

PN-ACB-598

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**SONORA, MEXICO,
MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT:
DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT OF
THE CITY OF BACOACHI**

August 1997

Prepared for

U.S. Agency for International Development

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Municipal Development and Management
USAID Contract No. PCE-1008-Q-00-5002-00
USAID Project No. 940-1008
Delivery Order No. 5

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ABSTRACT

The Sonora, Mexico, Municipal Development (SMMD) Project was initiated in response to the local government demand for autonomy in Mexico. Under this USAID-funded project, ICMA will provide technical assistance and training to six municipalities in the state of Sonora, Mexico: Agua Prieta, Cananea, Naco, Naco, and Bacoachi. The purpose of the SMMD project is to improve the capacity of the six municipalities in promoting and increasing citizen participation in municipal government decision-making and processes; managing the quality of their urban environment; promoting sustainable economic growth by addressing managerial, environmental, and economic problems that impede development; and developing stronger municipal partnerships along the U.S.–Mexico border both through Mexican inter-municipal cooperation and U.S.–Mexico partnerships. This report describes the diagnostic assessment completed by the ICMA technical assistance team in the City of Bacoachi.

SONORA, MEXICO, MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

1 INTRODUCTION

The Sonora, Mexico, Municipal Development (SMMD) Project was initiated in response to the local government demand for autonomy in Mexico. Under this USAID-funded project, ICMA will provide technical assistance and training to six municipalities in the state of Sonora, Mexico. The cities (and their estimated populations) are Agua Prieta (80,000), Cananea (35,000), Nacozari (18,000), Fronteras (10,000), Naco (8,000), and Bacoachi (1,800). This report describes the diagnostic assessment and recommendations completed by the ICMA technical assistance team in the City of Bacoachi.

The purpose of the SMMD is to improve the capacity of the six municipalities in promoting and increasing citizen participation in municipal government decision-making and processes; managing the quality of their urban environment; promoting sustainable economic growth by addressing managerial, environmental, and economic problems that impede municipal development; and developing stronger municipal partnerships along the U.S.–Mexico border both through Mexican intermunicipal cooperation and U.S.–Mexico partnerships.

This project has the potential for providing several models that can be replicated by the rest of the municipalities in the scope of this project and throughout Mexico. The technical assistance team is contributing knowledge of “best practices” in municipal management and in the sharing of resources. The team will provide SMMD municipalities with models for technical manuals that can be adapted to the local situation. These models for local and regional cooperation among U.S. local governments offer solutions for common problems and issues through resource sharing and could be used by Mexico’s municipalities to address regional problems. The models have special potential for Mexican municipalities that share regional issues with U.S. municipalities along the border, in the states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. The team will also provide citizen and employee participation models that can be used to institutionalize different people in the decision-making process.

Phase I of the SMMD is the technical assistance component. This phase involves conducting a diagnostic of each of the municipalities. The diagnostic will involve all aspects of the municipalities’ operations, including urban environmental problems of potable water, wastewater, solid waste collection and disposal, hazardous wastes, and air pollution. In addition, municipal management practices, finance, budget, citizen participation, and strategies for economic development will be examined. Phase I seeks to improve municipal effectiveness and efficiency, identifying new resources of revenue for the improvement of basic service delivery and increased infrastructure investment. Citizen participation and influence in municipal governments’ decision-making are a key component of Phase I.

Phase II of the project will provide further technical assistance and training to the community and government leaders in prioritizing and implementing the project's findings and recommendations.

2 METHODOLOGY

The technical assistance team conducted an orientation meeting with the Mayor, Councilmembers, and other key personnel to review the scope of the SMMD project and its objectives. In addition, the meeting served to solicit the group's perspectives on the problems facing their community and government and the objectives they sought to achieve.

In a subsequent visit to Bacoachi the technical assistance team conducted one-on-one interviews with available officials and department heads. In addition, a tour of Bacoachi and its infrastructure and facilities was conducted. The team reviewed pertinent documents such as ordinances, codes, development plans, and budget documents.

3 GENERAL MUNICIPAL CHARACTERISTICS

The City of Bacoachi has a population of 1,609. It has an annual budget of NP\$1.6 million and has 44 employees. Bacoachi is a *municipio* (municipality) that includes five other communities: Canada de la Cruz, Unamicha, El Pueblito, Mutoticachi, and Congregación de Guadalupe.

Bacoachi's economy is based on moderate agriculture and ranching, minor industries (brick production and broom making), and mining. The city is physically isolated from larger communities such as Cananea and Nacozari but is located along an intrastate highway. This makes Bacoachi strategically located to be a hub for economic development and transportation.

Bacoachi is characterized by its clean, well-kept streets, which are 90 percent paved. The city has modest sanitation equipment and labor, but solid waste collection service is excellent. The city picks up garbage three times a week from each household and disposes of it at an unmaintained dump on the outskirts of the city. Street lighting is excellent. Potable water is relatively dependable, but improved water purification methods are desired.

Bacoachi is a clean and attractive city with a classic, turn-of-the-century "old Mexico" ambiance. Due to its rich Mexican history, culture, and mineral assets it has the potential to be a tourist destination.

4 DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT AND OBSERVATIONS

This section describes the roles of the municipal offices and departments and the issues identified by the responsible officials.

4.1 Office of the Mayor (*Presidente Municipal*) and Councilmembers (*Regidores*)

This office is responsible for setting municipal policy, establishing organizational objectives, and appointing administrative staff. The major issues and problems articulated by the Mayor and Councilmembers are as follows:

- The city's principal problem is its lack of sustainable economic development opportunities. Without an industry and employment base the city cannot realize its objectives of improving its basic service delivery objectives through local financial autonomy.
- The city has the fundamental infrastructure to sustain economic development. While further infrastructure can be developed, it cannot be done without the creation and control of local revenue sources. The fundamental barrier to attracting industry and employers to the city is the lack of bridges over the Rio Sonora and an *arroyo* (gully), which would run across the highway entering and leaving the city. During flooding periods the road is impassable for up to three weeks, cutting the city off from other parts of Sonora and Mexico. According to the Mayor, the *maquiladoras* (foreign manufacturing firms) have stated that this is the main reason that they will not consider locating in Bacoachi. Maquiladoras require a consistently dependable transportation system to transport materials to their factory and goods to market.
- Potable water is relatively dependable; however, there is concern about water pollution created by the mining activities in Cananea. In addition, one of the town's three wells is losing its dependability. An alternative to chlorine for water purification is a main objective.
- A municipal sanitary landfill needs to be developed and maintained. The city's garbage dump is located one kilometer from the city. The city "pits" the dump periodically and fences it in. However, the city inhabitants who take their refuse to the dump do not always deposit it in the fenced and pitted area.
- There is no culture of citizen participation, and the decision-making process is not fully transparent. By law, Council meetings should be open; however, some are not. Council meetings are not publicized. The Mayor and the Councilmembers understand that community involvement and citizen participation are key to getting support for municipal programs and objectives. However, the Mayor and Councilmembers "are not prepared for democracy": they do not possess the skills for holding public meetings and are not trained in parliamentary procedure. The Mayor and Councilmembers have expressed a desire to hold open public meetings and develop the skills to hold them.
- Regional cooperation is a strategy that the Mayor believes will have to be pursued. Bacoachi and other cities have common problems and issues. They also share a lack of resources. A regional network should be established to address these issues and problems. There is a commensurate need to develop networking and facilitation skills to develop regional partnerships.

- The Mayor perceives a need for adult and youth education. The citizens need to be educated on their responsibility for developing the community; on matters of sanitation and welfare of the community; on the dangers of illicit drug use and alcoholism; and on the rationale for city taxes and fees to maintain and develop the city's infrastructure. Education is needed on the value of "community" and volunteerism in developing a community and getting things done because the citizens have a tradition of all things being given to them by the government. Illicit drug use, alcoholism, and violence are a major problem for the city. Bacoachi needs to develop educational, cultural, and recreational programs for its youth to help alleviate the problems with drug and alcohol abuse and violence.
- The Mayor is very proud of the infrastructure accomplishments of his and previous administrations. He believes that continuity and building on successes are important to future administrations.

4.2 The Office of the Municipal Secretary (*Secretario Municipal*)

This office is responsible for all the official and administrative duties of the office of the Mayor. It schedules and coordinates all City Council meetings.

The needs of the office are as follows:

- A personal computer with appropriate software is needed to record the city's official acts and documents. Computerization is also required to facilitate the posting of public notices and public documents such as the budget.
- Future incumbents need training in municipal administration and a general orientation on how the city and the municipal government function. The current municipal secretary learned the job through day-to-day experience. Regional municipal secretaries need to develop a network and conduct periodic "conferences" to share concerns and ideas on solving problems.

4.3 The Office of Public Works and Services (*Obras y Servicios Públicos*)

The Office of Public Works is responsible for the design and implementation of municipal infrastructure facilities and services, such as street construction, maintenance, and lighting. The office maintains the city's municipal water supply and distribution system and the municipal sewer system. It is responsible for solid waste collection and disposal.

The problems of the office are as follows:

- The city lacks a capital improvement plan due to lack of staff and technical expertise and financial resources. The financing and construction of two bridges over the Rio Sonora and a gully are the primary objective. Engineering and design studies have already been done, but construction financing remains the main obstacle.
- The city's water supply needs to be reinforced (one well is deficient), and water purification needs to be improved. Currently, water is purified through the use of chlorine.

- A sanitary landfill needs to be constructed and maintained to ensure that solid waste is properly collected and disposed of in the landfill. Households need proper residential refuse containers. Currently households and businesses use 55 gallon containers.

4.4 The Office of the Municipal Treasurer (*Tesorero Municipal*)

The Office of the Treasurer accounts for the municipal treasury and its revenues and expenditures and manages the municipal budget. The office is responsible for collecting and accounting for a variety of taxes, fees, fines, and penalties.

The problems of the office are as follows:

- A city tax and fee collection schedule should be implemented. Currently, no sanitation collection fee is imposed for the three times a week garbage collection service. The office sends out water service and electrical utility bills, but payment is not required. Customers "volunteer" to pay for the services. Delinquent accounts are sent notices for payment due or forms for paying on an installment plan. If the customer does not voluntarily pay then the water or electricity is cut off. This creates a negative public relations problem.
- The office tracks payment mailing schedules, payments received, and delinquent accounts manually every month. The office needs computer equipment and appropriate software to computerize these functions. Producing a combined bill with all sanitation collection, water, and electricity fees would be ideal.
- Staff in this office need orientation and skills training. The incumbent also feels that human relations skills are essential to help explain city taxes and fees rationally and to resolve delinquent account problems. Recordkeeping and personal computer skills training is especially needed in the office.

5 GENERAL DIAGNOSTIC OBSERVATIONS

The technical assistance team made the following general diagnostic observations. These should be addressed to determine reasonable and practical recommendations for achieving the project objectives.

5.1 Human Resources Development. The Mayor, Councilmembers, and other key personnel understand the need for Bacoachi's officials and administrators to have the fundamental training for the leadership and administrative skills required to manage the municipality. The identified topics are leadership for elected officials, team building, general administration, human relations, citizen participation, regional networking and facilitation, computers, and holding public meetings.

5.2 Citizen Participation. The Mayor and Councilmembers understand the value of and need for citizen participation in community development and municipal decision-making. They desire to

start to institutionalize the citizen participation process. They also understand that effective citizen participation requires leadership and citizen participation skills training.

5.3 Regional Networking and Cooperation. Upon the completion of skills development the policy leadership should initiate regional contacts and discussions on issues and problems of mutual concern.

5.4 Economic Development. The Mayor and Councilmembers believe that the key to local economic autonomy is economic development and developing a solid employment base (*fuentes de empleo*) for their citizens. Bacoachi is strategically located on a major intrastate highway and has basic infrastructure capacity, which could be further improved through economic development. The city's major obstacle is the lack of bridges over rivers crossing its entrance and exit.

Attracting major maquiladora industries is a major objective of the city. The city's rich Mexican heritage, culture, and ambiance are an attractive amenity for attracting tourism.

5.5 Infrastructure Development. The policy body has set its objectives of improving the infrastructure to attract economic development opportunities (maquiladora industries and tourism); maintaining its excellent solid waste collection system and street construction and maintenance projects; and enhancing its water purification process. The city needs to proceed with the construction of the bridges over its rivers. This will require federal, state, and regional cooperation to work out the political and fiscal issues preventing construction of the bridges. The city needs to construct and operate a sanitary landfill to maintain its sanitation disposal standards in the future.

5.6 Administrative Continuity. The Mayor and Councilmembers are very proud of their, and previous administration's, infrastructure development. This is especially noteworthy considering the turnover of political and administrative expertise every three years. The policy body attributes these accomplishments to a self-imposed responsibility to build on the successes of previous administrations. It is hoped that future administrations will continue this tradition and the commitment to Bacoachi's development objectives.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS

The general diagnostic observations and recommendations were discussed with the Mayor. The Mayor was in agreement that the recommendations were reasonable and practical for Bacoachi to consider. The Mayor stated that he would support the recommendations and communicate them to the new administration, which will take office in September 1997.

6.1 Human Resources Development. The Mayor and Councilmembers should solicit training resources and programs to develop the skills of the political leaders and the administrative staff. The policy-makers should attend skills development training in leadership for elected officials, team building, citizen participation, regional networking and facilitation, and holding public meetings. Key officials responsible for supporting the policy-makers should also attend this

training. Administrative skills training should be solicited and acquired for staff in computers, recordkeeping, and human relations.

6.2 Citizen Participation. Upon the completion of skills development for the policy group and key personnel the Mayor and Councilmembers should institutionalize citizen participation as a core component of conducting municipal business and decision-making. This citizen participation process should be transparent and should include extensive public information on public documents and on regular and special City Council meetings.

6.3 Regional Networking and Cooperation. The Mayor and Councilmembers understand the linkage between Bacoachi and other cities in the region. They desire to establish a regional network and begin a dialogue on common issues and problems, possible solutions, and the sharing of resources to meet their common needs.

6.4 Economic Development. The Mayor should initiate discussions with federal, state, and regional authorities to address the need to construct bridges on the highway entering and exiting the city. The lack of these bridges has been expressly identified as an obstacle to the maquiladora industries locating in Bacoachi. In addition, the lack of this transportation amenity limits the full realization of the city's tourism potential.

6.5 Infrastructure Development. The city needs to maintain its excellent sanitation collection, streets construction and maintenance, and potable water supply. Solutions to the political and fiscal obstacles to constructing the highway bridges need to be pursued. The bridges are the key to economic development, which will provide local revenue sources to continue to develop the city's basic infrastructure and services. This infrastructure is the key amenity needed to attract economic development and an employment base for Bacoachi.

6.6 Administrative Continuity. The Mayor should recommend a continued commitment to the city's infrastructure development and economic development goals to the new administration that will take office in September 1997. In addition, the institutionalization of citizen participation and human resources development should be recommended.