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**STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:  
U.S.A.I.D.'S EXPERIENCE TO DATE AND PLANS FOR  
THE FUTURE**

**Presentation to the Development Assistance Committee  
of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development**

**Agency For International Development  
Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean**

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## **Introduction and Overall Lessons Learned**

This paper responds to the DAC's request for a background paper on United States experience, and future-oriented ideas based on this experience, in using aid to help build and strengthen democratic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Democracy in LAC merits broad support within the international donor community. We look forward to working collaboratively with other donors on specific programs in the area and are glad to be able to share our experience. We believe that the involvement of others would enhance the effectiveness of programs supported by the United States and would be a valuable demonstration of broad international concern. Moreover, other donor involvement can better enable the LAC countries to benefit from the rich democratic institutional experiences of several countries as they forge ahead in their efforts to strengthen their own democracies.

A principal goal of U.S. foreign assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean is to support the evolution of stable, democratic societies. In pursuit of this goal A.I.D.:

**A. Encourages the strengthening of competent civilian government institutions that will merit the confidence of political and military leaders, citizens and investors. The foregoing requires:**

- Credible institutions carrying out the executive, legislative, judicial, and electoral functions, free from undue political influence, corruption or intimidation that undermines their independence and integrity.
- Respect for and effective protection of individual rights, including security of person and property.
- Delegation to regional and local authorities of power to make decisions having primarily regional and local effect.
- The operation of adequate systems to foster and maintain professionalism, honesty, and continuity in public service.

**B. Encourages pluralism, tolerance of opposing views and support for democratic values on the part of nongovernmental bodies, including the press, community organizations, labor unions, and business associations. This requires:**

- Open, peaceful debate of controversial issues in public fora and the press, and tolerance for opposing views.
- Broad, unfettered participation in civic activities such as voting, and in recourse to governmental authorities and to the judicial system for the redress of alleged grievances.
- Formation of and broad and active participation in organizations, and communication between organized sectors of the society.

Activities under this goal are focused primarily on the so-called "fragile" or "emerging" democracies of Central and South America, rather than on the stable, established democracies (such as those of much of the Caribbean) or countries that are still non-democratic. However, limited assistance is provided to these as well where opportunities exist. A.I.D. is currently spending around \$100 million a year in LAC for democracy activities: \$40 million for administration of justice (AOJ) activities, \$25 million for leadership training, \$15 million for labor development, and \$20 million for other activities, described below. The programs are still expanding.

## **Overall Lessons Learned**

In addition to the specific lessons learned in connection with each of the programs described below, there are certain overall or generic lessons learned in the past few years' experience with the democracy program. They are as follows:

- The programs are working, despite their political sensitivity and, in particular, Latin American sensitivity regarding "Uncle Sam." But they work only if they are designed and implemented collaboratively, so the host country institution feels it has ownership of the activity. The programs must be conducted openly with all parties involved fully aware of the source of the funding (i.e., USG).

- The program has been deliberately situational and opportunistic, supporting and building upon initiatives taken by Latin Americans and responding to their expressed needs. The current rather substantial program evolved from earlier A.I.D.-funded human rights activities that established relationships of cooperation and trust between A.I.D. and host country institutions. Thus smaller efforts laid the foundation for today's larger programs.
- Because of their political sensitivity and high visibility, U.S.-funded programs are best implemented using a coordinated approach involving all interested agencies. Inter-agency committees at both the Washington and field levels are useful mechanisms for ensuring the necessary coordination in project design and implementation. In addition, it is important to be aware of similar or related activities supported by other donors, to assure adequate coordination.
- Successful projects must be based on strong host-country commitment to strengthening democratic institutions. For example, the judiciary and related elements of the government or private sector must be actively working for judicial reform before substantial funding is provided for administration of justice projects.
- Programs require a long-term commitment by both A.I.D. and host-country institutions. The strategic objective is almost always focused on institution-building and will not be achieved in a two to four year time frame. Care must be taken to assure that the program is not politicized by either the donor or the recipient by using it as a weapon to achieve short-term political objectives. Suspending project funding to demonstrate U.S. unhappiness with a given bilateral issue or use of new technical capability to carry out a partisan vendetta jeopardizes the sustainability of the long-term efforts needed to support democracy-strengthening activities.
- Flexibility is key to effective assistance. It is important to be able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, and to change direction or emphasis as circumstances dictate. A.I.D. developed and applied new internal mechanisms for the review and approval of democracy programs in order to increase flexibility and the capacity for rapid response. The program has also required exemptions from U.S. legislative restrictions on providing police assistance and working in countries where A.I.D. is otherwise prohibited (i.e. Nicaragua before the transition, Panama before May 1989 elections).
- Because of the program's purpose, it is necessary for a donor agency to be reactive as well as proactive. The most successful and effective A.I.D.-funded projects originated from proposals received from Latin American institutions or from U.S. private organizations having established relationships and credibility with Latin American entities. Conversely, the projects that have missed the mark or face continuing implementation troubles were usually designed by A.I.D. staff or consultants, with less than adequate collaboration with host country institutions.
- While it is true that democracy must be established and nurtured in each country by its own citizens, regional programs can help accelerate that growth by sharing and adapting ideas and experience, reducing feelings of isolation and hopelessness, raising the level of mutual acceptance of democratic values, and stimulating achievements through peer pressure and support. Regional programs can also offer training and technical assistance to a wider audience on an efficient, cost-effective basis. In addition, some institutions (legislatures, for example) are naturally drawn to associative relationships.
- Small regional grants have proven useful as pilot efforts that laid the groundwork for more ambitious programs. Examples include support to the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (I/IHR), Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (CAPEL), and the U.N.-affiliated Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of the Offender (ILANUD), as described below. Support for issue-oriented conferences sometimes led to longer-range projects. These activities had specific, relatively limited, achievable objectives and expectations. The regionality of the activities allowed participants to share experiences, discover common goals and seek solutions to common problems. This, in turn, stimulated ideas for future collaboration and follow-on efforts on a larger scale.
- Highly sensitive matters can be approached effectively in an academic environment. Scholarly institutions can provide neutral, non-threatening fora where expression of differing views is welcome and often constructive. The advances made by the I/IHR and the civil-military relations project in a relatively short time demonstrate the value of an academic approach.

- In the design of projects, it is important to aim at a single strategic objective rather than a multi-purpose project. Otherwise, measurement of impact and project management become too complex. It is also difficult to provide technical services from a single contractor covering multiple areas. Prior to designing a full-scale program, it is desirable that a needs assessment be carried out to develop the analytical basis for the program. This assessment should be developed jointly with appropriate counterparts with a view toward developing a national consensus on needed democracy-strengthening activities.
- Consultants must be completely fluent in the local language and experienced in the workings of host country institutions. It is often desirable that they be Latin Americans.

### Early Programs: 1961 - 1981

Although the promotion of democracy was implicit in early U.S. foreign assistance programs such as Point Four, A.I.D.'s systematic involvement with democracy programs began with the enactment of Title VI of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961 (the Alliance for Progress), which had democratic institution building as one goal, and with the passage in 1967 of Title IX of the same Act. Title IX stated that:

"...emphasis shall be placed on assuring maximum participation in the task of economic development on the part of developing countries, through the encouragement of democratic private and local governmental institutions."

According to a 1987 consultant report:

"This concept was to be integrated into A.I.D.'s existing programs as a guide for strengthening democratic institutions such as trade unions, cooperatives, professional associations, and volunteer organizations at the local level. Title IX emphasized popular participation, democratic

institution building, and a multi-disciplinary approach to development. Immediately after its passage, Title IX was generally interpreted to mean that A.I.D. was to become more involved with political development activities.

"From its inception, Title IX objectives faced difficulty in being incorporated into A.I.D. projects. A.I.D. staff, primarily economists, were neither trained nor experienced in political development. A.I.D. also raised questions concerning how to integrate Title IX into existing programs, how to determine which political development activities were appropriate for A.I.D., how to evaluate Title IX activities, and how to build the expertise to effectively carry out the directive. In addition, staff were not comfortable with this new area of responsibility as political affairs were traditionally handled by the Department of State.

"In the 1970s, Title IX was overshadowed by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973, commonly referred to as the New Directions mandate, which called for shifting resources to meet the basic human needs of the poor majority. Legislation that followed raised the issue of human rights; the Harkin Amendment in 1974 stated that security assistance and economic aid would be based on a country's adherence to human rights. In 1978, Section 116(e) promoted and encouraged more respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, calling for adherence to civil and political rights."

Four areas of activity were emphasized during this early period of assistance: legislative capacity, local government, civic education, and leadership training. In 1987 A.I.D. commissioned a retrospective assessment of A.I.D.'s experience with these programs from 1961 to 1981.

## The Recent Past, Current and Planned Programs: 1978 - 1996

Between FY 1978 and 1983, A.I.D.'s Latin America and Caribbean Bureau (AID/LAC) managed a human rights program, authorized under Section 116(e) of the FAA. That program included, *inter alia*, support for the regional human rights education and research programs of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IIHR) and programs of the UN-affiliated Latin American Institute for Crime Prevention and Treatment of Offenders (ILANUD) that were forerunners of the present Administration of Justice program.

In FY 1984, a special Congressional earmark provided the first \$3 million of the \$9.2 million Administration of Justice program in El Salvador.

At about the same time, the United States began to implement the recommendations of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America (known as the Kissinger Commission). The Kissinger Commission, named in 1983 to propose a long-term U.S. strategy that would best respond to the social, economic, and democratic development challenges in the region, placed democratic development at the core of U.S. policy and recommended the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Since then, AID/LAC has funded a number of regional and bilateral projects aimed at developing and strengthening democratic values, practices, and institutions, primarily in Central America but also increasingly in South America and the Caribbean.

The following ten areas of current and proposed A.I.D. investment are based in part on experience over the past 20 years. They are also based on a recent analysis of the principal factors facilitating the creation of stable democracy and the constraints that need to be addressed Latin America to achieve this.

### 1. Strengthening application of the rule of law.

Democracy only works in societies that respect the rule of law and have adequate institutions for enforcing the laws. A.I.D. has programs in two main areas: the administration of justice and strengthening human rights.

#### *Administration of Justice*

The Administration of Justice (AOJ) program has become a major element of A.I.D.'s democracy strengthening efforts, due in part to Congressional earmarks. This program seeks to increase the independence and competence of justice systems in Latin American countries through broad-based assistance. Activities are designed to train judicial personnel, improve court administration, enhance legislatures' ability to revise and reform laws, bolster local institutional support, upgrade local law libraries, upgrade judicial qualifications, assist local and regional bar associations, improve criminal investigative capacities of governments, establish and expand public defender systems, conduct public education and continuing legal education programs, and publish case reports and textbooks.

The AOJ program includes assistance for purposes of enhancing police investigative and forensic capabilities, management training and academy curriculum development. Unlike A.I.D.'s earlier public safety program, which was terminated amid allegations of the use of torture by U.S.-trained police, this program does not provide general law enforcement training. The U.S. Department of Justice administers the investigative assistance component in a manner that promotes improved coordination among police investigators, prosecutors and judges.

The following lessons have been learned from experience to date in the AOJ program:

- The program is working, at least up to a point. Fears that it would prove too sensitive for U.S. government involvement have been largely overcome. There is great interest throughout the region in the program and clear needs for assistance that can be met with relatively modest funding levels.

- Meaningful judicial reform will not occur without a commitment to reform at the highest political and governmental levels (both civilian and military). In El Salvador, for example, the A.I.D. Mission reports that an investigative unit and a forensic laboratory established under A.I.D.'s project mark historic steps forward, and some improvements in the court system have been introduced. However, essential legislation has yet to be enacted, some needed reforms have not even been analyzed, and overall, despite good progress in individual project activities, the system as a whole is not performing efficiently or democratically.<sup>2</sup>
- Some of the difficulties with projects stem from their complexity and high initial levels of funding. The initial generosity of the Congress to the AOJ program, and the accompanying high expectations, may well have been too much too soon. In retrospect, a gradualist approach might have been better--less overwhelming to relatively inexperienced Latin American institutions, allowing opportunities for new concepts to become embedded and the programs and institutions to advance and grow at a more comfortable rate. The high initial funding levels have also helped to "label" these programs, especially in the smaller countries, as United States Government rather than host country programs.
- Regional organizations help to "internationalize" the program, thereby preventing the program from becoming a bilateral issue, though few have the relevant expertise.
- Administration of justice issues can successfully be incorporated into a Mission's overall policy dialogue agenda.
- It has proved possible to train judges, prosecutors and police in criminal investigative techniques in order to improve the use of physical evidence in criminal trials, but the more difficult problem is improving working relations among them.
- The use of experts for technical assistance from countries with similar legal systems promotes acceptance of ideas.
- Ensuring the capacity of regional organizations to handle project responsibilities is essential for success.

### ***Strengthening Human Rights***

The program's objective is to increase respect for and observance of internationally recognized human rights. Freedom and the rule of law, and hence democracy, do not exist in an environment where human rights are systematically violated.

Program funding enabled the Inter-American Human Rights Court to establish in 1980 the IIHR, a regional, non-governmental, academic institution dedicated to the promotion of human rights in the Americas. In ten years, with continued support from A.I.D. and other donors, the Institute has become the preeminent human rights education and research organization in the region. Individuals and groups engaged in the promotion and defense of human rights increasingly rely on the assistance of the Institute.

A.I.D. currently supports the education and research activities of the IIHR. Areas of special focus are human rights education in schools at all grade levels; rights of women, indigenous peoples, refugees and displaced persons; and training for human rights lawyers and activists.

Through this program, A.I.D. has learned that part of the long-term solution to addressing human rights abuses and instilling respect for human rights is through education programs that start in elementary school and continue to be reinforced through adulthood.

### **2. Strengthening Electoral Processes and Institutions**

At the very core of democracy is the right to freely choose one's government and to hold that government accountable through free, fair, and regular elections open to all adults. An open and independent electoral process is essential for orderly democratic transition from one administration to the next.

A.I.D.'s objective is to support and strengthen independent electoral tribunals--bodies whose results can be accepted by all parties involved in the process--so that they can carry out free, fair, and open elections.

The electoral processes in LAC countries are being strengthened principally through LAC support in the training, technical assistance, research, and networking activities of CAPEL. Bilateral funds are also used to support commodity assistance to electoral courts and start-up costs for institutional development projects. In addition, A.I.D. provides support for various independent election observation and monitoring activities.

In 1983, at the urging of Latin American leaders, the IIHR created CAPEL to encourage the practice of regular, free elections in the LAC region. CAPEL conducts research, widely distributes scholarly articles and other information in Spanish about the electoral process, and provides technical advice and assistance to electoral courts and other institutions. CAPEL has helped create two associations of electoral bodies, one for Central America and the Caribbean, and another for South America, through which electoral officials of member countries advise and reinforce one another in building and sustaining capable, independent electoral bodies. Two highly successful training programs—the training of local level electoral officials and party pollwatchers in Guatemala (1985 and 1988) and a voter education/registration program in Chile (1988)—are looked upon as models for programs in other LAC countries.

Lessons learned in the context of this program are as follows:

- CAPEL has established itself as the premier provider of technical assistance and training to Latin American electoral commissions. This is in large part because it is a Latin American institution.
- The presence of unbiased international election observers has been effective in discouraging intimidation and corruption and enhancing the credibility of the electoral process.
- Election assistance must be provided on a technical, strictly non-partisan basis to avoid accusations of partisanship.
- Ideally, assistance to electoral courts or commissions should focus on building institutional capacity and be provided during periods between elections when officials and staff are not facing the pressures of political rivalries and the demands of election administration.

### 3. Strengthening Political Parties

Strong political parties and party systems are critical to stable democracy. A recent study observes that among 26 countries studied, "where at least one and eventually two or more parties were able to develop some substantive coherence about policy and program preferences, some organizational coherence and discipline, some complexity and depth of internal structure, some autonomy from dominance by individual leaders or state and societal interests, and some capacity to adapt to changing conditions—incorporating new generations and newly emergent groups—democracy has usually developed considerable durability and vitality."<sup>3</sup>

A.I.D. leaves support of political party strengthening primarily to the National Democratic and Republican Institutes, with support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). NED is a private, non-profit organization established and funded by the U.S. Congress to promote democratic values and practices around the world, working with non-governmental organizations. A.I.D. did, however, provide in FY 1990, through the National Democratic Institute, a \$100,000 grant to strengthen the three major political parties in Bolivia after the May 7 elections. The technical assistance and training was focused on institution-building and technical problems, such as organization, use of the media, and fund-raising. It is anticipated that similar assistance to political party development may be provided in Haiti and other selected cases.

A.I.D. also reaches political leaders through legislative and electoral assistance programs, given their very active involvement in these processes, and through the training programs described below.

A.I.D. believes it is critical to ensure that assistance to parties is provided to and is perceived as being provided on a non-preferential basis to all parties that endorse and follow democratic principles and practices. Otherwise the assistance will be viewed as interfering in the internal affairs of another sovereign country.

#### 4. Strengthening Legislatures

Legislatures have in the past been viewed by some development experts as sterile, fractious organizations with little to offer the development process. Currently, however, strong legislatures are generally viewed as an essential institutional component of the development process, as well as a check on unrestrained executive power. Legislatures serve a number of important functions related to the allocation of resources, the articulation of the needs of a diverse constituency, the need for an information channel between citizenry and government, the legitimizing of government policies and programs, conflict management and the training of future leaders.

As one A.I.D. consultant's report explains, "Under Title IX, strengthening legislative capacity became a new area of technical assistance for A.I.D. As there was a lack of policy guidelines and strategies for this new initiative, a rigorous program of research was undertaken by the American Society of Public Administration and U.S. universities. Through A.I.D. support, the universities did succeed in developing an institutional capacity to continue research, training, and publishing.... Valuable information concerning legislative development was brought to light as a result of the research grants."<sup>4</sup> But little was done to strengthen host country legislatures.

A.I.D. now seeks to strengthen legislative capacity by providing technical assistance directly to host country legislatures. The initial focus is on enhancing legislatures' institutional capabilities to draft legislation and improve the analytical and management capacity of LAC legislatures through training, promotion of research, and dialogue on major policy and national and local parliaments. In addition, recognizing that an independent, professional legislative auditor general is important to ensuring that legislators have independent information on government programs, A.I.D. is also training and strengthening the Offices of the Comptrollers General of Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. Courses developed for them will help structure similar courses for other legislative audit offices in Latin America.

Replicating the successful experience in 1982 of the Congress of the Dominican Republic, the

legislatures of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador developed and conducted their first legislative orientation seminars for new members following the 1985 elections. The interest and enthusiasm generated by these activities led to the initiation of similar projects aimed at strengthening the analytical and material capacities of members and staffs. In addition, regional activities implemented by the Center for Democracy have established and reinforced relationships among Central American legislative leaders and with their counterparts in the United States and Western Europe. Central Americans participated in the Council of Europe's Second Strasbourg Conference on Parliamentary Democracy in 1987 sponsored by the European Parliament and the Concert of Europe, and are included on the planning committee for the Third Conference in 1991. Guatemala's hosting of the 1988 meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union further strengthened relationships between Latin American legislators and European counterparts.

A three-year regional project in legislative development began in September 1990. The project will provide resources to increase the administrative and information management capacity of national level legislatures in participating countries, and it will also support activities that increase contact and cooperation among legislators in the region and with fellow parliamentarians in the western democracies. It is anticipated that additional country-specific legislative development activities will soon be initiated.

Lessons learned with the current program are:

- Training programs in this area must be offered to all members of Congress, regardless of party affiliation, to avoid the appearance of partisanship.
- Congressional support services can be developed in-house, as they are in Honduras, or outside the Congress as university-based services situated near the Congress (Chile).
- Legislators appreciate opportunities to come together on a regional or sub-regional basis to share experiences and address common problems.
- Assisted legislatures often do not realize how they can utilize a strong legislative auditor general to obtain independent and objective reports on the progress of legislatively authorized activities. They usually need assistance in learning how to utilize these services effectively.

## 5. Improving the Honesty and Competence of Government

The legitimacy of democratic regimes depends on their being perceived as reasonably honest and reasonably competent in the delivery of essential services. Accountability has many facets, but the most visible and basic is financial, to prevent blatant corruption, theft and waste. In recognition of this fact, and in response to growing Latin American interest in this area, AID/LAC has recently issued financial management guidelines in a booklet "Your Role in the Accountability Process"; has sponsored the organization and functioning of the Donor Working Group on Improving Public Sector Financial Management in Latin America and Caribbean, which has held five quarterly meetings to date; and has designed for Panama an integrated financial management system and a comprehensive audit system. In addition, AID/LAC initiated in FY 1989 a pilot regional project focused on improving the financial management and auditing systems of interested host governments. A broader follow-on project will include a strategy to assist cooperating governments assess their respective corruption constraints and help overcome them. It will also support the design and implementation of integrated financial management systems to strengthen the quality, reliability, timeliness and credibility of information used in the managerial decision-making process.

Lessons learned from work to date in this area include the following:

- There is a surprising new receptiveness to speaking frankly about and openly opposing corruption and dishonesty in government. While this issue is still somewhat sensitive in some countries, it is at the forefront of public debate in others. Where sensitive, the issue can best be introduced by using case studies from other countries as a consciousness-raising activity, leading participants to gradually begin to focus on the local situation.
- Donor organization efforts must be coordinated to avoid providing conflicting advice to recipient governments and assure uniformity of criteria.

- Massive training programs are needed but have little value unless linked to substantive reform efforts.
- Proven professional practices and techniques-- not unproven, untried, *ad hoc* "ideas"-- must be applied. To this end, consultants must be recognized professionals in their fields with practical, real world experience.

## 6. Strengthening Local and Municipal Government

Excessive government centralization has been a problem in many Latin American countries, but a number of countries are recognizing this problem and beginning to adopt measures to remedy the problem.

Devolution and decentralization of power to local levels are important to strengthening democracy for a variety of reasons: they provide ways of reducing ethnic or regional cleavages; and in providing for greater responsiveness to popular needs, they reduce alienation and bind people more closely to existing systems. They also provide for closer accountability and relevance to local needs in designing and implementing development programs, and provide opportunities for broader participation in government and hence education in democratic practices. For all these reasons, AID/LAC has once again begun supporting LAC efforts to strengthen local government, and plans to expand such support in the next few years. Currently, A.I.D. has recently approved a major municipal development project in Honduras, and has been supporting for several years a "municipalities in action" program in El Salvador that has proved very popular and successful in empowering local officials and communities and delivering development services. In Guatemala, A.I.D. is analyzing possibilities for supporting a decentralization program begun by the Guatemalan government. In some countries, A.I.D. is training mayors and members of city councils.

Among the areas A.I.D. is considering for expanded support are: strengthening local election and government decision-making processes; decentralizing urban development finance and management; assisting in

program/project planning and evaluation; and strengthening service delivery capabilities.

AID/LAC intends to re-enter this area mindful of its considerable experience with municipal development programs during the 1960s and 1970s. Assistance during this era was not particularly effective in giving greater autonomy and decision-making power to local governments, probably because of an approach to the subject that sought to avoid issues of political power and reflected A.I.D. and multilateral donor comfort in working with central rather than local government.<sup>5</sup>

### 7. Supporting Civilian Control of the Military

Latin America has a history of military coups, unnecessarily large military establishments, inappropriate influence by the military over civilian government, and inappropriate involvement in economic activities. Since democracy depends on civilian control over the military and public unwillingness to tolerate any other arrangement, in many countries the size and role of the military are being actively debated.

Through an A.I.D.-funded study project, The American University's School of International Service and a private Uruguayan organization have developed new information on civil-military relations in Latin America, and have also significantly increased dialogue among military and civilian leaders in the region. A May 1988 conference in Washington, attended by more than a hundred internationally renowned scholars, civilian and defense experts, and military leaders from North and South America, created a new network among the participants. In addition, an important regional conference was held June 11-15, 1989 in Guatemala, hosted by the Defense Minister, which brought together Central American military and civilian leaders and academics to discuss their respective roles in transition to democracy. A second regional conference focused on South America will be held in Uruguay in 1991.

In the next few years, A.I.D. plans to utilize both policy dialogue and project assistance to build on and move well beyond these initial efforts. Areas under consideration for support include: helping civilian scholars and policy

specialists to acquire credible expertise in military and intelligence affairs; helping legislatures develop the institutional capacity to monitor military and intelligence systems effectively and routinely; and helping civilian leaders implement strategies to narrow military involvement in conflict resolution and economic activities, to enhance military professional capacities, to build effective procedures for civilian control, and to continue to improve consensus on appropriate civilian-military roles.

### 8. Promoting and Strengthening Alternative Information and Opinion Sources

Democracy depends on the citizenry having access to a variety of information and opinion sources: the written press, radio and TV; books and journals; and informed debate in critical public policy areas.

In some Latin American countries, journalism has been a low-paying, low-status profession, lacking in professionalism. To address these problems, A.I.D. initiated in FY 1988 a grant to Florida International University (FIU) to strengthen journalistic professionalism and improve mass media education and research capacities in Central America. This is being done through training, creation of regional associations of media professionals and owners, strengthened and more appropriate university journalism education programs, and the establishment of self-sustaining centers for mass media training in Central and South America. A.I.D. is also supporting improved journalism education, with adaptation of U.S. textbooks to the Latin environment and long-term training in the United States in specially adapted journalism courses. Rural radio journalists are being trained to broadcast news programs that focus on local issues and impart information of practical use to farmers and other rural residents.

In addition, through the Regional Technical Activities Center (RTAC) in Mexico, A.I.D. is supporting the translation into Spanish, and sale to university students at affordable prices, of U.S. texts in a variety of academic and technical subjects that would otherwise be unavailable. This program has proved extremely popular, with demands for texts far outstripping original estimates.

These activities are all proceeding successfully. Similar and follow-on activities will be supported during the next few years.

Lessons learned to date in this area are:

- Programs must be—in actuality and perception—free from manipulation by any government, political or social group, or other vested interest (competitive selection of trainees has helped accomplish this); and
- Working with the media is among the most sensitive areas in the democracy program.

### **9. Promoting and Strengthening Pluralism and Citizen Participation**

The recent 26-country comparative survey previously referred to concludes, "Just as democracy requires an effective but limited state, so it needs a pluralist, autonomously organized civil society to check the power of the state and give expression democratically to popular interests. Among our Latin American cases, there is a strong correlation between the strength and autonomy of associational life and the presence and vitality of democracy."<sup>6</sup> To date, AID/LAC has sought to promote pluralism primarily through its civic participation and labor development programs.

#### *Civic Participation*

Success in building and maintaining democracy requires that viable decision-making institutions and leadership be supported at the local as well as the national level. Just as it is important to have strong, well-functioning electoral, legislative, and judicial systems, so it is equally important to assure that the citizenry has access to these institutions, and that people have the knowledge, skills and confidence to permit their full participation. Legislators, judges and electoral officials, as well as other government officials, need to understand the concept of "constituency" and their responsibilities as public servants.

Two current programs have been operating in Central America since 1985. The Education for Participation (PEP) training program in Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica helps citizens learn and

use leadership and organizational skills to address local problems. A grant to the Partners of the Americas provided support for Central American Partner Committees to carry out activities aimed at strengthening the democratic leadership of public and private institutions.

Another area of support is non-partisan voter education, as illustrated by the highly effective programs carried out by local organizations in Chile and Nicaragua in preparation for their last elections. Both programs heightened voter confidence in the electoral process and significantly increased participation at the polls.

Lessons learned from the program are:

- Latin American citizens can be very resourceful in effecting positive changes in their communities.
- Project participants appreciate that working together democratically is an effective way of achieving common objectives.

A new regional project, Citizen Participation, is planned for FY 1991 or 1992 focused on civic participation and education in urban and rural communities. Participants from all economic levels would be prepared for leadership roles in politics and government, business, cooperatives, civic and community groups and other voluntary associations.

A.I.D. is also planning to assist the Partners of the Americas to expand its Partner Cities concept, through which people outside the capital receive training and assistance to form and operate local committees. The program would increase the level of training and technical assistance Partners provides to municipal-level public officials in Central America.

#### *Labor Development*

Strong democratic free labor unions contribute to societal pluralism, helping workers to resist repressive governments and combat the use of organized labor to achieve ideologically extremist objectives. For this reason, A.I.D. for many years has supported the programs in Latin America of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), the overseas arm in Latin America of the American Federation of Labor and

Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL/CIO), which is the United States' largest labor union. AIFLD provides assistance to labor movements in educational activities, social programs and union organizing. Training is provided, *inter alia*, in collective bargaining, labor management relations, and financial management. A.I.D. also supports union-to-union programs, coordinated by AIFLD, which provide similar assistance and provide direct linkages between Latin American and U.S. unions. AIFLD also receives support from the NED.

In addition to these civic participation and labor development activities, A.I.D. plans to support other associations and networks that would further democratic citizen participation.

#### 10. Strengthening Democratic Values and Leadership

Probably the single most significant determinant of democracy is a country's political culture, "essentially a distillation of the country's history into those characteristic political attitudes, beliefs, values and information that support or impede democratic pluralism."<sup>6</sup> Democracy requires "an elite and a general citizenry that have the values, attitudes, interests and knowledge necessary for democratic viability. For a democracy to be established successfully or endure, the people must be committed to a democratic system or to the idea of [one].... Neither elites nor the general public can see democracy as simply an attractive alternative to experiment with on occasion: they must see it as the only legitimate political system in the world."<sup>7</sup>

Democracy also requires effective leadership. The recent 26-country comparative study concludes that "the skills, values, strategies, and choices of political leaders figure prominently in our explanation of the enormously varied experiences with democracy in Latin America... A flexible, accommodative, consensual leadership style is more successful in developing and maintaining democracy than a militant, uncompromising, confrontational one (although sometimes at the price of needed reforms). Second, the effectiveness of democratically elected or oriented leaders in state building and economic

development is clearly associated with the overall success or failure of democracy over time..."<sup>8</sup>

While there is a consensus that political culture and leadership are vital to democracy, it is less clear that those factors can be influenced by foreign assistance activities, such as training—although attempts to do so have certainly been undertaken. Numerous leadership training projects were generated in the 1960s and 1970s; many involved training in the United States. Those projects all sought to train leaders capable of building institutions and encouraging maximum popular participation in their countries. These projects were very popular and appear to have had a positive effect on participants' growth. The effect of the leadership training programs on the achievement of democratic values is much less clear, especially because many of the participants became very radicalized, and indeed many became victims of violence. Evaluators reported disagreement on whether training in the United States was required to achieve the strengthening of democratic values.

To help instill democratic values in (as well as technical training for) the present and prospective leadership of assisted countries, A.I.D. launched in 1985 a Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP) that will provide training in the United States to over 15,000 individuals between 1985 and 1993 (12,200 from Central America plus another 3,000 funded by USIA, 1,785 from the Caribbean, and 1,740 from South America). Most of this training (about 67%) is short-term i.e. no more than nine months), focused on the socio-economically disadvantaged (86%), on women (over 42%), or people from predominantly rural areas, and on present or prospective leaders (over 86%).

Evaluation of the program to date indicates that it is very popular; more effective where clear policies and procedures exist for recruiting, selecting, programming, placing, and monitoring trainees; and in need of more intensive follow-on activities as trainees return. A.I.D. will probably continue this type of training, albeit perhaps at a reduced level, after the present project ends in 1998.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

### **AFL/CIO**

American Federation of Labor /Congress of Industrial Organizations

### **A.I.D.**

United States Agency for International Development

### **AOJ**

Administration of Justice

### **CAPEL**

Centro de Asesoría y promoción Electoral  
(Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance)

### **CLASP**

Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program

### **FIU**

Florida International University

### **ICITAP**

International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program

### **IIDH**

Internacional de Derechos Humanos (see also IIHR)

### **IIHR**

International Institute of Human Rights

### **ILANUD**

Instituto Latinoamericano de Naciones Unidas para la Prevención del Delito y Tratamiento del Delincuente (U.N.-affiliated Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of the Offender)

### **LAC**

Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

### **NED**

National Endowment for Democracy

### **RTAC**

Regional Translation Activities Center

## ENDNOTES

1. "A Retrospective of A.I.D.'s Experience in Strengthening Democratic Institutions in Latin America, 1961 - 1981," September 1987 report prepared by Creative Associates, Inc. for AID/LAC/AJDD.
2. Cable from USAID/San Salvador, "Experience with Democratic Initiatives," San Salvador 12111, 7 September 1990.
3. Diamond, Larry, Seymour M. Lipset and Juan J. Linz; Politics in Developing Countries. forthcoming; p. 27.
4. "Retrospective," p. IV.
5. See "Retrospective" for further details on this, as well as previous experience with strengthening legislative capacity, civic education, and leadership training programs.
6. Diamond, Lipset and Linz; Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America, Volume 4; 1989 Lynne Rienner Publishers; p. 35.
7. Gastil, Raymond; "Appropriate Strategies for Promoting Democracy," paper prepared for the A.I.D. seminar on Asia and the Near East Bureau's Democratic Pluralism Initiative, June 6, 1990.
8. Ibid., pp. 5 - 7.
9. Diamond et al; op.cit., pp. 14 - 15.