

**Regional Partnership  
For  
Decentralization and Local Governance  
In the Americas**

**USAID Quarterly Report VII  
April 1, 2000-June 30, 2000**

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## **1. Partnership Activity Summary**

The *Regional Partnership for Decentralization and Local Governance* will serve as a vehicle with which to implement the Summit of the Americas Plan of Action II, Strengthening Municipal and Regional Administrations. The *Partnership* will contribute to the LAC Regional Sustainable Development Office's Strategic Objective #5 (SO5): "Reinforcement of regional trends that deepen democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean." The *Partnership* will also contribute to LAC's Intermediate Result #2 (IR2): "Strengthened regional mechanisms to improve public sector legitimacy."

### **1.1 Component 1: Donor Consultation**

*The international donor community will establish a Donor Consultative Group (DCG) for Decentralization and Local Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean. ICMA will serve as the DCG Executive Secretariat.*

#### **Activities and Accomplishments this Quarter:**

Four important events were held during this quarter. Both the Inter-American Local Government Conference (IALG) held in Mérida, Mexico and the OAS Sub-regional Meeting held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, were significant in that they brought together local government practitioners from the US, Canada and Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss issues of relevance to local government management – economic development, citizen participation and association development. Of particular significance in the OAS Meeting was the fact that national government officials representing local government ministries, regular participants in the OAS Sub-regional Meetings, were given the opportunity to listen to practitioners from the region and beyond express their concerns and daily struggles in managing their localities in the face of economic and political constraints.

The third event was the roundtable held at the OAS to discuss the Summit mandate of "strengthening regional and municipal administrations." Not only did this event serve to clarify the views of bilateral and multilateral organizations on the processes and progress of decentralization in Latin America, but it was the foundation for the development of a Charter on Local Government which was presented and approved at the Sixth Annual Inter-American Mayor's Conference in Miami held June 27-29, 2000. This represents a significant step in the direction of influencing the agenda of the Quebec 2001 Summit and ensuring that the national delegates take into account the needs of local governments throughout the Hemisphere.

The fourth event, the Regional Conference on Learning from One Another: Strategies, Practices and Lessons for Assisting Decentralization and Local Governance in Latin America, presented an opportunity for the members of the International Forum for Cooperation on Local Government in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Forum) to

address and debate issues related to the process of decentralization and technical assistance to local governments, and learn about each other's strategies and policies as they search for ways to promote complementarity among their programs.

**Following is a brief summary of the meetings mentioned above.**

***Inter-American Local Government Conference***

April 13-15 - Mérida, Mexico

The Conference included around 250 participants – 42 from the US and Canada, 156 from Mexico, and 33 from other Latin American countries. It was organized with assistance from the National League of Cities (NLC), Sister Cities International, and the Mexican Association of Municipalities (AMMAC), who participated in planning meetings, provided input regarding the conference agenda, and identified appropriate participants. AMMAC, as the host of the IULA World Executive Committee Meeting which took place the same week as the Inter-American Local Government Conference, served as its host. Attached is the agenda for the Conference, whose focus was on local community partnerships for economic development. (Annex I).

***Roundtable to Examine Strengthening Municipal and Regional Administrations***

April 25-26, 2000 – OAS, Washington, D.C.

This roundtable was attended by representatives of the municipal sector in Latin America, the diplomatic corps, high-level officials from the Canadian and US governments and the OAS, the IDB, the World Bank, and Florida International University. The objectives of the roundtable were to develop a common understanding of the Summit process, and identify issues concerning decentralization processes and local government development to be considered at the Quebec City Presidential Summit in April 2001. The report from the roundtable can be found in Annex II. Of particular significance is that the declaration that came out of the roundtable was discussed and revised at the Miami Inter-American Mayor's Conference held at the end of June. A new document was drafted and signed by over 350 mayors in Miami. The declaration, included in Annex III, recognizes that local and national governments are engaged in a collaborative process and addresses a comprehensive list of concerns shared by both. The declaration was delivered to Ambassador Boehm's office for forwarding to Prime Minister Chrétien.

In addition to the Summit declaration, the roundtable raised a number of issues regarding the principal problems that are impeding the processes of decentralization, and the strengthening of local governments in Latin America. These issues will be taken up again by the LAC Forum in a broader discussion involving all Forum members.

***Effective Local Governance: Innovative Approaches To Improving Municipal Management***

A Sub-regional Forum of The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy,  
General Secretariat, Organization of American States  
May 16-17, 2000 – Montego Bay, Jamaica

This activity was a joint event of the ICMA International Task Force and the OAS Sub-regional Meeting. The program, found in Annex IV, focused on the areas of citizen participation initiatives, local economic development and association development/networking. ICMA International Task Force members, including city and county managers from the US and overseas as well as representatives of national municipal associations, volunteered to serve as panel speakers and presented case studies from their respective communities. There were a number of Caribbean speakers, as well.

Mr. Keith Miller, consultant to Jamaica's Ministry of Local Government, prepared a background study presenting a comparative perspective of decentralization in the Caribbean. The paper can be found in Annex V of this report. During the Forum, participants provided suggested corrections to the study which Mr. Miller incorporated into the final report.

***Regional Conference on Learning from One Another: Strategies, Practices and Lessons for Assisting Decentralization and Local Governance in Latin America May 25-27, 2000 – San José, Costa Rica***

This event, hosted by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), included among its participants representatives from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies (both from headquarters and field offices), and municipal and regional associations. It was an opportunity for the participants to talk openly about a number of sensitive issues, such as the issue of when an agency should insist on pushing for decentralization when many of the forces in the country are working against it, how to promote horizontal exchange of information and lessons-learned within an organization and why there is still such duplication of effort in technical assistance programs. The meeting reinforced the need for the LAC Forum to enable the donors and development agencies to share information and build upon their comparative advantages. The event was also an opportunity for ICMA as the Technical Executive Secretariat of the LAC Forum to share with the participants, many of whom were new to the Forum, its ideas on how to promote information sharing and collaboration in the Forum. The proceedings of the event are included in Annex VI.

## **1.2 Component 2: Information Exchange and Networking**

*ICMA will work with regional entities to establish sustainable mechanisms for the exchange of information and experience between and among regional organizations, municipal associations and local governments, and NGOs throughout the Americas.*

ICMA signed an agreement with the Chilean Association of Municipalities (ACHM) which will subcontract with PARTICIPA, a Chilean NGO, to solicit feedback on the implementation of the mandate of the Presidential Summit of the Americas in strengthening municipal and regional administrations. ACHM and PARTICIPA will also work with the Chilean Under Secretary of Regional Development (SUBDERE) to solicit feedback regarding the Summit mandate from the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. This feedback will be presented as a proposal in the preparation process for the next Presidential Summit of the Americas scheduled to take place in Quebec City, Canada in April, 2000.

## **1.3 Component 3: Local Government Training**

*ICMA will provide leadership in collaboration with U.S. and Latin American and Caribbean universities, regional and national associations, and municipal support NGOs in designing and implementing practical, affordable, needs-driven and results-oriented local government training programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

The final products of the Training Diagnostic were produced at the end of May in hard copy and CD format. ICMA used the event in Costa Rica to distribute several copies of the Diagnostic to elicit commentary from a number of individuals representing national municipal associations and different multilateral agencies. In the next Quarter, ICMA will engage the Forum members in a discussion regarding the diagnostic in an effort to design a process stemming from the methodology used in Bolivia which would be relevant and useful for other countries in Latin America. The final products can be accessed via the internet at: <http://www.latinterforum.org>.