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PARAGUAY

CASE STUDY

Coordinated Teams Tackle Impunity

Government agencies join forces to counter public corruption



Photo: USAID/Paraguay/Alfonso Velazquez

Technical staff review audit findings related to possible corruption charges in Paraguay. As members of a Forensic Audit Unit in the Controller General's Office, they have been key in more effectively addressing public corruption.

Deputy Attorney General Carlos Arregui said, "Prosecutors' investigative work that previously took 30 days now only takes one day, due to the high quality of the audit report and findings coming from the Forensic Audit Unit."

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Challenge

The lack of coordination between the Prosecutor's Office and the Controller General's Office resulted in weakened prosecution of public corruption cases due to inadequate audit reports. The audit reports frequently lacked a solid evidentiary foundation for the allegations made, contained irrelevant information, or were so complex that prosecutors were overwhelmed and couldn't determine if crimes had been committed. Meanwhile, auditors lacked both the time and the expertise to conduct sound analyses of their findings in cases where presumptions of corruption were detected. To address this, USAID facilitated the first formal meeting between the Controller General's Office and the Prosecutor's Office, and helped develop an action plan.

Initiative

The accomplishments of the action plan included the training of more than 300 auditors, prosecutors, and support staff; the provision of equipment and technical assistance; and the establishment of a Forensic Audit Unit that functions within the Controller General's Office. This Unit, which serves as a liaison between auditors and prosecutors, provides assistance to prosecutors during the investigation of audit related corruption cases. The Forensic Audit Unit collects and maintains evidence needed for prosecuting corruption cases, and reports these cases via a standardized reporting form that focuses on relevant information needed for prosecution.

Results

As a result of coordinated work between the Prosecutor's and the Controller General's Offices, the audit reports have become more functional, and the prosecutors are more effective in successfully prosecuting individuals on corruption charges. Several high ranking public officials allegedly involved in corruption have been indicted and convicted. In 2006 and 2007, the Controller General's Office submitted 56 cases involving alleged corruption to the Prosecutor's Office, leading to 10 convictions (including one of a former Minister). In addition, many indictments are still pending final oral trial.