



PART 1: BASIC DATA

Title of the experience: Guardianes de los Pantanos de Villa		
Name of the city/region: Lima		
Country: Peru		
Institution presenting the candidacy: Municipalidad Metropolitana de Lima (Metropolitan Municipality of Lima)		
Start date of the experience: January 2019		
End date of the experience: Ongoing		
Type of candidacy	New experience	X
Type of experience	Council	X
	Citizen initiative	X
Objective of the experience	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation and to incorporate diversity as a criterion for inclusion	X
	Community empowerment	X
	To empower non-organised citizens	X
	To increase citizen’s rights in terms of political participation	X
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy	X
Territorial area	All the territory	X
Thematic area	Governance	X
	Environment and/or urban agriculture	X
	New social movements and associationism	X

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Objectives

<p>Main objective of the innovative experience:</p> <p>Promote citizen participation in the promotion and protection of the <i>Pantanos de Villa</i> wetland by creating a space for the participation of children in the management of this protected area.</p>
<p>How have you achieved this objective?</p> <p>Aware that it is vital to involve the population to promote the conservation of the Pantanos de Villa, and that children have proven to be a key ally in the community, the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima opened an innovative space for participation aimed at our children, which we have called "Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa". This experience is aligned to the</p>



municipal policies of protagonist participation oriented to our children in favor of an inclusive and sustainable management of our city.

Children are an important group to attend to because of their potential impact on mitigating the impact on the Pantanos de Villa ecosystem. For this reason, 40 girls and boys between 8 and 12 years of age who live or study in the Pantanos de Villa special regulation zone were chosen by lottery.

"Guardianes de los Pantanos de Villa" gave the children the great opportunity to actively participate in the conservation of this natural area, having a close and collaborative link with the local authorities of the area. In addition, the children were given the opportunity to exercise active citizenship in the city government.

To what extent has this objective been achieved?

The results obtained from the experience highlight the value of this space and the active role of the children who are part of "Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa". Their contribution in the management of the conservation of the Pantanos de Villa has been important, with 31 face-to-face and virtual sessions, learning and generation of proposals; 5 acts of public advocacy with authorities or decision makers, which came to materialize as Ordinance No. 2264 and Deputy Management Resolution No. 7656-2019-MML/GTU-SIT, on the protection of biodiversity in the marshes and accessibility measures that come to favor the more than 25 thousand people who have visited the Pantanos de Villa since this experience was created. Along with these actions, the guardians have been working to raise awareness, sensitization, education, research and promotion of the wetland; and also undertook campaigns against the use of pyrotechnics, cleaning and recovery of public spaces, through actions that achieved great impact in the community. Despite the onset of the pandemic, the work of the guardians continues virtually.

Dimensions of the experience

Which is the most innovative aspect of the experience?

The experience of "Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa" is, in itself, innovative in relation to the effectiveness of participation and in the solution of social and environmental problems. We are convinced that the creation of this space for participation with children has all the potential to 'untie' realities that present complex problems such as that of the Pantanos de Villa.

The power that children can exert to generate changes in the chain and promote the integration of a community that develops activities that threaten the wetland ecosystem is very high. This is the first experience in Peru, and one of the first in the world, that gives a decisive voice to children through their active participation in municipal management.

The innovation of "Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa" lies not only in the exercise itself, but in the paradigm shift with which we respond to the problems of our city. Children become the role models that are needed today in our society, marked by distrust and individualism, and the standard that assures us that our cities can be sustainable.

For authorities who show openness, children help them to do their work better and to look at problems from a different perspective, proposing alternative solutions that materialize in concrete actions that contribute to preserving the ecosystem and benefit the community.



To what extent is the procedure transferable?

The procedure is widely replicable in other contexts and realities, since children in all realities are strongly responsible and sensitive, if allowed, to the improvement of their natural environment and their city. Therefore, giving them a voice in public management decision-making should be considered a common practice by all authorities.

In addition, Lima is part of the International Network of The City of Children, as are more than 200 cities in the world, and could be a means to share the experience.

Why do you consider that the experience is feasible?

The experience is feasible; it has demonstrated the strategic value of the presence of children to generate substantial changes in the community and guarantee their sustainability. As with any participatory experience, it requires openness and political will to recognize that children are citizens and agents of change.

The idea was not to create a parallel structure that would generate additional costs to the management system; on the contrary, the experience was intended to help improve the work already being done, from a new perspective. In the case of our experience, the entire team showed great openness to the new practice from the beginning, but as is normal, immersing themselves in the world of children represented a challenge for the adults.

The girls and boys were not expected to carry the backpack of "leadership" and "brilliant ideas" or "experts"; their wisdom lies in the possibility of making the team more empathetic, honest and sensitive. They helped to keep in mind certain aspects that the elders do not get to hear. Their job is to give us the ideas and ours is to provide the technical tools to make them happen.

How has the experience been coordinated with other actors and processes?

Internally, with organizational units linked to the proposals formulated by the guardians, for example: Urban Mobility Management of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, which contributed with the policy to prohibit the transit of freight cars on Hernando de Lavalle Avenue and the accessibility measures on Prolongación Huaylas, very busy roads in Lima and close to the Pantanos de Villa.

Externally with different allies from civil society, public institutions, community, among others:

- With the International Network of The City of Children, led by Francesco Tonucci in Rome, of which Lima is a member, and who provide permanent support to the vision.
- With the parents of the children who, in their own words, have become "guardian families".
- With schools in the area that facilitate the participation of their students.
- With the Ecological Police and the National Park Service (SERNANP), who supported the awareness day to reduce the use of pyrotechnics.
- With the U.S. Embassy in Peru for the transfer of letters addressed to children of the Sand Lake Wildlife Refuge.

What has been the level of co-responsibility?

Along with the valuable responsibility and commitment shown by the children, the support of their families and educational institutions, we must first highlight the commitment and openness of the different functional areas of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima.

The Mayor of Lima, the Municipal Council, Aldermen and officials, who have supported and favored the approval of policies such as Ordinance No. 2264 and Deputy Management



Resolution No. 7656-2019-MML/GTU-SIT, which includes the contributions of girls and boys guardians to be incorporated over the marshes.

In addition, the proposals that the guardians have put forward during their work have been established as policies in Directive No. 001-2021-MML/PROHVILLA/OFC, Directive of the Girls and Boys Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa, approved on January 28, 2021, by agreement of the Board of Directors of the Municipal Authority of the Pantanos de Villa (PROHVILLA).

Likewise, the Coordination of the City of Children Program of the Social Development Management of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima provides the necessary technical tools to carry out the practice on a permanent basis.

Which evaluation and accountability mechanisms were used?

The evaluation of the practice takes place in each of the moments of the cycle that follow the proposals, ideas or opinions of the guardian children, from the moment they are raised by them until they materialize. The cycle is as follows:

- 1) The guardian children raise proposals, give their opinions or state their needs, after having an experiential experience and knowledge of reality.
- 2) The proposals, opinions or needs are accepted by the technical team of the Municipal Authority of Pantanos de Villa (PROHVILLA) to analyze them from the perspective of the children.
- 3) PROHVILLA's technical team prepares viable proposals based on the children's suggestions. If any of the guardians' proposals are viable, they can be materialized with the respective technical adjustments.
- 4) The proposals worked on by the PROHVILLA team are presented, based on the guardians' requests, so that they receive approval from the group of children and, if necessary, can be adjusted at their request.
- 5) The final proposals are presented to PROHVILLA's Board of Directors for final approval.
- 6) Implementation of the proposal.

Evaluation methodologies use both quantitative and qualitative approaches that are documented throughout the cycle.

Summary of the experience

The Pantanos de Villa is one of the most important wetlands in the middle of a city in Latin America, and its conservation is at risk due to human activities that affect its environment.

Therefore there is a public very committed to environmental care and he demonstrates it with its majority attendance to natural spaces such as the wetlands. Between 2015 and 2018, 6 out of 10 people who visited the Pantanos de Villa were children. They are also citizens, however, during that time, the participation of this group in any space where they could give their opinion or proposals regarding the conservation of the Pantanos de Villa Wetland has been null and void.

We had to generate urgent changes to ensure not only the sustainability of the wetlands but also to start promoting citizenship and action from childhood. For this reason, since 2019, the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima has been promoting the practice of "Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa".



It is the first experience in Peru, and one of the first in the world, that gives a decisive voice to children to act in favour of the conservation of a natural area, through active participation in the Board of Directors of PROHVILLA.

With "Guardians of the Pantanos de Villa", a group of 40 children between 8 and 12 years of age has been formed on an equal basis (20 girls and 20 boys), in compliance with article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the framework of the adherence of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima to the International Network of the City of Children. They come together to propose alternatives that promote better protection and gentler activity in the marshlands.

The presence and advice of children is an important contribution to PROHVILLA, as its officials and staff learn from the children's perspective to be more sensitive, creative, attentive and empathetic in the work of wetland conservation and promotion.

The impact of this experience on the management of the area has been significant with 31 face-to-face and virtual sessions, learning and generating proposals; 5 acts of public advocacy with authorities or decision-makers, which came to fruition as Ordinance No. 2264 and Deputy Management Resolution No. 7656-2019-MML/GTU-SIT, on the protection of biodiversity in the area and accessibility measures that come to benefit the more than 25 thousand people who have visited the Pantanos de Villa since this experience was created. Along with these actions, the guardians have been carrying out awareness-raising, sensitisation, education, research and promotion of the wetland; they have also undertaken campaigns against the use of fireworks, cleaning and recovery of public spaces, through actions that have had a great impact on the community.