

## Principal Activities

In 2001, the UPD is providing technical support to the member states in organizing in Bolivia a meeting of ministers and high-level authorities responsible for decentralization, local government and citizen participation, in addition to implementing the technical activities of this Program. Among the main activities completed in 1999 and 2000 are the following:

### Seminars

#### Caribbean

- ◆ *Local government, communitarianism and the citizen: opportunities and challenges.* June 1998, Kingston, Jamaica.
- ◆ *Effective local governance: innovative approaches to improving municipal management.* May 2000, Montego Bay, Jamaica.

#### Central America and the Dominican Republic

- ◆ *New public management models in the framework of the decentralization process: water, education, and rural roads.* July 1998, San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica.
- ◆ *Second meeting on facilitation of municipal training and technical assistance.* March 1999, Roatan, Honduras.
- ◆ *Decentralization and challenges to promoting local participatory development.* August 2000, San Jose de Costa Rica.

#### Andean Community and Mercosur

- ◆ *Frameworks and policies for citizen participation at the municipal level.* July 1998, Cochabamba, Bolivia.
- ◆ *Second Seminar on frameworks and policies for citizen participation at the municipal level.* May 1999, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- ◆ *Decentralization and citizen participation in local government.* November 1999, Quito, Ecuador.

#### Courses on Decentralization and Local Government with emphasis on Citizen Participation

- ◆ June 1999, Javeriana University, Bogota, Colombia.
- ◆ August 1999, University of El Salvador, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- ◆ July 2000, Universidad Americana de Managua, Nicaragua.
- ◆ December 2000, Javeriana University, Bogota, Colombia.

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
UNIT FOR THE PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY

1889 F St., N. W.  
WASHINGTON, DC 20006  
TEL: 202 458 3589  
FAX: 202 458 6250

#### WEBSITE

[www.upd.oas.org/democratic/decentralization.htm](http://www.upd.oas.org/democratic/decentralization.htm)

ELIZABETH M. SPEHAR  
EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR  
ESPEHAR@OAS.ORG

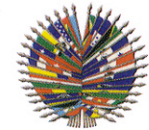
RUBÉN M. PERINA  
COORDINATOR  
STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS  
RPERINA@OAS.ORG

ANNE -MARIE BLACKMAN  
SENIOR SPECIALIST, PROGRAM COORDINATOR  
ABLACKMAN@OAS.ORG



# Program of Cooperation in Decentralization and Local Government

UNIT FOR THE  
PROMOTION OF  
DEMOCRACY



GENERAL SECRETARIAT  
ORGANIZATION OF  
AMERICAN STATES

## The OAS and Democracy

The defense and promotion of democracy are the *raison d'être* of the Organization of American States (OAS) and a fundamental objective of its member states. In addition to supporting key national institutions, consolidating democracy at the municipal and community level is crucial to prospects for long-term success in this goal.

The Summits of the Americas highlight the importance in the process of democratic consolidation of strengthening local government, and promoting increased civil society participation in public policy especially at the local level. The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) is the Unit within the General Secretariat of the OAS mandated to provide support to member states in consolidating their democratic systems and institutions. In this context, the UPD has developed a "Program of Cooperation in Decentralization and Local Government."

## Preparatory Consultations

On May 12-13, 1997, the UPD supported the governments of Bolivia and Venezuela in organizing, in Caracas, an Inter-American Seminar on *Support to decentralization, local government and citizen participation*. Government representatives at this seminar agreed on the broad outlines of a cooperative program among member states, assisted by the UPD. It was considered that supporting efforts by governments to develop the policy framework for local government and citizen participation is one important way that the UPD can effectively contribute to hemispheric efforts in these areas.

The conclusions of the conference on *Governance, democracy and civil society in the Caribbean Community*, held in Barbados in September 1997 also provided input into the Program of Cooperation. UPD/OAS was one of five co-sponsors of that Conference.

## General Objectives

Based on the mandates of the Summits and of the OAS General Assembly, the UPD Work Plan, the conclusions of the preparatory seminar and conference mentioned above, as well as ongoing consultations, the UPD Program of Cooperation in Decentralization and Local Government aims at:

- ◆ Contributing to policy debate and serving as a forum for creation, dissemination and exchange of knowledge and information;
- ◆ Supporting national government institutions and regional organizations in their efforts to strengthen the normative and institutional frameworks, thus facilitating more effective coordination, development and execution of policies, strategies, practices, and mechanisms for decentralization, and citizen participation at the local level.

## Organization

The program is organized sub-regionally: CARICOM; Central America and the Dominican Republic; South America (states of the Andean Community and the Southern Cone). NAFTA states also participate in activities. This subregional focus facilitates information exchanges and creation and dissemination of specialized knowledge, as well as formation of subregional networks of technical and resource personnel.

## Instruments

Program objectives are achieved through:

- ◆ **Technical/governmental subregional fora**, to foster exchanges of experience and knowledge as well as the development of common strategic lines of action for the application of effective decentralization legislation and policies. These fora involve the participation of a growing network of government experts, legislators, mayors' associations, civil society organizations, and representatives of media, business and academic institutions.
- ◆ **Subregional courses** for training and upgrading specialized human resources in the fields of decentralization and citizen participation at the local level, organized in collaboration with government and academic institutions in the hemisphere.
- ◆ **Comparative subregional research** for the development of model legislation and technical guides to help in the management and adequate coordination of decentralization and local governance processes.
- ◆ **A Website** - including a databank comprising experts in the field - periodically updated with documentation from meetings held and other activities of the Program, links to other related sites, and virtual fora.