

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

**Quarterly Report XIX
July 1 – September 30, 2003**

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USAID Quarterly Report XVIII

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	3
II. Major Accomplishments.....	3
Component 1: Donor Consultation.....	3
Component 2: Information Exchange and Networking.....	4
Component 3: Local Government Training.....	5
III. Challenges/Remedial Actions Taken.....	6
IV. Projected Activities.....	7
Component 1: Donor Consultation.....	7
Component 2: Information Exchange and Networking.....	7
Component 3: Local Government Training.....	7

Annexes:

Annex 1: Financial Information

I. Introduction

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."

In terms of the FORUM Staff, a new Senior Program Manager was hired to act as director in anticipation to the new cooperative agreement.

II. Major Accomplishments

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:

Update of Forum Web site

During this quarter, the Secretariat updated and continued to add programs, projects, news articles and events to the site, and reviewed and added records to the library section.

A Regional Assessment of the State of Decentralization in Central America

During the last report period ICMA drafted a scope of work to update the report commissioned by USAID in 1995 entitled, "Municipal Development and Democracy in Central America" in order to provide USAID and other donors a perspective on the progress of decentralization in Central America since 1995, including the challenges faced by local and national governments and the role of associations in promoting change.

During this period, ICMA finalized the scope of work, hired consultants and started implementation of the study. The ICMA team completed field work in three of the six countries (Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras) and plan to continue with Panama, Costa Rica and El Salvador during the month of October. The final draft of the study will be completed, disseminated and discussed during the first quarter of year 2004.

Participation in the 2nd RIAD meeting in Mexico

The Secretariat, through its new technical director, participated in the 2nd RIAD meeting in Mexico to confirm the FORUM's commitment to support the RIAD. During the meeting, a new "Technical Support Group" gathering all international donors and agencies was established. The FORUM will work with the RIAD as part of the Technical Support Group.

The FORUM director met with the Technical Secretariat of the RIAD and its newly appointed president to discuss specific areas of cooperation. It is expected that the scope of the cooperation will be agreed upon during the next quarter.

Bilateral Meetings with key donors

The FORUM director met with representatives of the IDB, WB, UNDP and GTZ. The objective of the meetings was to discuss future programs and plans to strengthen the FORUM and to identify common issues and incentives that would serve as input for the new cooperative agreement's work plan. The Technical Secretariat will send surveys to members to identify common agenda issues.

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.

Activities and Accomplishments this Quarter

Forum Newsletter

No issue-based newsletter was issued during this quarter. A newsletter focusing on municipal finance was under preparation during this period and will be distributed during the next quarter.

E-learning Task Force Listserv

After careful review of the usefulness of the listserv, ICMA decided to cancel it. ICMA found that the listserv did not provide the right incentives to the task force participants to interact periodically. Task Force members found it too rigid and difficult to access. Contact has been maintained through telephone calls reporting the progress made to its members.

Regional Association of Municipalities exchange

During the RIAD meeting in Mexico, ICMA promoted discussions with FEMICA, FLACMA and the League of Cities of the USA on issues related to institutional and

financial sustainability of municipal associations. From that discussion, all parties expressed their interest exchanging experiences that would evolve into forging partnerships. The Technical Secretariat will design and start planning implementation of a program to respond to that interest during the next quarter.

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.

Activities and Accomplishments this Quarter

Bolivia Listserv Discussion

This quarter has seen active discussion on the interagency training document from listserv participants from Bolivia. The Technical Secretariat has identified that virtual discussions are not enough if they are not followed-up by face-to-face meetings that motivate participants. ICMA hired a consultant in Bolivia who periodically met with participants, resulting in a significant increase of the level of participation in the listserv.

During this period ICMA consultants worked in the planning of the event to promote consensus on recommendations that will take place on November 4. Antonio Iskandar and Jorge Otero met with Michael Bennet (President of the Bolivian Federation of Municipalities – FAM in Spanish) and the Vice-Minister of Citizen Participation during the RIAD meeting in Mexico to gain their support for the event.

This quarter has also served to launch virtual discussions and plan the event in Nicaragua regarding the Nicaragua training study. Jorge Otero traveled to Managua during September 27 and October 4th to promote the participation of both key local organizations such as INIFOM, AMUNIC and the Presidential Secretary of Nicaragua, and the participation of international donors and agencies that have a say on local government training.

During this period the listserv discussion started. ICMA took into account lessons learned during the Bolivian experience to enhance the responses from the participants. A consultant was hired in Nicaragua to keep constant contact with listserv participants. ICMA found that there is a good wealth of interest from some bilateral donors that have already started coordination vehicles on the issue of training (Danish, Swedish and Germans). During the next quarter ICMA will assess the participation of multilateral agencies but it seems that there is a good momentum for promoting collaboration and coordinated initiatives.

The event in Nicaragua is schedule to take place on December 4 with the active sponsorship of INIFOM, AMUNIC and the Presidential Secretary leading the decentralization agenda on the part of President Bolaños.

E-learning roadmap

This quarter, the E-learning consultants completed the database of cases on E-learning, telecenters, group of trainers of small and medium enterprises, and institutions providing e-learning and distance education on the internet in Latin America¹; and created graphics to present the findings with regards to the viability of E-learning in each one of the countries in Latin America. The regional database includes literature, actors, trainers, events, and infrastructure that will support the recommendations of the e-learning roadmap.

In addition, information gathered to develop the road map is being organized systematically in order to create a viability index to inform donor agencies on the effort and the challenges related to increase access of citizens, entrepreneurs and municipal officials in Latin America and the Caribbean to e-learning. Planning is underway for an event to discuss the roadmap. That event will bring together members of the Task Force on E-learning and other key individuals in the field of distance education and local governance to provide input to refine the roadmap and its recommendations. The event is planned for the first quarter of 2004. In planning the event, ICMA will review the first draft of the roadmap with a number of key partners and later exchange a more elaborated draft with participants through a listserv that will anticipate discussions.

Presentations to socialize the project were organized, one at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico, another at the IADB and two at the OAS aiming to develop a partnership with the Inter American Cooperation of Development (IACD) and the group supporting the Portal of the Americas. A meeting with NASPA took place to explore possibilities for partnership for the creation of local capacity in the region.

III. Challenges/Remedial Actions Taken

E-learning Task Force Listserv

After careful review of the usefulness of the listserv, ICMA decided to cancel it. ICMA found that the listserv did not provide the right incentives to the task force participants to interact periodically. Task Force members found it too rigid and difficult to access. Contact has been maintained through telephone calls reporting the progress made to its members.

¹ The data base documented 120 e-learning/distance education programs for citizens and municipal officials in LAC, 20 institutions working to provide e-learning for small and medium enterprises, and 24 groups working in the development of telecenters.

Bolivia Virtual Discussion

The FORUM has faced challenges in having participants actively involved. A consultant was hired to maintain face-to-face communication with listserv participants.

IV. Projected Activities

Based on a proposal submitted by ICMA, USAID signed a three-year extension of the Regional Partnership for Decentralization and Local Governance in the Americas. During the next quarter, ICMA will complete a new Work Plan for the extension and increase its staff to respond to the new agenda.

Component 1: Donor Consultation

- Regional Assessment on the state of Decentralization and Municipal Development in Central America. The ICMA team will complete the field work and analysis of the conclusions. An integration meeting will take place in Washington in mid December 2003. A first draft will be shared with USAID and FEMICA.
- Regional Association of Municipality exchange. ICMA will meet with Inter American Development Agency of the OAS to design a partnership to promote exchange of best practices on how to promote sustainable association of municipalities in the hemisphere with the participation of U.S. associations of municipalities such as ICMA and the League of Cities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Federation of Chilean Municipalities with FEMICA and FLACMA.
- E-learning roadmap. The results of the e-learning study will be exchanged with members of the taskforce to promote awareness and consensus. The event to discuss the roadmap that will take place during the first quarter of 2004 will be planned during next quarter.

Component 2: Information Exchange and Networking

- The Secretariat will continue to update and add records to the Programs, Newsroom, Calendar and Library sections of the Web site and will publish an E-newsletter on municipal finance.
- ICMA will review the FORUM communication mechanism and members' feedback. The FORUM will have more demand driven mechanism that will keep track of donor members' interest in the FORUM periodically.

Component 3: Local Government Training

- ICMA will complete and distribute among the e-learning task force members a document with conclusions of the research and a draft roadmap. FORUM consultants will attend the World Summit of the Information Society in Geneva.

- Development of graphic reports when the information is completed
- Continue the review of the literature to support the development of the Road Map
- Start the planning of the conversion of the databases into an interactive web data analyzer to be published in The Forum.
- Increase the number of members of the Task Force.
- Explore the potential of creating a GIS map providing a visual display of the progress made in the provision of training and connectivity in the region
- ICMA will hold a roundtable discussion in Bolivia on international agency cooperation on training. In addition, ICMA will complete the virtual discussion and hold an event in Nicaragua on the same issue as the one in Bolivia. Conclusions will be presented in USAID's partners meetings in Washington D.C and among different donors through brown bag presentations.

Annex 1: Financial Information