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CAPABILITY STATEMENT  
for the  
DECENTRALIZATION: FINANCE  
AND MANAGEMENT PROJECT

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The Decentralization: Finance and Management (DFM) Project is sponsored by the Office of Rural and Institutional Development of the Bureau for Science and Technology (S&T/RD) of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD) is the prime contractor for the DFM project under AID contract number DHR-5446-Z-00-7033-00. Subcontractors are the Metropolitan Studies Program of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University (SU) and the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University (IU).

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Decentralization: Finance and Management (DFM) Project is designed to help host-country governments and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) field missions solve the persistent problem of rapid infrastructure and service deterioration once rural road and irrigation construction projects have been completed. The project's primary focus is on host-country institutions that perform key funding, management and maintenance functions where performance is suboptimal. It will analyze reasons for frequent serious neglect of maintenance regimes, and suggest changes in maintenance institutions and finance organizations (e.g., procedures, policies and authority) or creation of new institutions and financing arrangements in order to improve performance. Continuing evidence suggests that overcentralization is a key cause of suboptimal performance. The DFM project will explore decentralization as a component of solutions to these problems.

Decentralizing provision of maintenance services is a contextually sensitive solution that must be tailored to particular situations. Attention must be paid to such factors as the nature of the good or service under consideration, local culture, and the sorts of parallel and supervisory organizations involved in providing or producing the good or service. This suggests that decentralization will be a component of more broadly based solutions.

The analytical focus of the DFM project will be on incentives and disincentives that affect the behavior of citizens and officials and, in turn, the sustainability of the good or service concerned. Defining these incentives and disincentives, and how institutions might be reorganized to encourage sustainability, will be issues that drive the project's services in the field.

Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD), Syracuse University (SU) and Indiana University (IU) have joined together to offer broadly based analytical (diagnostic and prescriptive) and project-support capabilities (design, evaluation, implementation and training) to address problems associated with infrastructure and service deterioration. Using the tools of political economics, institutional economics, institutional analysis and public finance economics, and drawing on the extensive experience of their personnel in third-world development, this consortium is prepared to provide USAID missions with short- and long-term assistance in seeking solutions to these problems.

Applied research on infrastructure maintenance problems and testing of sustainable maintenance systems will be carried out for up to three missions by long-term field teams. DFM will also supply recurrent TDY technical support for project design, evaluation and policy dialogue; development of operational skills and capabilities to manage delivery of rural infrastructure maintenance services and cost recovery; and team building services for LDC organizations. Training to develop analytic skills necessary for improved understanding of institutional incentives, finance and benefit/cost factors in service delivery will also be provided. Finally, lessons of field research and experience will be disseminated through conferences, workshops, networking, reports and publications.

## THE CONSORTIUM

ARD, SU and IU have brought their respective disciplines together to form a consortium with expertise in applied research, implementation of field activities, training and education. Each group has a history of experience in developing countries and a unique approach to development issues, which broaden the consortium's ability to recognize and address problems faced by developing countries.

### Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD)

ARD, located in Burlington, Vermont, has over 10 years of experience working with AID and other international agencies in all geographic regions of the world. The firm concentrates primarily on multidisciplinary research and fieldwork in rural economic and institutional development and renewable resources management. ARD's primary goal is to provide a range of services that promote the development of rural communities and increase productivity at subnational and local levels. Through cooperation with local people and host-country officials, ARD is organized to conduct coherent development programs--from initial surveys of community and organizational problems and resources, to creating the technical, institutional and economic mechanisms needed to sustain development in the target area. ARD staff are prepared to work intensively with national, subnational, local and community officials and residents in analyzing problems, examining the feasibility of potential solutions, planning for collective action or individual initiatives to deal with perceived problems, training personnel, reviewing plans and their implementation, managing projects, and setting up the institutional, socioeconomic and technical structures required to support the innovations introduced. To this end, ARD staff are ready to become closely involved with host-country institutions and communities for long periods of time to ensure the ultimate success of a development activity.

Since its founding in 1977, ARD has provided technical support and policy advice to government agencies, private voluntary organizations (PVOs), development banks, educational and research institutions, and private enterprises in over 50 developing countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Some of the disciplines represented by the core staff are institutional/financial analysis, rural development, anthropology, economics, regional planning, civil engineering and mechanical engineering. The firm has completed more than 90 projects worldwide, and, as the prime contractor for the DFM project, will provide a range of interrelated services including: institutional analysis and design concerning irrigation system maintenance, rural energy supply and services, feeder road

operations and maintenance, and natural resource management activities; needs surveys and assessments; organizational strengthening; and community development to enable local people to produce locally needed services including water supply and sanitation, renewable natural resources management, and rural energy for agriculture, small rural industries and domestic use.

#### Syracuse University (SU)

The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University is the oldest institution in the United States devoted to public affairs education and research and related training. The success of the school as an institution for public service education is partly attributable to its commitment to applied research. The Metropolitan Studies Program within the Maxwell School is a nondegree-granting research and training institute concerned with a variety of public policy issues. Established in 1961, the program is one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the United States. It currently consists of 20 faculty members drawn from the departments of economics, public administration and geography, and 30 graduate students in the same disciplines.

Local government public finance policy and administration has been a primary focus of the program's research and training orientation throughout the last 25 years. The program's group of local finance faculty is probably the largest concentration of such specialists at any university or research institute in the nation. In 1979, the USAID-funded Local Revenue Administration Project (LRAP) was established within the Maxwell School. LRAP and the related Jamaica Tax Reform Project have been an integral part of the research activities of the Metropolitan Studies Program since that time. The dual objectives of these applied research pursuits have been the production of policy recommendations that host countries and USAID missions could use and implement directly, and the compilation of research findings of interest to other scholars and development practitioners around the world. The Maxwell School has also trained a large number of senior government people from over a dozen Asian, African and Caribbean countries as well as Department of State and USAID officials. Courses have ranged in length from two weeks to a year, and included seminars in which foreign and U.S. students worked together. These efforts and the formal degree programs have resulted in an impressive list of Maxwell alumni currently serving in leadership positions in the public and private sectors, as well as in major educational and training institutions throughout the developing world.

## Indiana University (IU)

The Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis has operated as an independent center with a distinctive tradition of scholarship on the Bloomington campus of Indiana University since 1975. The name "Workshop" reflects the conviction that research skills are best acquired when students collaborate with experienced scholars in the organization and conduct of research. To encourage this interaction, seven university faculty members from the disciplines of political science, public administration and economics, and five support staff permanently associated with the workshop, are joined each year by up to 10 visiting postgraduate scholars and professionals from Eastern and Western Europe and developing countries. Together, they participate in Workshop research that is distinguished by its use of broad theories of governance to analyze public policy problems.

Faculty are well-known for their case studies of patterns of organization for water resource development and large-scale survey research studies of how different patterns of organization affect the delivery of public services. The results of carefully designed studies of structure and performance in the provision of public services have challenged conventional theory in the study of local government and public administration. The central focus of Workshop activity is a year-long seminar that introduces visiting scholars and students to a general framework for institutional analysis and important theoretical tools drawn from political science, law, economics and anthropology which are useful in understanding relationships among framework variables. Students are expected to complete their own institutional analysis project during the year, and may also involve themselves in ongoing projects being carried out by faculty associated with the Workshop.

The ARD/SU/IU consortium is well prepared to implement applied research, carry out fieldwork designed to test practical solutions to infrastructure and service problems in developing countries, and train local people and professionals in the practical and analytic skills necessary to organize and operate sustainable systems of infrastructure maintenance. The following sections outline the specific services and strategies the DFM project can offer to this end.

## SERVICES

### Mission Services

The DFM project offers USAID field missions a number of complementary services to improve the short-term performance and long-term sustainability of infrastructure and service projects through institutional reorganization that emphasizes decentralization. ARD and its primary subcontractors, SU and IU, are prepared to provide missions with short- and long-term assistance in analyzing the reasons for management and financial problems in selected infrastructure and service projects, and with the design, monitoring, evaluation and, in some cases, the implementation of decentralized governance and revenue strategies that are appropriate for resolving those problems. The remainder of this section describes services that the ARD/SU/IU consortium is prepared to offer.

### Project Design Assistance

First, the DFM project will work with USAID missions on the design of new projects. It is prepared to send teams into the field to analyze proposed infrastructure and/or service projects in order to identify potential problems with their governance, management and fiscal sustainability. DFM teams will review host-government and donor experiences with similar projects to identify problems generated by perverse incentives for citizens and officials that hinder project sustainability. DFM teams will also analyze when, where and how decentralized governance and public finance systems could be utilized to strengthen project fiscal and management sustainability. In performing these tasks, consortium teams will be prepared to:

- collect and analyze available documentation;
- organize and implement first-stage, field-research activities to evaluate user preferences for infrastructure and service types and maintenance strategies;
- evaluate possible problematic or erosive uses of the infrastructure;
- evaluate the feasibility of possible innovative decentralized approaches to governance, finance and management of infrastructure maintenance, such as contracting out to private firms or other jurisdictions for services, utilizing nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), establishing new special- or general-purpose

units of local government, and developing new public finance systems;

- evaluate the impact of various options for financing the project's recurrent costs; and
- design and provide the training required by personnel who will staff new institutions.

### Infrastructure Project Evaluation

Second, the DFM project will work with USAID missions to evaluate and redesign existing infrastructure or service projects to explore whether decentralized governance and finance strategies might improve the maintenance, management and sustainability of ongoing projects. In this capacity, DFM is prepared to field teams ready to identify, gather and assess the information needed to evaluate the causes of problems with project management and sustainability. Causes might include:

- inability to abate destructive patterns of infrastructure use;
- economic inefficiency (inadequate benefit/cost relations);
- insufficient regular maintenance procedures;
- revenue generation and expenditure systems that are inadequate to sustain recurrent costs;
- infrastructure designs that are inappropriate for local needs or conditions; and
- systems of governance that do not take into account the public good, common property or externality characteristics of the infrastructure goods to be managed and maintained.

In light of the information they collect, DFM teams will determine whether or not decentralized finance and governance strategies might be helpful in achieving better levels of infrastructure maintenance and sustainability. DFM teams will make specific decentralization recommendations concerning project reorganization and the division of labor among local and overlapping jurisdictions, private-sector firms, and NGOs in terms of infrastructure maintenance activities.

Teams will also make recommendations regarding project linkages to various host-government organizations and relevant

AID and host-government procedures and policies, where these appear likely to improve project performance.

It is important to emphasize that while DFM personnel are particularly interested and experienced in decentralized approaches to solving problems with infrastructure maintenance and sustainability, they do not view decentralization as a panacea. Indeed, the body of theory which team members will use recognizes that complex and complementary changes must often be made at various levels of governmental, public finance and management systems to resolve such field problems as inadequate maintenance, erosive usage and inadequate financing systems.

### Implementation and Monitoring

Third, the DFM project will work with host countries and USAID missions to implement, monitor and refine decentralized finance and management strategies in appropriate projects to ensure that they meet host-country needs. Short- and long-term DFM teams will be prepared to work with selected missions to evaluate and adjust the decentralized finance, governance and management components of infrastructure maintenance on an ongoing basis. They will evaluate the performance of decentralized finance and management prescriptions with an eye to refining them in the field and incorporating lessons learned from other missions and donors. Long-term DFM teams will expect to play a significant role in the implementation of new institutional arrangements for the decentralized governance, finance and management of rural infrastructures.

### Training

Fourth, the DFM project will provide training in support of new decentralized finance and management strategies. The consortium staff includes professionals who are trained and experienced in the design of alternative institutional arrangements for the administration, maintenance and finance of infrastructure, and others who are highly skilled in the technical, "nuts-and-bolts" aspects of infrastructure design, construction and maintenance. Strategies discussed under the three preceding tasks will usually require four types of training:

- executive
- analytical,
- operational, and
- long-term.

Executive and analytical training will focus on reaching middle- and top-level administrators, policy-making personnel and analysts who can play key roles in encouraging sustained maintenance of infrastructure investments. This kind of training will emphasize the logic of institutional analysis. It can help administrators and decision-makers meet their responsibilities to diagnose and remedy performance problems. In workshop formats employing a combination of lectures, simulations, discussions, group exercises and an abundance of real-world case materials, DFM teams will show how the analytical tools developed by institutional economics, political economy and public finance economics can be used to illuminate key aspects of such persistent daily problems as feeder-road maintenance and irrigation system management. They will demonstrate how perverse structures of incentives encourage individuals to behave in ways that, in the aggregate, produce problems at the field level such as poor maintenance, erosive usage and underfinancing. They will also demonstrate how these problems can be reduced or overcome by modifying institutional and public finance designs. Teams will emphasize group analysis of real cases, including various ways of organizing the selection, design, construction, management and maintenance of a particular type of infrastructure.

Operational training programs will be oriented toward the needs of local-level citizens, elected officials, administrators, technicians, and representatives of private firms and NGOs. These sessions will aim at strengthening their capacity to fulfill greater responsibilities in decentralized maintenance governance, management and finance, initially by familiarizing them with the strength, opportunities, weaknesses and pitfalls of decentralized approaches. These programs will include training in:

- revenue management,
- maintenance techniques,
- legal procedures needed to assume these responsibilities,
- accounting and auditing, and
- assisting communities in participatory governance and management techniques.

Pedagogical methods to be used in workshops designed for these individuals will include simulations, group exercises, discussions, and the analysis of practical, real-world materials, demonstrations and experiences.

Long-term training will contribute to the DFM project by establishing a core of host-country professionals who achieve a thorough understanding of the project's analytical approaches and

strategies, so that host-country governments can continue the DFM approach beyond the life of the project. The DFM project will facilitate such training by familiarizing host-country academicians and administrators with the Metropolitan Studies Program of Syracuse University's Maxwell School and with Indiana University's Workshop on Political Theory and Policy Analysis. Each institution has strong programs of graduate and postgraduate studies in areas that are critically important to DFM activities, as well as long-standing experience in working with visitors and students from developing nations.

### Policy Dialogue Support

Fifth, the DFM project will provide support for policy dialogue. The consortium is keenly aware that major policies and established procedures of host governments will be affected by and will affect proposals for the decentralized provision of rural infrastructure maintenance services. Thus, the consortium has deliberately chosen senior people for the DFM project's core staff, who have experience interacting with senior host-country personnel, and possess the personal and professional stature to work successfully with these officials. Working under the guidance of and frequently with USAID mission personnel, ARD/SU/IU staff will be prepared to enter into and sustain policy discussions with host-country personnel that are necessary to promote these changes. DFM has also deliberately selected core and support staff who have substantial academic and practical international experience, and are likely to have access to the host country's academic community and other senior donor personnel who will be able to help them develop and pursue these dialogues. Policy dialogue is a delicate, but absolutely critical aspect of the DFM project which the consortium is prepared to emphasize from the outset.

At AID's direction, the ARD/SU/IU consortium has chosen to emphasize decentralization as it pertains to infrastructure projects as a way to respond tangibly to an area of high need as well as one that will probably have high payoffs for AID. Nonetheless, DFM personnel have broad experience with and interest in decentralization, and are willing to work with USAID missions and host governments on a variety of issues pertaining to alternative, decentralized and institutional arrangements in the public sector.

### General Service Strategies

DFM personnel can be made available to missions through long- and short-term arrangements. Because of the importance of continuity, the value of in-depth analysis in understanding infrastructure problems, and the significant emphasis placed on

applied research in the design of this project by AID's Bureau for Science and Technology, Office of Rural and Institutional Development (S&T/RD), three demonstration countries will be selected for intense, long-term DFM project involvement. In these countries, services will be provided through long-term, full-time, resident teams. These teams will assist with analytical and design tasks, and accept primary responsibility for implementation, training and monitoring. Close linkages between DFM and one or more infrastructure projects are anticipated in each demonstration country.

Short-term help will also be supplied in five support countries under the DFM project. In these cases, the project will be involved in assisting USAID missions to focus on and respond to discrete public-service finance, governance and management problems, often in AID-assisted activities, where decentralization strategies appear useful. While DFM work in these countries will not involve demonstration or pilot projects, DFM can offer ongoing consultation in project redesign, evaluation, decentralization feasibility studies, training and support for policy dialogue. The project may also do studies in support of USAID mission or AID/Washington policy and strategy development.

### Summary

Through the DFM project, the ARD/SU/IU consortium is prepared to offer a number of complementary services to USAID missions interested in evaluating and/or pursuing alternative institutional means or public finance strategies of improving the sustainability of infrastructure maintenance. These services include analysis and diagnosis of sustainability problems, project design, implementation, training, and policy dialogue. They will be offered on a long-term demonstration basis and also through intermittent support. Long-term DFM involvement will engage the consortium in helping host countries design, implement and evaluate sustainable arrangements for infrastructure maintenance. Short-term assistance will allow the consortium to help resolve discrete problems with existing or proposed infrastructure activities.

## STRATEGY

The DFM project is designed to help USAID missions solve problems involved in sustaining the long-term useful life of infrastructure and service capacity in rural areas. This project was developed in response to problems donors have consistently encountered with infrastructure degradation and the decline of service delivery after maintenance and/or recurrent costs become host-government responsibilities, as well as strong evidence that rural dwellers and local officials have contributed labor and funds to sustain such investments and will continue to do so. The project's focus is on analyzing, understanding and strengthening institutions and organizations, particularly decentralized ones, that are responsible for these funding and maintenance tasks. This focus grows from the conviction of S&T/RD and the ARD/SU/IU consortium that evidence shows rural dwellers and local officials will take on these tasks if they believe that:

- the infrastructure and/or services are valuable to them;
- the efforts necessary to undertake these tasks are feasible, given their resources;
- it is desirable that the infrastructure/services continue; and
- their efforts are likely to result in its survival.

The consortium and S&T/RD have found that in many instances, rural dwellers, users and officials do have resources to combat the erosion of infrastructure and services, but choose not to do so. Their failure to utilize those resources for maintenance is not irrational in many situations. For example, local residents and officials may have no institutional structure through which they can muster the resources needed to fulfill these responsibilities. Or, local dwellers, users and officials may find it simply not worthwhile to help maintain an infrastructure or service that was designed without attention to local needs and use patterns. Another problem may be that local residents and officials are aware of destructive or erosive infrastructure usage or preemptive uses of services, but have neither the authority nor the means to abate those uses. In this case, abuses may so quickly erode the facility that maintenance is not cost-effective for local residents. Another problem may be that the infrastructure's design requires maintenance that exceeds local skills and resources, or demands teamwork between professionals with technical equipment and local laborers. In these situations, infrastructure redesign or mechanisms to coordinate the timing of maintenance efforts to fit local agricultural cycles may be needed. Of course, local dwellers,

users and officials may simply believe (sometimes with good reason) that if they allow the infrastructure services to deteriorate, outsiders will eventually bear the cost of repairing or replacing the investment. Similarly, officials responsible for some aspects of maintenance may find their organizations operate in ways that consistently distribute resources away from these problems or otherwise make meeting their responsibilities difficult. Many other perverse situations could be described.

While the above problems are diverse, they share a common dimension--the constellation of incentives and disincentives facing local dwellers, users and officials are such that it is too "costly" for them to maintain the investment in a number of ways:

- from the perspective of "transaction costs" associated with trying to organize to collect funds or for management maintenance;
- in terms of the speed of deterioration resulting from misuses they cannot abate;
- relative to the lack of tools or skills needed to maintain the investment;
- if the investment is poorly located or excessively capitalized, given the uses made of it; or
- in terms of attempting to work with a distant, hierarchical, urban-oriented professional ministry as a partner.

In any case, the task makes little sense to the local officials and/or the rural dwellers/users concerned, and they choose not to undertake it. Underlying these situations are institutions that work to continue generating disincentives for project sustainability.

The DFM project is designed to tackle this problem. Its strategy includes three components that confront and resolve these dilemmas. First, it is prepared to assemble teams to go into the field to analyze the reasons behind maintenance problems. These problems probably result from more than one of the circumstances noted above and undoubtedly include others that will only be discovered during fieldwork. During this stage, DFM field staff will interview relevant USAID personnel and host-country government officials and citizens to discover the types of dilemmas that encourage local dwellers and officials to allow local infrastructure/services to deteriorate. While it is expected that each group of persons interviewed will have different perceptions of the situation, DFM believes its teams will be able to integrate these viewpoints into comprehensive,

understandable pictures of the problems involved. A critical focus of field teams will be analyzing problems at two levels-- immediate disincentives for infrastructure sustainability, and the institutional patterns and public finance arrangements that produce these disincentives. These teams will include individuals who are:

- skilled in the analytical frameworks that are pertinent to these dilemmas--political economics, institutional economics and local revenue systems;
- familiar with local social and cultural conditions as well as host-government political and administrative systems; and
- acquainted with relevant infrastructure/engineering or service/technical information.

In most cases, DFM expects that teams made up of U.S. and host-country personnel will spend eight to twelve weeks analyzing local and regional/national contextual aspects of the problem. Thus, the first component of the project's strategy will focus on diagnosing key elements of the problem and suggesting, in general terms, what incentives and disincentives need to be altered to encourage local people, users and officials to undertake the tasks essential for the maintenance and/or operation of the infrastructure or service, and how institutions and public finance systems should be modified to accomplish these changes.

The second component of the DFM project focuses on the prescriptive task implied by the above diagnosis. Here, it will suggest to AID and host-government personnel ways to design institutions that will provide the changes in incentives needed to alter problematic private and official behaviors. Such institutional changes may take the form of new ministry operating policies and procedures regarding maintenance/service responsibilities; modified local government legislation authorizing local dwellers and users to raise funds for maintenance and to abate nuisance uses of infrastructure; or new provisions in local revenue codes that authorize the collection of user fees. DFM teams may suggest altering procedures and protocols that govern the location and technical sophistication of resource design, the complexity and cost of a service, service routines, or procedures to allocate maintenance responsibilities. In this stage, with the USAID mission's guidance, DFM teams will seek ways in which host-government officials can fundamentally alter the options, choices, opportunities and limits available to key actors so infrastructure maintenance and service delivery are consistent with the interests of the key personnel and citizens involved.

The project's title implies that it is a "decentralization" project. While the decentralization of some functions will often be recommended, given pervasive overcentralization in developing countries, a project team will not approach any situation with a predefined set of decentralization recommendations in mind. DFM personnel will analyze each situation independently, using a body of theory which suggests that several levels of government may be involved in providing services enjoyed at the local level. The institutional modifications they recommend will likely require the consolidation or strengthening of certain services, resources or decisions at other than the local level. Because prerequisites for local institutional improvement will often include changes in national statutory provisions, project teams will include individuals who are experienced in dealing with national personnel and institutions. DFM field teams will be multidisciplinary, include U.S. and host-country personnel and, with the USAID mission's guidance, be able to interact with top-level, host-government officials in discussing institutional changes.

Finally, the DFM project includes a third, applied component that offers USAID missions assistance over the long run in implementing, monitoring and refining institutional reforms, and administering such portions of project maintenance/operational responsibilities as the mission, host government, S&T/RD and ARD/SU/IU consortium agree are appropriate. The consortium will place in the field on a long-term basis professional personnel able to engage in continuing analytical and prescriptive work, and organize training, information dissemination and other services supportive of the maintenance/operation tasks. With USAID and host-government support, DFM teams will organize localized experiments to test the results of various different institutional arrangements in a single country. While this is the most ambitious approach, it is also likely to speed the process of discovering what means are the most appropriate and effective for achieving host-government goals.

Through ARD and its major subcontractors, Syracuse and Indiana universities, the DFM project has available over 40 professionals skilled in various aspects of the tasks outlined in this capability statement. The consortium is currently working on a state-of-the-art paper that covers these issues in detail and stands ready to dispatch teams to discuss the project with interested USAID missions on short notice. ARD and its subcontractors are prepared to support missions in long- and short-term analytical and prescriptive tasks, on a limited basis through central project funds and on an extended basis through mission buy-ins.