

**Democratizing the Budget: Fundar's Budget Analysis  
and Advocacy Initiatives in Mexico**  
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Executive Summary

Fundar—Center for Research and Analysis—an NGO based in Mexico City, focuses on monitoring public funds through the lens of democratization. The organization was founded in 1999, two years before the election of an opposition government to the Mexican presidency for the first time in 71 years. Fundar has developed a unique role in a burgeoning civil society as a professional, research-based organization with a mandate to participate in social justice debates from the perspective of applied budget work. It works on transparency, human rights and governance, and citizen capacity building in coordination with alliances of other CSOs. Fundar has refined its budget work to center around two broad areas—budgets and public policy and human rights and governance, with cross-cutting programs examining legislative issues, transparency, and local-level power. Fundar's 31 staff members are relatively young, and they often develop the capacity for budget research on the job; although the organization also hires specialist skills when necessary.

Fundar's significant contribution to the budget process in Mexico includes simplifying and disseminating budget information, fostering budget transparency, and building the capacity and awareness of budget issues among other civil society organizations. The organization's capacity-building initiatives in Mexico and throughout Latin America, in the form of workshops and training for the media, NGOs, journalists, and legislators, have contributed to wider understanding of budget issues in order to enhance advocacy campaigns. Fundar's efforts to improve transparency have persuaded the Mexican government to publish official budget data on the Internet. The strongest impact of Fundar's budget monitoring work lies in improving the quality of the public debate and access of legislators and CSOs to budget information.

Fundar's work has also directly led to increases in budgetary allocations through its analysis and advocacy work. Through its analysis and coalition-building efforts, Fundar has influenced government programs to combat maternal mortality and pressured for additional funds for maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS prevention. In 2003, Fundar's work led to a ten-fold increase in the budgetary allocation for a national program designed to reduce maternal mortality through emergency health care provision. This represented an additional increase in the order of US\$50 million for a program that would directly benefit pregnant women, especially those from poorer, indigenous communities.

Fundar's successes in occupying a respected space in the national political context and providing useful information and tested analysis to policymakers serve as examples to other organizations. The key challenges the organization faces over the next few years include whether to increase its work at

state and local government levels in Mexico. Fundar will also require an adaptive approach to a changing political environment; with both candidates in the current election promising significant changes in priorities and governance.