

# CASE INFORMATION SHEET

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## COLOMBIA: Legislative Efforts to Prevent Corruption in Large-Scale Water Projects

### The *Agua Transparente* Programme

The Colombian Ministry for Environment, Housing and Development introduced the *Agua Transparente*-Programme in conjunction with a new US\$ 599 million public investment fund for the Colombian water sector in early 2008. This new governmental programme aims to avoid embezzlement in the allocation of public resources through the introduction of mechanisms for transparency and accountability in hiring and tendering processes. The initiative targets especially the water and sanitation sector and is supported by the World Bank. The programme marks a crucial step towards more effective national level legislative reform.

### Corruption Problems

In Colombia, corrupt behaviour among public officials and businesses deters the successful implementation of water and sanitation projects. On the TI Corruption Perception Index 2007, Colombia scores 3,8 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean), which indicates that the levels of corruption among public officials and politicians is perceived to be serious. According to a Colombian government survey, 11,7 billion pesos were provided to the water and sanitation sector between 1996 - 2003, enough to have a nearly 100% coverage throughout the country. However, a bulk of the money was lost to irregular hiring's, unknown extra costs and unnecessary works ([web.presidencia.gov.co/sp/2008/marzo/14](http://web.presidencia.gov.co/sp/2008/marzo/14)).

### Corruption Prevention

To avoid further embezzlement, the new *Agua Transparente*-Programme determines that all contracts have to be publicly announced and that contractors need to publish the status, financial accounts and commitments of their projects. The initiative consists of three main strategies:

- Disseminating information regarding the status and finances of tendering processes and including unions and other stakeholders in the project selection processes.
- Supporting officials in tendering processes by providing sufficient information about the project.
- Building interinstitutional cooperation among diverse public actors involved in the tendering and/or project implementation processes.



**Project Information**

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## Anti-Corruption Strategies

### Transparent Hiring

This tool is part of a series of tendering rules aimed to prevent corrupt behaviour and favouritism in the process of hiring public officials. It establishes a number of strict hiring principles and control mechanisms to oversee management processes and to ensure greater effectiveness of contracts and social control. For example, it obliges contracting organizations to publish all information related to their hiring processes including their hiring principles on the company website and make it available for all interested candidates and the general public.

### Transparent Auditing

This tool is funded by the Presidential Programme for the Fight against Corruption (PPLCC) and seeks to facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices among contractors to ensure more effective and transparent public resource distribution. The key principle of this tool is to involve communities and generate public awareness on the impact, scope and duration of governmental projects in the water sector by informing them about planned projects and how they will benefit from it. The provision of this information will compel contractors to prove more commitment and accountability to the general public.

*“What we looked for was a way to secure financial resources for water and sanitation, so they do not end up in private pockets or get lost due to corruption.”*

**Juan Lozano Ramirez , Colombian Minister for the Environment**

### Lessons Learned

The programme primarily addresses people in urban areas. Thus, more focus needs to be put on initiatives from the rural areas.

This process requires participation of all sectors: the ministry, mayors and governors and citizen participation.

Inform the public with detailed information on: What are the planned governmental projects?; How are we going to go about?; Who are the different actors involved?; What are the stages of implementation?; and How can the community be involved?