

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

**USAID Quarterly Report VI  
January 1, 2000 – March 31, 2000**

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The U.S. Agency for International Development  
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## **1. Partnership Activity Summary**

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

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

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

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

##### ***Web site launched***

In early January, ICMA's consultant Sergio Cambronero was in Washington and made a preliminary presentation of the Forum Web site to ICMA representatives and Mr. Paul Fritz of USAID.

During the month of March, initial design and work on the Forum Web site was completed. The Web site was officially launched at the IDB Annual Meetings held in New Orleans. Prior to the New Orleans conference, all Forum members received an email announcing the Forum Web site and inviting their feedback.

##### ***Meetings***

##### **Initial preparation**

##### **Joint International Forum for Cooperation on Local Government in Latin America and the Caribbean / GTZ meeting**

On February 18, 2000, Mr. Joachim Fritz of the GTZ visited ICMA's offices to meet with Ms. Maureen Pearce and Mr. Mark Bidus. The purpose of this meeting was to define preliminary objectives as well as a strategy to mobilize participants for the joint International Forum/GTZ meeting planned for late May in San Jose, Costa Rica. Mr. Paul Fritz of USAID attended the second half of this meeting.

This meeting also represented the first time that a representative of the GTZ has had the opportunity to visit ICMA's offices. For this reason, the introductory portion of the

meeting was devoted to sharing information regarding each organizations programs in Latin America. Mr. Joachim Fritz was also briefed on the activities of the International Forum to date.

It is ICMA's desire that the joint event in Costa Rica will represent a model where annually one member organization of the International Forum will take on the role of co-hosting a Forum meeting.

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

During this quarter, ICMA held several coordination meetings to plan for the Inter-American Local Government Conference scheduled to take place in Merida, Mexico in mid-April. Representatives from the National League of Cities (NLC), Sister Cities International, and the Mexican Association of Municipalities (AMMAC) participated in these planning meetings to provide input regarding the conference agenda as well as identify appropriate participants. The theme for this conference is local economic development, and the agenda includes both plenary and panel sessions aimed at encouraging a high level of participation among North American and Latin American attendees.

### **Continued preparation**

### **ICMA International Task Force Meeting/OAS Sub-regional Meeting**

During this quarter, preparations continued for the joint ICMA International Task Force Meeting and OAS Sub-regional Meeting in the Caribbean to be held on May 16 and 17, 2000 in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The program will focus on the areas of citizen participation initiatives, local economic development and association development/networking. Already, numerous ICMA International Task Force members have volunteered to serve as panel speakers and present case studies from their respective communities. The OAS is currently identifying Caribbean speakers to participate on the panels.

In addition, ICMA has contacted Mr. Keith Miller, consultant to Jamaica's Ministry of Local Government to prepare a background study presenting a comparative perspective of decentralization in the Caribbean. This background study, which will highlight trends and specific challenges of decentralization in the context of the Caribbean, will be shared with all meeting participants.

Since this event will touch upon topics directly related to the 1998 Summit Action Plan, it will provide a unique opportunity to solicit feedback from Caribbean officials in terms of progress made on the 1998 Summit mandates in the area of strengthening regional and municipal administrations. The final publication from this event will seek to include mention of these summit mandates as well as observations regarding the upcoming Presidential Summit to take place in Quebec City in April 2001.

## **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Annual Meeting: March 27-29, 2000**

Two representatives from ICMA traveled to New Orleans for the Annual Governor's Meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank. ICMA had organized a booth dedicated to the International Forum. This booth, located in the Technology Village Exhibit Center, featured the Forum Web site along with a hand-out on the Forum.

The inaugural night of the Technology Village Exhibit Center was quite successful and numerous conference participants visited the Forum booth. Participants who visited the booth included government officials, NGO representatives, consultants and private sector representatives. They provided thoughtful feedback regarding the Web site and expressed a great deal of interest in the Forum and its activities.

### **Activities for Next Quarter:**

- Inter-American Local Government Conference will take place in Merida, Mexico (April 13 –15, 2000)
- ICMA/OAS Event will take place in Montego Bay, Jamaica (May 16 & 17, 2000).
- International Forum for Cooperation on Local Government in Latin America and the Caribbean / GTZ meeting will take place in San Jose, Costa Rica (May 25-27, 2000)

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

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

#### **IULA/CELCADEL Conference on REDCOMUN Viña del Mar, Chile**

IULA convened a conference on March 22-25, 2000 to give an update on its progress toward developing a network for gathering data on municipal services and to obtain input from experts on local government from throughout Latin America. ICMA was invited to be part of the program and share its experience measuring the performance of municipal governments in the State of Jalisco, México.

Oscar Rodríguez, Senior Municipal Advisor, made the presentation on behalf of ICMA (See Annex I for copy of powerpoint presentation). While much of the conference focused on local socioeconomic indicators, Mr. Rodríguez talked about the technique that ICMA uses in Jalisco to measure the progress being achieved by efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of a pilot group of municipal governments. The technique aims to solve a problem that local government administrators constantly face in their daily work: quantifying quality. It involves establishing a series of targets that represent a line of progression or, alternatively, regression, and determining whether or not there has been any movement in relation to these targets. The technique is just as effective with evaluating the quality of street surfaces as with determining whether or not a municipality's institutional capabilities have improved. In order for the technique to be

useful and the targets to make sense, they have to be in line with the vision and objectives of a strategic plan.

To illustrate the technique, Mr. Rodríguez demonstrated how the targets ICMA is working with in Jalisco have been put down on a standardized evaluation form so that a periodic evaluation can be performed. He emphasized that the targets shown on the form all correspond to a vision where the pilot municipalities demonstrate improvement on a wide spectrum of institutional responsibilities, including financial management, citizen participation, and inter-governmental cooperation.

Beyond the information imparted by the panels, the conference also provided an opportunity to exchange information directly on a personal basis. This allowed ICMA to assist the USAID Paraguay mission to arrange an encounter between the representatives from OPACI (Organización Paraguaya de Cooperación Intermunicipal) in Paraguay and Oscar Vega, Executive Director of AMMAC in México. This meeting allowed Mr. Vega to share AMMAC's experience building up its presence and reputation among municipalities in México. He emphasized that the biggest challenge was proving to their members that AMMAC offered true value-added to all municipalities without regard to political affiliation. It took time and persistence with a constant, inclusive message, but now AMMAC is widely respected as a valuable and open source for technical advice and information, and its members reward it by paying substantial dues and ensure that AMMAC stays financially independent. AMMAC's success as a municipal association can serve as a model for other associations such as OPACI.

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

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

- The final products of the Training Diagnostic are being finalized this Quarter and will be finished and presented next Quarter.

### **1.3 Component 4: Other Related Activities**

#### **OAS Roundtable Meeting**

During this quarter, ICMA agreed to issue a purchase order to Florida International University from the LAC Cooperative Agreement in order to organize a round table meeting to examine the Presidential Summit mandate for “strengthening municipal and regional administrations”. The objective of this round table discussion which will be held in late April will be to gather together representatives from throughout Latin America to prepare for the Canada Summit of the Americas in April 2001. This will be an effort to

get the countries most committed to decentralization to present their ideas for the proposals to be included in the Action Plan to be signed at the Summit of the Americas.