning took place largely through the reflection of POs on effective approaches to contribute to strengthening grantees to be more prepared and resilient to changes in context, but also through reflection on key successes and challenges and on how to use them to inform future programming. Hewlett POs acted as conveners, brokers, and facilitators in coalition building, and, likely because of the foundation's presence in Mexico, the programming in Mexico was used as a lab to test and pilot different approaches that informed the foundation's global strategies. For example, the participation agenda was tested in Mexico with POs making explicit efforts to target grants to subnational, local, grassroots organizations both in the Transparency & Accountability and in the Environment programs' portfolios.

The unique grant to Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información (IFAI, now INAI) for Proyecto Comunidades was intended to raise awareness on the need for access-to-information to reach citizens and communities and to build the capacity of people/users in order for the law to have impact on citizen lives. This project, developed by one of IFAI's commissioners (Juan Pablo Guerrero) would not likely have been pursued by IFAI with its own resources.

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Fundar played an important role in Proyecto Comunidades. In 2009 two key staff left IFAI and, based on demand from stakeholders, started working with Fundar on the Controla Tu Gobierno (CtG) project to advance the use of access-to-information tools at the local grassroots level. The Hewlett Foundation began support for CtG as a Fundar project and, in 2013, provided 100% funding to establish Controla Tu Gobierno as an organization dedicated to the service of access-to-information to citizens through the support of grassroots organizations. The foundation's support to Controla Tu Gobierno and the learning that this generated, demonstrates that work in Mexico was the basis for taking the participation agenda global. The CtG work was an important factor that contributed to the support for the Accountability Research Center, an action-research incubator based in the School of International Service at American University. Informed by the Mexico participation work, participation was formally adopted into the Hewlett Foundation's 2015 Global TPA Strategy.

Learning supported by the Hewlett Foundation in the past five years has also broadened the types of organizations supported to include those not traditionally associated with transparency and access-to-information work. For instance, the foundation is socializing the use of transparency and accountability tools by funding EQUIS' work to improve women's access to justice and its support to ILBS working to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly to indigenous women and youth. This has expanded the reach of transparency and accountability work to more vulnerable populations and brought clearer linkages with the work on participation. Despite these approaches in Mexico, evidence to suggest that the Mexico experiences influenced the shift towards more gender work in the Global TPA Strategy is limited. According to TPA POs, the work on sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as increased participation of women in decision-making processes and increased accountability to women's priorities in national and sub-national government plans, budgets, and program is happening in other TPA countries. The extent to which lessons from Mexico have informed programming priorities in other countries is aspirational and most likely came about through informal PO interactions. However, TPA POs caution about the assumption that there is a one-way flow of lessons from Mexico to Africa, which is reinforced by the lack of evidence to support this assumption.

Learning also took place when the innovative uses of modalities in the Hewlett grantmaking toolkit were tested in Mexico, and then used elsewhere. For example, the DCA (direct charitable activities) contract modality is defined as: "services contracted and paid for by the foundation to advance our philanthropic goals including: conducting educational conferences, seminars, or performing arts performances; conducting and publishing/disseminating of public policy, scientific, historic, educational, or other research that does not constitute a prohibited attempt to influence legislation; and providing technical assistance to grantees and other charitable organizations". These contracts were used by POs in Mexico to fund the facilitation and convening role of the Enabling Environment for Philanthropy and Civil Society coalition. Rather than hiring a consultant to manage coalition engagement, POs in Mexico provided a DCA contract for facilitation services. DCA contract payments are charged against the grants' budgets of the individual programs, whereas consultant contracts are charged against the administrative budget. Mexico POs pioneered the use of DCA contracts for strengthening local capacity, particularly where it strengthened the communities of practice by having a qualified facilitator who was a grantee, thus

minimizing power asymmetries within the coalitions. Other POs adopted this use of DCA grants when they hired facilitators to support work in other areas such as legislative monitoring in Mexico.

Importing and exporting lessons

Learning took place between POs working in the same program in different countries and the flow of exchange was two-way, resulting in both export and import of lessons. For the Environment Program's POs, experience working on transportation and air quality regulation and policy in Brazil informed the foundation's focus on transportation and air quality in Mexico. The Environment Program also brought expertise from Mexico and Brazil to China to share experience and Chinese grantees to Mexico and Brazil to learn from them. While the close learning between POs worked well when there were dedicated POs working in those countries, the closure of the Mexico office and the relocation of Mexico POs to Menlo Park created a new opportunity for cross-fertilizing lessons. POs now had responsibility for grants in multiple countries, providing more opportunity for adopting lessons from one country to another. For instance, Controla Tu Gobierno's work with the supreme auditing institution in Mexico was shared by the responsible PO with African accountability organizations that have not incorporated government audits into their work.

Some global partnerships including the Open Government Partnership and Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative have become forums where Mexico CSOs have had the opportunity to share their experiences with CSOs from around the globe at annual summits or virtual processes facilitated by these partnerships. These are spaces where there is evidence of Mexico CSOs exporting to other countries.

In terms of inflow of lessons, the Citizen Led Learning Assessments⁶ that originated in India were imported to Mexico after a research team from Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) travelled to India in 2012 to learn about these assessments from a few Hewlett Foundation grantees.⁷ Based on the Indian experience, CIESAS launched a project titled Medición Independiente de Aprendizajes in 2014 to increase the participation of civil society in education through collaborative research involving citizen volunteers, local civil society organizations, universities and the education community.⁸

While these examples illustrate the foundation's efforts to facilitate cross-fertilization between countries, more efforts could be made to increase the frequency and breadth of exchange of learning and improved communication between POs and grantees.

Expanding channels for learning

With the launch of the TPA Strategy (2015), the foundation sought to improve the structure and channels for learning. The TPA Strategy sought to identify, document and share lessons from TPA practitioners around the world, and promote learning between these practitioners.

⁶ <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/R4D%20-%20Bringing%20Learning%20to%20Light%20-%20June%202015.pdf>

⁷ <https://palnetwork.org/mia/>

⁸ www.medicionmia.org.mx/

Building on the foundation's track record with the Transparency Breakfasts, Hewlett decided to expand channels for learning through peer-to-peer exchanges of the organizations it supports in Mexico. The goal was to encourage spaces in which people from different civil society organizations supported by the foundation share experiences, methodologies, tactics and learning about different topics or areas of work and also strengthen their network of contacts in different areas.

In 2017, COMETA was hired to facilitate peer-to-peer horizontal learning exchanges to learn about how change happens in Mexico as well as learn about good organizational effectiveness practice. COMETA adapted the earlier approach to the Transparency Breakfasts and identified explicit learning objectives in consultation with Hewlett Foundation grantees, and created spaces for peer-to-peer learning for people from different roles within organizations, rather than exclusively for directors (as had been the practice with the Transparency Breakfasts). The first workshops focused on communicating for influence, a topic prioritized by the participating organizations. These workshops were targeted at communications officers and M&E officers within the organizations to share experiences on implementation of communication strategies and the impact that communication has on changes in accountability. A second workshop focused on methodologies to measure the impact of advocacy programs, and a third workshop focused on strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion practices within organizations.

International peer learning

To complement the Mexico-focused peer learning exchanges, three international exchanges with Hewlett Foundation TPA grantees from Mexico and East and West Africa were organized in 2018–2019. The first exchange focused on TPA and gender by providing a space to learn how similar organizations from other countries are dealing with similar questions around the interest of linking gender with different aspects of TPA. Participants shared methodologies, what challenges they face, how they are adapting to these challenges and what impact they have achieved and how. Despite peer learning that took place at the peer-learning events, there is limited evidence to suggest that peer learning continues between grantees outside of these fora. While peer learning facilitated through COMETA has provided unique spaces for exchange, there appears to be a lack of feedback loops and indicators to assess the contribution of these events to systematizing learning and making explicit contributions to the TPA field.

Learning from grantees

The Mexico program has learned from grantees' experiences, and there are several instances when learning from grantees has influenced the evolution of the Mexico program. In the early days of the Global Development Program, for example, much of the agenda for Mexico was informed by discussions with grantees regarding policy windows and opportunities that emerged with the passing of the access to information law and the establishment of INAI, as well as grantees' capacity to engage on new issues. This, along with discussions with other stakeholders at the national level, helped define the country strategy for Mexico which focused on transparency, accountability and the access to information agenda, which later helped inform the global TPA strategy.

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The collaborative work of grantees, fostered through the breakfasts and discussions of important policy agendas, shaped the course of the work the Mexico program took around TPA. Hewlett grantees working in this space were conducting research, fostering collaborative work at the national and local level and promoting informed debates around the transparency agenda, all of which contributed to informing the development of the General Transparency Law, and later the anti-corruption system.

The foundation has been very supportive of grantee agendas, particularly once they have established them as good partners, and the program has evolved in consultation with grantees. The work of citizenship participation and work with feminist organizations has inspired recent POs to move grantmaking to that space, informing how the current Mexico program is focusing its TPA work.

Leadership transitions

In the first decade of the 2000s, given the stage of maturity and development of Mexican CSOs, organizations were growing and developing alongside one another. Between 2006 and 2008, there were several grantees that were embarking on their first leadership transition from founder to successor. This time was precarious given the lack of experience with organizational governance and leadership in Mexico CSOs and the culture of patronage and blurred lines between professional and personal relationships. For most organizations in the Mexico portfolio, the first leadership transition from founder to successor took place during the time of Hewlett support. In addition to the lack of experience within grantee organizations, POs had limited experience accompanying organizations through these transitions within the context of CSOs and think tanks in Mexico. POs were having to learn alongside grantees and pursue opportunities to strengthen their own capacity so they could provide more informed ideas and advice to grantees.

Hewlett POs identified an opportunity to learn from this set of organizational transitions and hired a consultant to document transition processes unfolding in several organizations, including CIDAC, Fundar, and Sin Fronteras. The documentation of these processes provided Hewlett POs with lessons that they could share with organizations planning for future transitions such as IMCO, Sonora Ciudadana, EQUIS, and ILSB, which began their transition planning processes informed by lessons learned from others. The practice of documenting lessons for organizational development practices became a central focus for work done by other experts hired to accompany grantees and these have contributed to a compilation of publicly available guidance on organizational development for CSOs in Latin America.⁹

Learning with other donors

There was a history of close collaboration and strategizing with other donors in the first decade, particularly during the period when Hewlett had the office in Mexico. The foundation initially shared office space with the Ford Foundation, and eventually was located in the same building as the Kellogg Foundation and the McArthur Foundation. The close relationships between the Hewlett managing director and POs and representatives from the other donors meant that they

⁹ <https://effectiveorgs.org/resources/>

would regularly get together to discuss the context, alignment of strategies and support to grantees they had in common. While they haven't always focused on the same issues or agendas, their respective work was often complementary to each other. For donors who did not have a presence in Mexico, like Open Society Foundations (OSF), Hewlett POs provided a valuable source of local intelligence on the context and grantmaking strategy. Hewlett Foundation POs had actively participated in donor spaces throughout the time they had a presence in Mexico, but from the perspective of key informants from other donors, the Hewlett Foundation has been absent from local donor circles in recent years. According to one PO, the foundation is 50% active in donor collective conversations today, which is slightly more active than in peer networks in Kenya and Ghana, for example. The decrease of donor collaboration and learning today has been attributed to Hewlett no longer having an office and POs on the ground in Mexico, and therefore not being as connected to others working in the country. In contrast, the early approach to sharing of information and experiences was largely facilitated by attending the same events and connecting with other donors in the same circles.

Learning emphasized over monitoring

Learning, defined as the process through which information generated (typically from M&E) is reflected upon and intentionally used to continuously improve a project/program's ability to achieve results, has clearly been a central facet to the Hewlett Foundation's grantmaking practices in Mexico. Nevertheless, monitoring of grantee progress towards the foundation's theory of change has received much less focus. Hewlett reporting requirements emphasize reporting on activities and outputs, and from document reviews it is difficult to find evidence that Hewlett has encouraged grantees to report the outcomes or any details on the contribution of their work to social change. While grantees are encouraged to fill out the theory of change chart (including indicators and trip wires) in their reporting template, the more useful way to understand outcomes is when POs ask for concrete examples of social change during grantee visits, which are in turn shared with foundation colleagues through trip reports.

There is a long, well-documented history of both funders and grantees lacking enthusiasm for writing and reading grantee progress reports, however it is worth exploring how the social change outcomes that POs collect during visits could be developed into stories of change or a stories of influence series. From interviews with grantees on Hewlett support for organizational development, there are few examples of where Hewlett support – either through GOS, from the consultant pool, or OE grants – has been used to strengthen MEL processes and practices and contribute to organizations with a genuine interest and culture of learning. Systematically collecting data that informs progress assessment is critical to organizations communicating their stories of influence and will be essential for effectively implementing resource mobilization and funding diversification strategies. While OE grants are designed to respond to needs/demand from grantees, this is an area where PO encouragement could contribute to an uptick in MEL focused OE grants and improved ability of grantees to communicate their outcome stories.

3.5 Organizational development outcomes

Uneven focus on organizational development in grantmaking

While the Hewlett Foundation's strategy in Mexico evolved to include an explicit focus on strengthening the health and organizational sustainability of civil society organizations, organizational development objectives have been more implicit throughout its strategies. The only program implemented in Mexico that has defined objectives for organizational development is the 2007 Global Development Program Strategy that includes plans for the Think Tank Initiative that was managed by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) as a multi-donor partnership. In the absence of strategic guidance on organizational development, POs in Mexico have taken a non-directive approach to organizational development of its grantees. POs have taken an appreciative inquiry approach, asking guiding questions to get grantees to reflect on and explore areas for organizational development.

For many years, the Hewlett Foundation had a consultant pool that grantees could draw upon for organizational development support and many Mexico grantees underwent an institutional assessment to develop an institutional development plan, a process facilitated by the consultants. As more POs communicated the availability to the consultant pool to grantees, access to this relatively small group of consultants became a challenge as the consultants weren't always available on the timeline required by grantees. The type and depth of discussions with grantees about organizational capacity varied significantly between POs, largely dependent on their depth of experience working on organizational development issues. Organizational development expertise was not an explicit set of skills or experience that was included in PO job descriptions, therefore it was rare for POs to have any formal background or training on organizational development. This resulted in inconsistencies in how POs were engaging and supporting grantees with organizational capacity strengthening.

In 2004, the foundation introduced the OE grant modality to provide dedicated funding exclusively targeted at strengthening the organizational effectiveness of grantees. While Hewlett has been a long-term provider of general operating support, and some POs shared the view that GOS provides room for organizational investment, the reality according to one PO and several grantees is that although the POs did not restrict the grant funds, grantees usually use GOS funds for predetermined programming expenses and overheads (building, lights, cleaners, HR) and rarely use these funds for organizational strengthening. This trend persists across the non-profit sector where funders typically provide low indirect rates/overheads and not much in the way of indirect budget support, leaving no cushion for organizational improvements. The OE grants were introduced to provide a formal mechanism that put grantees in the driver seat to select consultants and direct the process.

Integration of organizational development with strategies

With OE grants accounting for roughly 1.5% of the foundation's global grantmaking, and with organizational development not being sufficiently integrated and articulated in the foundation's strategies, OE grants have been treated as a side offering. While organizational development and the OE modality do feature as a topic within the new PO orientation program, this area of support

has not been systematized in terms of PO guidance on appropriate use, frequency and so on, nor has there been synthesis of learning on approaches to organizational strengthening.

To assess organizational development support to Mexico grantees, the Mexico POs commissioned COMETA in 2016 to undertake a capacity building needs assessment of Mexico grantees to understand their experience to date and areas for future focus of Hewlett Foundation support. While grantees appreciated the availability of the consultant pool from the early days of Hewlett's support in Mexico, they often faced challenges with consultant availability and not having access to a consultant from the pool that had the particular expertise to meet their unique requirements. With the introduction of the OE grants, grantees appreciated the autonomy in deciding which consultant to use, and while the OE process required submission of a proposal and separate reporting, the benefits outweighed the burden of the extra requirements.

Consistent with the overall grantmaking approach in Mexico, the freedom of POs to pursue their approach to organizational development has resulted in an uneven distribution of OE grants to Mexico grantees. Since 2004, there have been 50 OE grants made to 23 grantees in Mexico, with eight organizations having received three or more OE grants, accounting for well over 50% of the OE grants. This concentration of "OE power users" is a direct result of different POs' approach to organizational development and level of encouragement for grantees to pursue organizational strengthening work. The freedom of PO decision-making has led to some grantees not being aware of the availability of OE grants and others applying for OE grants on a yearly basis, resulting in inconsistent levels of organizational strengthening support across the Mexico portfolio. From a review of GOS proposals and grantee reporting, it is not clear how grantees have made use of GOS to support organizational strengthening processes in any explicit way. One PO confirmed that since GOS proposals focus on organizational strategies, the OE priorities are implicit and discussed in conversations with POs rather than being documented in proposals.

POs' approach to organizational development

Some POs have embodied organizational development in their overall grantmaking approach more explicitly while other POs have taken a more subtle, less directive approach.

The institutional development plans that many organizations developed with Hewlett support have provided a useful roadmap for organizations to prioritize their own organizational improvements and have facilitated discussions between POs and grantees. The extent of organizational development discussions has also depended on the nature of the relationship with POs. Where grantees have an established level of trust and openness with POs, they have been more likely to share their organizational challenges with POs.

Grantees have confirmed that the closeness of the relationship with POs when Hewlett had the Mexico office resulted in more frequent communication and more opportunities to discuss organizational issues. In particular, during the in-country period, POs had more opportunity to meet with staff from across the organizations and build that trust and openness with staff in different positions. Since the office closed, POs have channeled most of their interactions via the grantees' executive directors, many of whom prioritize updating POs on programmatic progress

rather than sharing organizational challenges. Despite the change in attentiveness of POs towards Mexico grantees since the office closure, results from the Center for Effective Philanthropy 2015 and 2018 Grantee Perception Survey suggest that Mexico grantees rated the foundation's awareness of the organizational challenges that grantees face, the foundation's understanding of organizational strategies and goals and the foundation's overall impact on grantees as significantly higher than the average for all Hewlett grantees globally.¹⁰

Prioritized areas of organizational development

The areas of organizational development most commonly addressed through OE grants are: strategic planning, leadership transition processes, strengthening to governance practices, documenting internal procedures, communications and engagement strategies, and monitoring and evaluating program outcomes. This largely mirrors the topics most frequently discussed with POs. Aside from the important role that POs have played as trusted advisors and sounding boards particularly to directors of grantee organizations, the foundation's support for organizational development has mainly been through GOS, while OE grants provide dedicated support for hiring experts. The OE grants have, in most cases, allowed POs to maintain an arm's length involvement in directly engaging as facilitator or mediator in more sensitive organizational challenges related to leadership transition and board renewal.

Financial sustainability

An area that has received little attention with OE grants or broader organizational strengthening efforts is financial sustainability. According to one PO, this is the area suggested most frequently for OE grants, however grantees have not pursued it as a priority.

Despite some PO efforts, topics of fundraising strategies, diversifying funding sources, financial management and realistic project costing were not commonly pursued priorities for organizational development. In the few instances where OE grants were deployed for these purposes, they came towards the end of grant cycles at moments when the Hewlett Foundation was beginning to explore the exit from grants. Some long-standing grantees, particularly those that received GOS support, pro-actively pursued diversification strategies to ensure they didn't become too reliant on the foundation. For example, in the case of Fundar the POs encouraged the organization to take steps towards financial sustainability by developing reserve funds, and establishing an endowment to which the foundation contributed.¹¹

There may be opportunities for POs to be more directive in their encouragement of grantees to focus on financial sustainability from the outset of the Hewlett grants through GOS and OE support. While the attentiveness of POs to respond to grantee needs and let grantees lead is an appropriate approach overall, on the topic of financial sustainability, this may be an area for Hewlett to consider options for strengthening capacity of grantees on financial sustainability through peer learning, capacity building workshops and /or accompaniment support of financial

¹⁰ https://cep.surveylresults.org/report_sections/1118207

¹¹ See Fundar Organizational Development Case Study for details

advisers as well as active advocacy and engagement through funders circle. See recommendations section.

Board engagement

Largely dependent on the depth, history and nature of the relationships with directors and board members, some POs were more active in discussing, negotiating and advocating with directors and board members on sensitive issues. Other POs remained at arm's length to respect that these were internal organizational decisions and issues over which a funder had no place exerting influence. At times, the lack of PO knowledge about organizational development practices and experience resulted in either overstepping their role by over-engaging in these issues, and in other situations missing an opportunity to delicately exert influence to organizational decisions. The role of a PO vis-a-vis organizational strengthening is a delicate one, and POs could have benefited from more capacity and guidance on how to navigate these situations.

Exchanging lessons on organizational development

Given the stage of maturity and development of Mexican CSOs, organizations were growing and developing alongside one another. Between 2006 and 2008, there were several grantees that were embarking on their first leadership transition from founder to successor. Likewise, Hewlett POs were learning alongside grantees as they too had limited experience with transitions within CSOs and think tanks in the Mexican context.

3.6 Social and policy change outcomes

Many of the contributions by the Hewlett Foundation to policies, stronger institutions, research on better public policy solutions and spaces for citizen's participation were achieved in the field of transparency, accountability and access to information, where it has concentrated a significant share of its grantmaking over the past 20 years. The medium- to long-term engagement with actors in that field helped form a critical mass of thinkers who developed strong networks, reached policymakers and spread their work from the national to the local. According to consistent information gained through interviews with a broad range of grantees, donors and external key informants in the TPA sector in Mexico, Hewlett became the most recognized donor, supporting work in this area as a result of its constant engagement with grantees and focus on building on of policy opportunities through the know-how and strengths of the organizations it supported.

Hewlett's most notable contribution to the field of transparency and accountability in Mexico was consistently identified as its ability to **foster an ecosystem of strong and professionalized organizations** working towards the common goal of strengthening transparency and access to information legislation and institutions, creating the necessary conditions to promote accountability by public sector actors. The Hewlett Foundation has been the main funder of organizations working in that field since the early 2000s. The foundation's initial contributions were more at the macro-level, through high-level technical institutions such as IMCO, Fundar or CIDE, which were necessary at that juncture to build the institutional scaffolding for transparency and accountability. During a later stage (from 2015) the foundation's contribution evolved to engage more diverse organizations that work closer to the grassroots, responding to an identified

need to move the transparency agenda towards citizens as the ultimate end users. This is the case with Controla Tu Gobierno or GIRE.

By creating a space – the Transparency Breakfast, organized regularly by the foundation in Mexico City from the mid-2000s until 2019 – for organizations to get to know each other, exchange learning, experiences and develop joint strategies, the Hewlett Foundation was able to provide the right incentives for trust-building, which would result in successful collaborative and individual work to push the transparency and accountability agenda forward. The solid community of practice that emerged continues to work through alliances towards policy, legal and social change in a number of relevant areas, as explored below.

Transparency and accountability legislative and policy change

The Hewlett Foundation financially supported strategic collaboratives through the Colectivo por la Transparencia (from 2005 to 2009) and later through the Red por la Rendición de Cuentas (2011 to date), providing the resources and the mental space for civil society organizations, academic institutions and autonomous public bodies to generate research, use evidence and engage with authorities on transparency and access to information, and use these mechanisms to promote accountability (see social change case studies). These collaboratives eventually went on to make important contributions to transparency and participation public policies.

These legislative changes and policy reforms have been crucial in improving the basis for organized civil society and citizens themselves to pursue accountability and good governance, and to continue pushing authorities to comply with the law. Still, the legislative change and stronger transparency infrastructure has had mixed results, both at the grassroots and macro levels. There are other examples of success found closer to the grassroots, with citizens now being able to demand basic services based on information derived from demands for information. One of many illustrative examples comes from the Rebelión de los Enfermos (Rebellion of the Sick), a campaign led by Sonora Ciudadana (a Hewlett grantee) which used access to information requests to obtain information about citizens' exclusion from social insurance coverage to which they were entitled because of their pre-existing conditions. The campaign successfully enrolled several patients, although reports on the number of patients enrolled as a result are difficult to come by.

There are also examples of poor implementation of the law as a result of electoral and political systems still lacking strong checks and balances to hold authorities to account. This is the case, for example, of the demands by INAI for access to the dossier regarding corruption charges against the Mexican official most closely linked with the Odebrecht corruption and embellished case, which the office of the attorney general has refused. At grassroots level, the fact that the knowledge about and use of transparency and accountability tools to request information and hold authorities to account remains weak illustrates its partial success. However, there is enormous potential for work by TPA actors, including civil society, to work to strengthen its use as a powerful tool.

In addition to these high-level regulatory wins achieved through the policy engagement and advocacy work by these coalitions, the Colectivo por la Transparencia (Colectivo) and the Red por la Rendición de Cuentas (Red) have used the relevant research and tools they have produced on

transparency and accountability to build the capacity of many organizations throughout the country who can then apply them to support citizens to access their rights and basic services.

Open Government Partnership (Alianza por el Gobierno Abierto)

Mexico joined the international Open Government Partnership (OGP) (which receives Hewlett Foundation funding at the global level) in 2011 as one of its eight founding member countries. Mexico was seen within the group as a regional pioneer in the field of transparency and access to information, with what was considered model legislation and institutions such as the IFAI (later INAI).

Several high-profile civil society organizations with a track record of influence in the transparency, accountability and access to information agenda were called in by the Ministry of Public Function – the government body in charge – to join the initiative as civil society representatives. Eight organizations joined the initiative (six of which were Hewlett grantees): **Artículo 19; Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo (CIDAC); CitiVox; Cultura Ecológica; Fundar Centro de Análisis e Investigación; Gestión Social y Cooperación (GESOC); Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad (IMCO) and Transparencia Mexicana.** These organizations coordinated to push for an equal partnership with the government aimed at achieving real change in open government practices. As a result, after the alliance's first plan was largely co-opted by the government rather than resulting from a collaboration with CSOs, they took a strong stance to revert the process. These were all technically strong organizations that had built their capacity over the years to engage with public authorities at the highest level. This allowed them to set out new terms for effective co-governance in the initiative, giving way to a tripartite secretariat as the governance body for the OGP, with equal representation by the government, the INAI (as the guarantor of citizens' rights to information), and civil society. This process of setting up a common strategy in response to the first action plan had an impact on the relationship between the eight civil society organizations. The institutional strengthening and opening up of spaces for public engagement supported by Hewlett had increased the standing of these organizations.

Since most of the organizations were part of the community of practice the Hewlett Foundation had fostered, they had a strong basis of trust with many of them collaborating on initiatives such as the Colectivo and the Red, which made it easier for them to join forces as a formal group – the Civil Society Organization Nucleus (NOSC) – with the ability to discuss and successfully resolve differences to move their work forward. Their regular participation in and contributions to the OGP became part of their institutional work, which was in most cases partially funded by Hewlett as a strong supporter of open government initiatives. Between 2011 and 2017 NOSC worked as part of the tripartite secretariat to develop a total of three plans of action, following up on their implementation through the close liaison between NOSC members and government counterparts. For instance, one of the more recent members of NOSC, the Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (ILSB), heads the OGP roundtables on caregiving and sexual and reproductive health on behalf of civil society and has continued to press the Ministry of Health to support its downstream commitments in this sphere.

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Since 2019, the OGP partnership's secretariat was re-established and included representatives of academia, such as CIDE. Most of the organizations that originally came together to support the OGP's civil society arm in Mexico, as well as current NOSC representatives, are or have been Hewlett funded (more recent members who are also Hewlett grantees include ILSB, México Evalúa and EQUIS). This is illustrative of Hewlett's ability to identify and work with CSOs with strong engagement potential. In a context of closing civic space, the Open Government Partnership is seen by civil society organizations as one of the remaining spaces for open dialogue between civil society and the government, so they remain engaged, though results cannot yet be assessed. Importantly, Hewlett support has not only nurtured the community of practice that has enabled NOSC to work fluidly in representation of civil society, but Hewlett's direct funding to these organizations has helped them generate human capacities and allocate time for the regular and substantive engagement to pursue the Open Government agenda. IMCO currently represents NOSC in the OGP's coordinating committee.

Transparency in public spending

When the Hewlett Foundation started working in Mexico, transparency in budget and spending information was not even a subject of public debate. Today, through transparency and access to information laws, public budget and spending data is publicly available making its analysis for accountability purposes a reality. Much of the highly technical analysis of public expenditure was initially driven by think tanks and organizations such as México Evalúa, IMCO, Fundar, and CIDE, which have undertaken this work with important funding from Hewlett grants. México Evalúa's public spending program, for example, is 80% Hewlett financed and has resulted in among the most visible evidence to push for government budget accountability, mainly at the national level, but increasingly looking at sub-national public spending. México Evalúa's research has resulted in important changes to public spending practice, such as the Ministry of Finance's improved reporting publishing not only planned but also executed budgets, which in Mexico differ greatly given the space for "budget adjustments" that in reality result in high levels of discretionary spending. Overall, the collaborative work of CSOs, think tanks and academic institutions encouraged by Hewlett has remained aligned resulting in greater accountability and the reduction of loopholes against corruption, particularly with the push for the National Anticorruption System, spearheaded by the Red por la Rendición de Cuentas.

México Evalúa, one of the main Hewlett grantees focused on high-quality evidence generation around public spending, has developed a high visibility communications strategy, using evidence and data to shed light on use of public resources while effectively communicating findings through many media and social media platforms to gain the attention of both decision-makers and citizens, which has been helpful to demand greater accountability. The contribution of the Hewlett Foundation to the work on transparency and accountability in public spending has been crucial in Mexico since bilateral donors, such as USAID, are not able to fund work on fiscal policy, making Hewlett a central funder in this field since 2013. Through its long-term commitment and multi-year grants, Hewlett funding has helped build capacity by enabling organizations working in this area to invest in human resources for this type of technical analysis of budget and spending data for accountability purposes. The work they have produced in the sphere of public spending has been very innovative.

Hewlett has supported research to expose discretionary public spending in the government and the use of public funds in programs without any operating rules, which opens many spaces for corruption, and it has contributed to generating evidence on the mismanagement and lack of transparency of funds in public trusts. This research and use of evidence through effective communication to pressure authorities has had concrete results. For instance, because of effective public pressure by CSOs based on research by México Evalúa regarding the corruption risks of having social programs implemented without operating rules, the current administration changed course and published operating rules on 11 new programs. This change is important as the supreme auditing body (*Auditoría Superior de la Federación*) is only able to rule on whether programs were implemented in alignment with the law. Without law, there was no mechanism to hold authorities accountable for their adequate implementation and spending of government resources.

Hewlett-funded research has also exposed infrastructure projects that have been contracted without adequate public procurement. In the State of Nuevo León, México Evalúa worked with the government to develop a platform in which all public infrastructure contracts are published, following international standards which help reduce the space for corruption. Hewlett-funded organizations have also conducted and published analysis related to the underspending in key sectors such as health services in the context of the pandemic, and it has pushed for gender-responsive budgeting. México Evalúa is now working on social-media and interactive platform-based mechanisms such as the “Yo me Sumo” initiative, as ways to engage citizen participation in budget accountability. These are only some examples of how grantees have strengthened evidence-informed advocacy with results.

Transparency tools to fulfil women’s rights

Lo Justo es Que Sepas is an alliance of civil society organizations led by EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres, which during 2019 and 2020 through their research, evidence use and coalitions building, was able to successfully advocate for the reform of the 2015 General Transparency Law to broaden the definition of judicial sentences that are of “public interest” and hence make all sentences public. By making sentences public, it is possible to observe if and when sentences are negatively influenced by biases or perverse incentives (such as corruption) by judges, bringing down barriers faced by vulnerable populations, particularly women, to access the justice system as they typically have limited resources or information to appeal these sentences. The Lo Justo coalition was spearheaded by EQUIS, a feminist civil society organization that has received Hewlett funding for the past six years to undertake research and advocacy to increase access to justice for women using transparency tools.

Other Hewlett-funded organizations, such as México Evalúa, Fundar, Controla Tu Gobierno and Artículo 19 were also part of this coalition. Building on the trust and openness to work on common objectives resulting in large part from Hewlett’s effort to foster a community of practice in the field of transparency, accountability and participation in Mexico, they formed a successful alliance that in the space of little over a year, managed to gain buy in from legislators and other relevant stakeholders to reform the law.

Public data to hold sub-national authorities accountable

Hewlett Foundation grants have also financed downstream work, where some of its contributions to social change are perhaps the most tangible for the lives of citizens. Through its support of organizations working directly with grassroots organizations and citizens, it has brought transparency and access to information closer to the users it was meant to benefit: citizens who seek accountability from public officials can have their voices heard and demand their rights to be fulfilled. It is perhaps through this component of its work on transparency and accountability that the “participation” dimension of the TPA agenda is best being realized. The examples provide some illustrations of how Hewlett supported CSOs’ use of TPA tools to affect social level change:

- **Fundar’s ‘[Subsidios al Campo](#)’:** This collective effort in 2014 brought together civil society and academic organizations in Mexico and the USA to promote a debate over the use of financial subsidies by the Mexican government to the agricultural sector, which had been going to medium- and large-scale producers and excluding small-holder farmers who would most benefit from them. The project generated information that was previously non-existent and crucial to inform discussions about the optimal distribution of financial subsidies to farmers in order to reduce inequalities and exclusion in this sector. The initiative created a website with a detailed database with information from official data on who and where subsidies were being received, what products received more and less money and which were the states that concentrated most subsidies. Since then, this initiative has been used to improve equity in the transfer of subsidies in support of small and more vulnerable farmers, particularly through a website using open data that provides regular information about transfer amounts, locations and recipients. In this way, small-holder farmers can keep a tab on where subsidies are going and demand their reallocation. More data and analysis are needed, however, quantifying the re-distributional impact of this initiative on small-holder farmers.
- **IMCO’s “Programa de la Reforma Educativa/ avances y pendientes”:** This analysis of education sector spending was undertaken with the aim of strengthening accountability in a program developed by the Ministry of Education to promote social participation and decentralization in public spending in schools. Seven months after resources from the Education Reform Program were disbursed to “urgently improve” the physical conditions of public schools that faced severe lags, IMCO found that there was insufficient information about the allocation and use of those resources in the transparency portal set up to monitor this program. Through local public information requests, IMCO obtained progress reports for this program in the 32 states of Mexico, allowing it to trace how resources were being spent. Information requests were also sought from the federal Ministry of Education, but the data provided did not include details on the use of resources. This pushed IMCO to a new area of work, reaching educational communities, school children and their parents directly. Making school-level spending transparent resulted in an important effort to hold education authorities to account, with the participation of service users. As a result of the program, a website with public information on individual schools, including the ability of families to score the quality of their school, was created. Although this initiative does not yet sufficiently bridge the gap of insufficient information

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about school resources and establish clear mechanisms to hold school authorities to account, it was a step in that direction.

- **Sonora Ciudadana’s accountability initiative for access to health services, ([Rebelión de los Enfermos](#)):** This project was launched to change an internal regulation in the state of Sonora’s public medical insurance system, which over 11 years excluded new patients with pre-existing conditions, even though all individuals working for the state government are in principle entitled to this health insurance. Sonora Ciudadana, working with an organized group of patients, conducted a high visibility campaign based on detailed budgetary analysis and access to information requests to demand the right to health services for all the workers excluded from the insurance. Its success in changing the law in Sonora resulted in the campaign moving to other states to do the same, bringing about changes to local regulations so that all patients enjoyed their rights to access health services. The initiative could have had a better mechanism in place to record the number of patients receiving insurance cover as a result of this initiative; such data is not readily available.
- **Artículo 19’s [‘Transparencia Proactiva’](#) work with indigenous women:** Artículo 19 led to 106 workshops with diverse indigenous communities in the states of Chiapas and Tabasco and members of the Red Junco (Junco Network). The workshops’ results confirmed the impact that the right to information can have in the everyday life of people, particularly women. Through this work, a group of women were able to have their rights met by using access-to-information requests. Two examples illustrate this: Women in the Junco Network made a public information request to the Ministry of Health in Chiapas to learn about the work schedule and salary of the doctor who was supposed to provide consultations in their local community’s health center, as well as the budget allocated for purchase of medicines. They found out that the doctor, who had always provided intermittent consultations and never provided them with free medications, was not following his contract or using the resources he received to buy medicines for locals. With the information requested and provided, the women prepared a letter to the Ministry of Health demanding adequate health services from a different doctor, plus the availability of medications according to the budget allocated to their health center. As a result of this push by women, their local health center now receives regular health services with a doctor and two nurses every day. Another group of indigenous women used the tools learned during the workshop to make a public information request to learn why they stopped receiving a subsidy as part of a program to support indigenous women who were undertaking productive projects. They found that they were entitled to the program and used the public information request to demand the restitution of the subsidy, which they were granted.
- **ILSB’s [“Lo Público es Nuestro”](#) initiative uses social accountability** to prevent adolescent pregnancy by strengthening the participation of youth and indigenous women on issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Using transparency and access-to-information tools, as well as field research instruments, young researchers conducted informed and evidence-based engagement to strengthen sexual and reproductive health

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services and monitor the implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy. Central to this monitoring is a perspective of gender, youth and interculturality. Through its funding, Hewlett supports the work of two networks/programs: REDefine, which promotes young leaders and defends sexual and reproductive rights of youth in 12 states in the country, and PROMULI, which contributes to reducing inequality gaps for indigenous women through strengthening and articulation of local leadership groups and networks.

- **Controla tu Gobierno supports [grassroots organizations using access to information rights](#)** and social audit mechanisms to solve public problems in relation to access to water, construction of local public infrastructure, land rights, and more. One such case involves the support of an organization of local farmers in the state of Mexico, who denounced public authorities for the poor planning, contracting and construction of a water treatment plant in their community that was meant to provide them access to clean water. The construction process was plagued with irregularities, which were all identified through public information requests, and the necessary evidence was provided to file a lawsuit against authorities demanding they ensure the water treatment plant is repaired and rendered functional. The case is ongoing.

These are all concrete examples of how Hewlett-funded work on transparency and accountability that began at a macro, highly technical level, was necessary to set up the transparency and access-to-information infrastructure that underpins the evidence-based legal tools that help move the agenda to users. The work now being supported by Hewlett at the local level ensures public actors are held accountable to the people, with clear social change outcomes particularly for the vulnerable. This illustrates the importance of a multi-pronged approach, working at different levels of the policymaking ladder that can later be rolled out into actions that have a positive impact on the lives of citizens.

Contributions to social change by the Hewlett Foundation outside the TPA field

The Hewlett Foundation has had a mixed grantee portfolio, particularly during its first 15 years of work in Mexico. While the TPA work was the central axis of its grantmaking, projects in other areas contributed to some important outcomes with positive social benefits.

Enabling environment for philanthropy

The foundation played an essential role in improving the enabling environment for philanthropy in Mexico by providing technical assistance, and generating and disseminating data-based evidence and international comparative information on best and worst practices for fostering a healthy non-profit sector. Prior to the Hewlett Foundation's intervention in this area, domestic philanthropy in Mexico was limited and legally restricted to traditional charitable causes. Civic-minded, advocacy organizations engaged in social and environmental change agendas were largely reliant on international funding or remained weak. The foundation took on this limitation by deploying a coalition-building approach, bringing together a group of multi-faceted actors to push for regulatory and fiscal reform to improve the enabling environment for domestic philanthropy and civil society in Mexico. The power behind this effort was the collective contributions of each

individual coalition member, which included the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), the International Center for Non-Profit Law (ICNL), a consultant from the think tank Iniciativa Ciudadana y Desarrollo Social (INCIDE Social) formerly from Centro Mexicano para la Filantropía (CEMEFI), and an experienced facilitator, who guided the coalition's process, facilitating and brokering with key actors including tax authorities and Mexican tax lawyers, as well as Hewlett grantees involved in the process. This group became the frontline organizations for a new Enabling Environment for Philanthropy and Civil Society coalition, and the Hewlett Foundation made grants to all four members.

There was also a technical working group of pro-bono lawyers who advanced the agenda by incorporating the technical language to explain to the lawyers at the tax authority how the legal and fiscal constraints were impacting organizations. They played a key role in taking the research and data and presenting it in a relevant way to the SAT (Mexico's tax authority) legal team. The coalition was able to contribute towards changing the vision of SAT officials for a healthy, sustainable civil society in Mexico.

Establishing a state-of-the-art law school at CIDE

Hewlett funding was used by CIDE to establish **the Reform Program for the Teaching of Law** (PRENDE, for its acronym in Spanish), an innovative legal studies program focused on promoting and protecting the democratic transition. In line with the Hewlett Foundation's "knowledge building for development work", CIDE successfully developed and consolidated its law school. PRENDE was the first law school in Mexico to be case-based and focused on problem-solving, rather than memorization of legal code. This required building the capacity of CIDE faculty to internalize the new pedagogy and overall approach to legal studies. At the forefront of Mexican legal thought and education, PRENDE has changed the way other law programs in Mexico are operating (including using curriculum and case materials developed by CIDE) and is now recognized as one of the best in Latin America. Its graduates are highly sought after in the private sectors and have also had prominent positions in the Mexican government as key policymakers and decision-takers. These changes in legal education had an important impact on the private practice of many law firms that recruited CIDE law graduates, who changed the culture and multidisciplinary of legal practices. PRENDE also catalyzed changes to the professional practices of prosecutors, judges and lawyers in Mexico.

Improving access to clean air

One of the focus areas of the Hewlett Foundation's Environment Program work in Mexico was the formation of strategic alliances, which helped break down the barriers that existed regarding environmental regulations. Like coalition building and fostering communities of practice on the TPA agenda, the Hewlett Foundation encouraged this approach for environmental organizations too, supporting a number of organizations working in this field that came together particularly around improving air quality. For instance, some organizations that had been funded by Hewlett between 2011 and 2014, including el Poder del Consumidor, the Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental and Bicitekas, joined forces in 2019 to launch the Observatorio Ciudadano de Calidad del Aire (Citizens Observatory of Air Quality), which monitors the right to clean air and to a healthy environment. Through its network of organizations, the observatory generates data and advocates

actively for the local and national governments to promote actions to reduce pollution and improve the environment.

What elements of Hewlett's work should continue and which should change?

From the analysis presented above, some of the factors identified as being central to Hewlett's contribution to social change in Mexico include:

- Hewlett's ability to foster and nurture a strong community of practice, creating the right incentives and spaces for organizations working under a common objective, even if situated at the different end of the spectrum, to be able to find common ground, learn from each other and use evidence to influence decision-makers to move towards policy goals.
- During the previous administration, when working in coalitions was an effective means of advocating for better policy and planning, the community of practice fostered by Hewlett was able to influence decision-making, joining forces through coalitions to work towards a goal, forging strong and lasting alliances. While the current government has closed the space for formal coalitions, it does find ways of working bilaterally on issues with specific CSOs, many of which have been Hewlett grantees. The community of practice has remained strong and has enabled them to agree on issues to informally push forward.
- The foundation has been able to identify highly committed organizations and individuals that can produce rigorous and high-level research, evidence and engagement work, both technical think tanks and second-tier organizations working with grassroots organizations. Grantees have produced good-quality research, reports and analyzes which are useful resources for academics, practitioners, policymakers and citizens. There is evidence of the use of this research to influence decision-makers. For example, important policy and legislative change initiatives, such as *Lo Justo es que Sepas*, succeeded in making judicial sentences public. In addition, ongoing work over the past five years using evidence of good practices has led to recommending the establishment of a non-partisan congressional fiscal council to evaluate fiscal spending and fiscal policy – the initiative for which now appears in the most recent law regulating Congress.
- Hewlett has shown a strong commitment to strengthening organizations, supporting organizational development for many of its grantees over a number of years. They are known for providing financial support and advice to strengthen grantees' internal capacities over time, to ensure they could become strong partners in the work being done in different fields. This results in better quality work and the ability to engage with other organizations and improves their ability to engage on policy issues, with high-level policy stakeholders.
- In addition to supporting robust research, the foundation has supported the use of innovative communications to inform policy change. However, more could be done by grantees to systematically report on the outcomes of their work, and when possible quantify impacts so that results can be better tracked, measured and reported.
- Hewlett has invested in capacity development of staff in its grantee organizations, not only by financing internal capacity building within organizations, but through connecting directors with opportunities to strengthen their skills in specialized institutions in and outside Mexico, as well as through peer-to-peer workshops for staff.

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- The foundation, through its POs, has fostered innovation and flexibility – allowing CSOs to innovate, make mistakes, learn from them and try again, allowing them to grow.
- Hewlett’s long-term engagement and support through multi-year grants and medium- to long-term funding, has enabled organizations to invest in capacity development and organizational strengthening, and to engage in projects that take several years to mature.
- Hewlett has financed both elite technical organizations working at the macro level as well as with more diverse organizations working closer to the grassroots, bringing them together to share perspectives and approaches in order to work toward common objectives.
- Promoting mutual learning and exchange has generated positive results. The foundation has thus promoted change both from the top down and from the bottom up, making it more sustainable. However, given its small structure and the limited number of staff working on a given country’s portfolio the Foundation needs to think about efficient and manageable ways of promoting both types of organization so they can continue building on each other in the long term (see Recommendations).

3.7 Sustainability

The sustainability of the foundation’s work in Mexico is linked to its long-term engagement with many organizations, enabling it to support their organizational strengthening and developing installed capacities which can remain after funding ends. Much of its initial work in the TPA field was geared towards supporting transformations in regulation, policies and institutions, creating policy infrastructure which is more difficult to tear down. The alliances generated, although less active today than five years ago given the political context, can still be activated to push important agendas forwards, as was recently seen in the case of *Lo Justo es que Sepas*. However, according to grantees interviewed, in the current political environment the most effective collaborations are those carried out informally rather than through coalitions or collectives, which are seen as threatening by the administration. In this sense, finding creative ways of continuing to foster the TPA community of practice, and continuing to build trust and collaboration, is central to promoting the sustainability of some of the achievements of the TPA agenda. For instance, CSOs that are part of the Hewlett-supported TPA community of practice have been actively pushing back against the government’s closing of civic space and decisions to eliminate key TPA institutions, such as INAI. This shows how their presence, unity and strength is instrumental to combatting the backslide of transparency and civil participation gains being marshalled by the current government.

Based on our analysis of the data collected, it is possible to say that the foundation’s move in recent years to diversify its support to different types of organizations, including feminist organizations and others working closer to communities at the sub-national/local level, can contribute to making changes more sustainable, as it can embed its work on transparency, access to information and citizens’ participation in local realities. By promoting participatory-based accountability, local leaders and organizations are learning to use TPA tools to help citizens and communities to effectively access their rights and basic services, by making important access to information requests that enable them to hold authorities accountable. In fact, the average annual demand for INAI (measured in terms of requests for information) increased by close to 400% since IFAI became an autonomous organ. Between 2003 and 2014, the annual average demand for

government information was 78,000 information requests. Between 2015 and 2020 this demand increased to 373,000. People do not tend to spend too much time on a useless process, so increased demand suggests effectivity.

4. Forward looking (current context)

The 2018 Mexican elections were won by the Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (Morena) party, under the moral and political leadership of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The sweeping triumph of López Obrador's party included the presidency and the majority of seats in both chambers of Congress. Therefore, the president gained undeniable democratic legitimacy, which has given him the leverage that no president has had in decades.

Despite the negative outcomes of the economic and health crisis (resulting from COVID-19) and López Obrador's subsequent controversial public policy decisions, the president's approval remains one of the highest worldwide according to international polls, maintaining popular support for social causes that led him to the presidency, such as the fight against corruption. This unconditional support from the majority of Mexicans has allowed him, for example, not to support the National Anticorruption System, as he implements his own approach to fight corruption, which has not been fully developed and has been questioned for its lack of transparency.

One of the most troubling aspects of the federal government's actions is the hostility of President López Obrador towards civil society. He has criticized various civil society organizations with groundless accusations and threats of tax audits. Among these organizations under presidential siege, there are several that have been financed by the Hewlett Foundation, and the current situation poses a threat to their achievements. Additionally, the president has also displayed animosity to the media, despite calling himself a defender of freedom of expression; he has attacked numerous newspapers and programs directly by calling out his political adversaries.

President López Obrador has also undermined the state's democratic checks and balances, particularly the autonomous constitutional bodies, through political and budgetary pressure. For instance, he has criticized the performance of the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE) by questioning its authority to organize free elections and has also been critical of the INAI for requiring different government agencies to disclose sensitive information related to the federal government. He even appointed the president of the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH) through a controversial and unlawful process, weakening the defense and protection of the fundamental rights of Mexicans. He has also weakened the Supreme Court of Justice through the appointment of ministers who are close to him, as well through unfounded criticism. This asymmetry of power of public authorities and the absence of checks and balances against the executive branch have endangered Mexican democracy.

In addition to the political and budgetary onslaught against different autonomous bodies, there has been an attempt to limit citizen participation in these spaces, the earlier inauguration of which had been a historic achievement of civil society. To a great extent, the autonomy of these bodies resides with the citizens represented on these governing bodies. Therefore, by preventing citizen

representation on their governing bodies, these institutions have become captured by the government, diminishing their accountability function.

Likewise, the president has re-centralized public spending, repealing branches and budget funds and dissolving trusts, which has caused fiscal and political friction with a third of the country's governors. The plunge in tax collection and the reorientation of public spending to finance López Obrador's priority public works foreshadows a greater conflict among levels of government in Mexico. The Mexican fiscal arrangement has been worn-out and expired for decades, but the crisis caused by COVID-19 has revealed the fiscal weakness of the Mexican state, which holds the lowest tax revenues among OECD members, making it impossible to effectively face the current crisis and promote state-driven development. The pandemic has not only resulted in an economic and social setback for millions of Mexicans, but also a democratic regression in many dimensions of the country's public life.

Mexican civil society has also been affected by COVID-19. In February 2019, the president announced that the federal government would no longer provide funding to CSOs to stem 'the rise of discretion, opacity and corruption' and then in September 2020 he initiated the repeal of several provisions in the income tax law and federal tax code that will have an adverse impact on CSOs.¹² As a result, many of the already limited domestic, government funding resources available to civil society organizations have disappeared. Additionally, CSOs have faced unprecedented difficulties in continuing with their projects, as the lockdown forced many of them to switch to online approaches to work that have made it difficult to influence the political agenda. Moreover, civil society organizations don't always have reserve funds, consolidated institutional capacities, or stable sources of financing to face a situation such as COVID-19. This crisis could create a vacuum in the face of public power, inciting a regression in many of the areas where agendas such as accountability, citizen participation, and governance had already advanced.

The national environment for civil society is going through one of its worst moments. In November 2020, the Chamber of Deputies passed an initiative to restrict the eligible amount for authorized funders, a fiscal modality that allows tax deductions to the donors (companies) when they make donations to civil society organizations. This reform constitutes a regression for the development of civil society, since it hinders its financing and restricts its expansion. This reform inhibits the development of organized civil society as a counterbalance to public power in Mexico.

The current political context is therefore challenging for civil society organizations, particularly those working in the transparency, access to information, accountability and anti-corruption spheres. Civic space has significantly closed down, autonomous public institutions face budgetary cuts, have lost voice in the public discourse and are in constant threat of being co-opted by political interests. Checks and balances in the federal system have been debilitated and freedom of expression is under threat, particularly in states and municipalities, not only as a result of political alliances but also given the threats of violence and territorial control by organized crime.

¹² www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/Organisaciones-de-la-sociedad-civil-y-Gobierno-una-relacion-disfuncional-20201108-0001.html

Despite this adverse scenario, it is clear that the Mexican civil society underwent a growing and transformative process that strengthened its capacities and allowed social change. This transformation would not have been possible without the support of international foundations like the Hewlett Foundation. Through its support, the foundation ensured that an agenda was set among civil society organizations, academia, and even government organizations to achieve (through individual and collective efforts) common objectives. While strong, the work achieved by civil society with the support of the Hewlett Foundation is at risk of sliding back; institutional mechanisms set up require protection and support to withstand political threats. Continued engagement and financing by the Hewlett Foundation, as well as by other donors, is therefore essential for organized civil society to continue making significant strides in the fight against corruption and to effectively demand accountability from all levels of government.

Former Hewlett grantees have led the charge, using evidence and their knowledge of the TPA field, to push back against the administration's efforts to close down autonomous organizations such as INAI. Through campaigns and communication strategies, including actively using social media, they have been the voice of INAI's work, achievements and potential and are raising the alarm bell about the consequences on good governance of losing such important checks and balances. Hewlett and other funders can continue supporting the work and standing by them, although the more active engagement of foreign philanthropies could in fact backfire given the administration's discourse about sovereignty.

5. Recommendations

These recommendations have been developed based on findings that surfaced throughout the Mexico evaluation process. The recommendations range from those that can be generalized and adopted across the Hewlett Foundation grantmaking globally, to recommendations that have been extrapolated from the Mexico experience, but are likely to be relevant for many countries and regions prioritized in the global TPA Strategy. This list should be considered as a menu of options for consideration irrespective of whether the foundation continues grantmaking in Mexico.

Type	Findings section	Recommendations	Audience	Ease of implementation
Improving grantmaking	3.1, 3.3 and 3.5	<p>Grantmaking practices: A key feature of Hewlett Foundation POs in Mexico is that they all have autonomous approaches to grantmaking. Recognizing that written documents on their own are unlikely to shift behavior or practice there may be a need for more structured dialogue between POs to share insights on how they are making decisions. Based on PO perspectives, a structured set of documented guidelines to inform PO decision-making should be developed specifically on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant modalities: when GPS/GOS is appropriate, versus project support or OE grants, and requirements for the different types of grants. • Priorities for portfolio development, expansion, renewal and exiting to maximize coherence and complementarity in the grantmaking strategy. 	GDP program director and POs	Easy - internal process but requires buy-in and communication and sustained dialogue with POs to ensure systematic implementation

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEI – more formal capacity building support such as training, PO pairing, facilitated PO peer learning and the development of guidelines that integrate DEI considerations into grantmaking. • Organizational development guidelines – guidance on the involvement of POs regarding board engagement and leadership transition. (i.e.: POs should engage under these circumstances but not engage under others). • Capacity building for POs on healthy organizational practices (could be part of new PO onboarding or orientation). 		
Improving grantmaking	3.4	<p>Monitoring and learning: Improve the foundation’s ability to assess progress towards strategic outcomes articulated in strategies and sub-strategies by establishing metrics or indicators to monitor performance and strengthen overall accountability in individual grants. Using tools and approaches from the outcome mapping approach, the foundation could develop a process for assessing progress towards its strategic outcomes. This is already articulated in the Foundation’s Outcome-Focused Philanthropy Guidebook and this could be used to develop implementation markers for strategies and sub-strategies.</p>	GDP program director and POs	Moderate effort and complexity to implement

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		<p>With performance metrics (quantitative/qualitative) and stories of influence/change, Hewlett could improve its communications strategy to share its experience with grantees, POs, other CSOs in Mexico, and with other funders in other countries/regions. With improved communication, Mexico lessons could directly influence work by other grantees in Mexico and indirectly in other regions where Hewlett and other donors are active.</p> <p>These will need to be developed through a review and possible refresh of the TPA Theory of Change. This will require a refresh of the current monitoring process, as most grantee reports are <i>output</i> focused and grantees are not required to report on <i>outcomes</i>. It is thus important for grantees to more systematically reflect and report on outcomes and in the process grantees will strengthen their capacity to trace and communicate their influence.</p>		
Improving grantmaking	3.1	<p>Improve transparency and communication with grantees on the grantmaking selection process.</p> <p>While the more recent practice of publishing strategies has improved grantees' understanding of strategic alignment, information available to prospective grantees on the process is largely missing. For example, the foundation's approach and criteria for integrating DEI considerations into grantmaking are not clearly communicated. This is important especially given the</p>	Communications team, POs and Program Associates (PAs)	Easy – communication on website and bespoke feedback. Requires PO time.

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		foundation's focus on the transparency and accountability agenda. By making available more information about the selection process and providing feedback to rejected grant proposals, the foundation would improve its reputation as an organization that practices what it preaches.		
Improving grantmaking	6.1	Make information on the grantmaking modalities available to grantees. While the foundation's legal team has developed resources in Spanish, many grantees are unclear on the criteria for GOS, how to move from General Support, or Project Support to GOS, and how eligibility for OE grants works. More transparent information sharing with all grantees will enable a more equitable, inclusive approach to grantmaking. Once grantees have relevant granting modality information, they can explore opportunities with POs. Better socialization of the purpose and strategic use of OE grants to advance the objectives of organizations will improve the perception of grantees that DEI is embedded through foundation practices.	Communications team, POs and PAs	Easy – communication on website
.	3.5	Organizational development focused on financial sustainability. More emphasis is needed on strengthening organizational health and the sustainability of the CSO ecosystem. There should be renewed efforts to partner with domestic philanthropists to grow domestic sources of funding in order to reduce reliance on Hewlett support. This should be pursued in collaboration with	Effective Philanthropy Group (EPG) and POs	Moderate – will require buy-in across the foundation

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		<p>recent initiatives by the Ford Foundation and MacArthur Foundation to avoid duplication. This could be a funders' circle through which international funders advocate for more domestic funding to CSOs and work alongside CSOs to strengthen the business case for domestic support. This would build on the foundation's efforts on the Enabling Environment for Philanthropy coalition in collaboration with other international funders. The funders' circle could commission research from Mexican CSOs on the current enabling environment for philanthropy and use the evidence as the basis for advocacy. The funders' circle could also establish a fund that would create incentives for domestic philanthropists to offer financial support to CSOs by offering matched funding from the international funders' circle.</p> <p>More organizational development support focused on business models and diversifying funding will improve organizational viability and resilience, and reduce reliance on Hewlett Foundation funding. Hewlett POs should not wait until they are ready to exit the grant to encourage this kind of support. This should be encouraged from the beginning of the relationship.</p> <p>Realistic costing and reimbursement are vital for organizational sustainability, but difficult to achieve. A clear picture of an organization's real project costs</p>		
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		<p>(including externalities like HR, finance, admin, M&E, cleaning staff time, rent, overheads etc) gives grantees data with which to negotiate with donors. The foundation is an active member of the Real Costs Project and a supporter of Pay-What It Takes Philanthropy, and has published a blog on its website titled A Step Towards Supporting the True Cost of Non-Profit Work. More explicit commitment towards strengthening the capacity of organizations' financial, administrative, and fundraising capacity is needed.</p> <p>While strategic planning and managerial capacity are crucial to attracting and responding to funders, CSOs would benefit from more targeted support with business models, funding diversification and sustainability throughout its relationship with the foundation. While there has been some focus on this for US grantees, the foundation would be well served by targeting this support to grantees in their international programs.</p>		
Contextually responsive program strategies	3.1	Global program strategies that are too broad provide less strategic guidance and are more likely to result in a portfolio of grants in a specific context that are more diverse in terms of types of grantees and approach to their work. This diversity makes it more challenging to assess progress and impact towards a strategic goal. It can be like	GDP program director and POs	Moderate – need for buy-in from GDP program director and POs

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		<p>scattering a thousand seeds in several fields while unsure how many will grow and survive. The Hewlett Foundation in Mexico has sharpened its focus since 2015 but may still be spread too thin. It is important to ensure a cohesive rationale for grantmaking is maintained so that there is learning from individual interventions that adds up to a whole that is greater than its parts. This can be facilitated by creating more space for program-level reflection and developing a shared understanding of the common goals or destination. This, combined with regular space for reflecting as a team on the progress of individual grants and the overall portfolio towards strategic outcomes, and asking POs to articulate justification to their peers for individual grants – (which are still strategically aligned, which require additional time to test alignment and which warrant exiting considerations) – will enable greater portfolio alignment with strategy.</p> <p>Country or sub-regional strategies that can evolve in response to context are better aligned to realities on the ground and, if well-focused, can improve the foundation's ability to contribute to and tell the story of influence/impact. In the absence of local country/sub-region presence, it can be challenging to ensure that strategies stay relevant and that outcomes can be more specifically captured and measured (quantitatively or qualitatively).</p>		
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		<p>There are viable, cost-effective options that enable a donor to ensure strategies are aligned with changes in context and that locally embedded partners facilitate both capacity strengthening and disbursement of aid to enable a contextually relevant solution. Some funders work with a local partner organization connected to social, political context, which can ensure that strategies are a living document. This can enable relevant grantmaking that responds to emerging opportunities and policy windows. This indirect approach to aid has been a strategy pursued by many funders. This can be done through a trusted consultant with an extensive network and connections on the ground. The downside of this model is that it delegates some control and decision-making to this local strategist. The upside is that a donor can ensure their strategy is evolving and relevant to the context even if it does not have an in-country presence.</p> <p>With a country/sub-regional focus and priority thematic areas, funders can more effectively manage performance, set up a monitoring framework and collect data on key indicators (quantitative and qualitative) that will add up to targeted impact. Sub-strategies that provide more practical guidance to implement global strategies can serve the purpose of focusing and targeting support to priority themes/issues</p>		
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		<p>that can facilitate progress assessment. However, in the absence of indicators to assess performance and connection with locally relevant contextual factors, sub-strategies may not help to ground the strategy nor provide an understanding of a donor's influence or impact.</p> <p>Continued creation of spaces for POs and grantees to exchange and reflect on what's happening, and what's working and what's not, such as the peer exchanges facilitated through the transparency breakfasts and COMETA events, are critical to maintain for Hewlett POs to effectively learn from each other and tell the Hewlett story.</p>		
Mexico-specific options		<p>Given the 23-year history of using the Mexico portfolio as a place to test and experiment with TPA approaches and then learning from these experiences to adopt approaches and practices in other country contexts, there is value in continuing with this approach. With the closing of civic space in Mexico, which follows a trend unfolding across Africa, Latin America and Asia, there is an opportunity to continue to learn and test new approaches in Mexico that could inform future programming elsewhere. There are opportunities to consolidate some of the progress made, double down where more work is required (citizen engagement/local/grassroots), and renew focus on sustaining progress to date in Mexico (the laws, regulatory</p>	GDP program director and POs	Moderate – need for buy-in from GDP program director and POs.

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		<p>and fiscal frameworks and institutions such as INAI) through the TPA agenda. Given the erosion of progress on some fronts, there is more work needed for further investment in Mexico to advance its sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To achieve sustainable results, the Foundation should consider more grants to local, grassroots organizations to balance highly technical, national, advocacy and policy-level grants, working at both levels for maximum impact and knowledge transfer. However, it must be recognized that it is more challenging to meet disbursement targets and higher transaction costs for POs working with lots of local organizations. Due to structural limitations for many, smaller sized grants, it would be possible to follow the Hewlett model in the US of using re-granters or funds to reach smaller, local, grassroots organizations, with smaller administrative costs and less intensive PO involvement, than doing this type of grant-making directly. Potential down-sides may be losing influence, and privileging regional and international intermediaries over national organizations.• Maintain support to national-level organizations that have strong connections to state and/or municipal-level governments, or with		
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		<p>intermediaries that work directly with CSOs at the state and/or municipal level. It's useful to work with grantees that have capacity to connect the state/municipal level to national-level decision-makers and vice-versa.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue fostering communities of practice, but as more informal alliances, which should evolve at the sub-national level in response to key local agenda issues.• A practical and innovative recommendation to systematize global learning would be to pair Mexico grantees with new grantees in Africa to undertake comparative research with Mexican and African organizations working together on achieving a common objective, and/or African organizations undertaking study "visits" to Mexican grantees and Mexican grantees being embedded in African projects.		
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Annex 1: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Informant Name	Organization / Affiliation
Lourdes Morales	CIDE
Guillermo Cejudo	CIDE
Mauricio Merino	CIDE
Enrique Cabrero	CIDE
Guillermo Noriega Esparza	Sonora Ciudadana
Sergio Aguayo	Sonora Ciudadana
Leticia Cuesta	Sonora Ciudadana
Haydee Perez	Fundar
Tania Sánchez	Fundar
Miguel Pulido	Fundar
Alfredo Elizondo	GESOC
Manuel Alejandro González Arreola	GESOC
Juan Pablo Guerrero	IFAI
Ana Cristina Ruelas	Artículo 19
Guadalupe Mendoza	IMCO / Former Hewlett Foundation PO
Juan Pardinas	IMCO
Alexandra Zapata	IMCO
Manuel Molano	IMCO
Eduardo Bohorquez	Transparencia Mexicana
Fabiola Osorio	Transparencia Mexicana
Edna Jaime	México Evalúa
Mariana Campos	México Evalúa
Ana Pecova	EQUIS
Fátima Gamboa	EQUIS
Isa Erreguerena	EQUIS
Maylí Consuelo Sepúlveda Toledo	Controla tu gobierno
Elvia Arzate	Controla tu gobierno

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José Luis Chicoma	Ethos
Maria Amparo Cásar	Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad
Rafael Fernandez de Castro	Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México
Cristina Galindez	Direct Charitable Agreement (type of grantee)
Jocelyn Nieva	International Center for Nonprofit Law
Claudia Guadamuz	International Center for Nonprofit Law
Segio Garcia	CEMEFI / Incide Social
Friné Salguero	ILSB
Valentina Zendejas Moheno	ILSB
Martha Farmelo	Organizational Development Consultant
Simone Haf	Organizational Development Consultant
Mariclaire Acosta	External Stakeholder
Ana Laura Magaloni	External Stakeholder
Juan Jesús Garza Onofre	External Stakeholder
Ricardo Fuentes Nieva	External Stakeholder
Michael Leyton	Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México
Jonathan Fox	FUNDAR Board Member
Martha Tagle	External Stakeholder
Maria Jose Montiel	Former INAI Director of open government
Manuela Garza	COMETA
Atzimba Baltazar Macías	COMETA
Helena Hofbauer	Ford Foundation
Ximena Andion	Ford Foundation
Liliane Loya	MacArthur Foundation
Mario Arriagada	Open Society Foundation
Felipe Estefan	Luminate
Vonda Brown	Open Society Foundations
David Sasaki	Hewlett Foundation PO
Alfonsina Peñaloza	Hewlett Foundation PO
CR Hibbs	Hewlett Foundation PO
David Lorey	Hewlett Foundation PO & PD

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Libby Height	Hewlett Foundation PO
Ruth Levine	Former Hewlett Program Director
Jen Wei	Hewlett Foundation PO
Joe Ryan	Hewlett Foundation PO
Margarita Parra	Hewlett Foundation PO
Dana Hovig	Hewlett Program Director

Annex 2: Methodology, Limitations & Stakeholder Engagement and Communications

Annex 3: Social Change Case Studies

Annex 4: Organizational Development Case Studies

Annex 5: Retrospective

Annex 6: Summary of Sensemaking Workshop January 26, 2021