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ICMA's Evolution as an International Organization

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ICMA

ICMA's vision of an international presence started as early as 1924—when, just ten years after its founding, the City Managers' Association added "International" to its name. Although the organization had been founded with an eye to professionalizing local government in the United States, its reach soon extended to other countries—such as Canada, Great Britain, and New Zealand. In fact, the 1924 annual conference was in Montreal, so the stage was set for what ultimately became a truly international organization.

The "I" in ICMA was advanced substantially by executive director Orin Nolting. During his tenure, from 1956 to 1967, Nolting traveled abroad extensively, especially in Western Europe, to promote the council-manager plan, attend biennial congresses of the International Union of Local Authorities, and further the exchange of ideas and experiences between

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SELECTED FOCAL POINTS



Although ICMA has fostered connections across international borders throughout most of its 100-year history, the "I" in ICMA assumed new meaning with a significant award from the U.S. Agency for International Development in 1989. As municipalities worldwide absorbed new responsibilities—and faced new challenges—in the face of urbanization and decentralization, ICMA's mission, vision, and core values proved to be perfectly in sync with new emphases in U.S. foreign assistance policy goals.

In its international work, ICMA seeks to identify local solutions to local challenges—and then put in place programs ensuring that improvements in governance and service delivery can be sustained into the future.

ICMA's members—professional managers in local government—have eagerly embraced city-to-city partnerships to share knowledge and best practices with their counterparts in developing and decentralizing countries. Partnerships and friendships enrich all participants and frequently endure after project funding ends.

U.S. and Canadian managers and their counterparts in other countries.¹

Building on Nolting's legacy, ICMA's leadership and members became eager to expand the organization's international activities, and members began to make more connections with officials in European cities. In 1976, with funding from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and the participation of Antioch College, the European Task Force—which included U.S. and Canadian local government managers, several academics, and the deputy director of ICMA—spent three weeks traveling in England, the Netherlands, and the Federal Republic of Germany, meeting with high-level officials and exploring how ideas generated in European cities might be applied in the United States.

The task force focused on intergovernmental relations, planning (physical, social, and economic), and downtown (core) redevelopment and beautification. Upon their return from Europe, participants formed the ICMA Task Force on International Education to disseminate the lessons learned. The early reports of the task force covered affordable housing, downtown revitalization (including public art and pedestrian- and bike-friendly layouts), and alternative approaches to policy development and service delivery.²

ICMA also undertook a few small-scale projects funded by donor organizations—including, in the 1970s, a program in the Philippines and, in the late 1980s, a United Nations–funded technical-assistance training program that was conducted in Jordan and attended by administrators and mayors from Arab nations.

A Funding Opportunity

The late 1980s was a period of rapid urbanization in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Particularly in developing countries, cities were ill equipped to handle the influx of people from rural areas, which overwhelmed already deficient public services. In response, the federal Agency for International Development (commonly referred to as USAID) began to develop new strategies to strengthen the capacity of local leaders to address urban problems, including service provision.

Meanwhile, it was becoming clear that U.S. foreign assistance policy goals—which provide direction for USAID—were perfectly in sync with the mission, vision, and core values of ICMA. ICMA staff member Elizabeth Kellar began attending USAID conferences and meetings to learn more, recognizing that the agency's new emphasis on urbanization presented a perfect opportunity to bring ICMA's substantial municipal management knowledge and resources to bear on a worldwide scale. As word got out that

USAID was planning to issue a request for proposals (RFP) focusing on municipal networking, longtime international contractors began exploring the possibility of having ICMA participate as a subcontractor. Given the depth of the organization's expertise, however, ICMA staff decided that the association had the necessary strengths to be a credible contractor in its own right.

In 1989, with ICMA executive director William H. Hansell's encouragement and support, ICMA took on the challenge of writing the association's first proposal to USAID. Staff put together a proposal team and met with representatives of other local government organizations—including the American Public Works Association, the Government Finance Officers Association, and several municipal leagues—to solicit letters of support. When USAID's Office of Housing and Urban Programs issued the RFP, it was a perfect fit for ICMA, and ICMA was ready.

The solicitation asked for proposals to provide municipal development, management, finance, and training services in a number of developing areas in Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere. The ICMA proposal highlighted the association's significant qualifications for the work:

- A core membership of local government professionals with hands-on experience, numbering 7,500 at the time
- State-of-the-art training materials that were tested, proven, and easily adaptable
- An unequaled information center with the ability to respond quickly to inquiries
- A network of professionals who could facilitate international study tours, exchanges, and peer-to-peer relationships, including affiliate relationships with organizations in Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, and the Middle East
- An institutional vision, commitment, and strategy focused on expanding and strengthening professional local government management worldwide.

ICMA's proposal was successful, and in late 1989, the association was awarded the multimillion-dollar Municipal Development and Management Project to assist local government officials in developing countries.

ICMA Hits the Ground Running

To meet the financial, contractual, and logistical demands of international work, ICMA established the International Municipal Programs department and quickly assembled the necessary resources. In addition to building a talent bank and hiring staff with

An Excerpt from ICMA's Original Proposal to the U.S. Agency for International Development

The effort to share management know-how and build professional capabilities in the developing world in many ways will take ICMA back to its roots. ICMA was founded in 1914 to help a struggling new profession—municipal managers—solve overwhelming problems that threatened the very survival of municipal government in the United States. Local governments in the U.S. at that time were in disarray; corruption was the norm; property assessment and tax collection were rife with nepotism; basic urban services were inefficient or nonexistent; migrants from rural areas were flowing into the cities ill prepared for urban life, and urban government was simply not prepared to cope with their needs. The new city management profession was a response to the call for reform. A similar call for change and for stronger municipal governments has been emerging in recent years in many developing nations. . . . ICMA welcomes the challenge to build on its own history by extending the hand of cooperation to municipal managers and elected officials in the Third World who are struggling to improve their communities.

specialized expertise, ICMA needed to invest in technology to facilitate international communications. The new program faced a host of unfamiliar management challenges—health risks; safety issues, particularly in postconflict areas; and even the psychological stress of culture shock, as U.S. and Canadian managers were suddenly transported to unfamiliar physical, cultural, and political environments.

ICMA's members were eager to help. In response to announcements in the association newsletter, ICMA received more than 600 résumés from candidates for international positions—most of them from members. Staff also conducted a language survey of members and received more than 1,000 responses, 850 of which indicated some proficiency in a language other than English.

An additional challenge for ICMA was the need to continuously market the project. The contract was structured in a way that required “buy-ins” from USAID country missions, bureaus, and regional housing and development offices. During the first year, ICMA visited USAID missions and other offices in Ecuador, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, the Ivory

Coast, Jamaica, Kenya, the Philippines, Poland, Thailand, and Tunisia, and responded to more than 60 requests for services around the world. The following are among the tasks that ICMA undertook in fulfillment of the contract:

- Recruiting trainers and training coordinators for wide-ranging assignments, including the development of an urban environmental strategy and a proposal to establish new toll roads in Jamaica, support for the privatization of solid-waste services in Botswana and Costa Rica, and the design of a computer-based land management system in Morocco
- Arranging for the placement of an engineer from Morocco with public works officials in St. Petersburg, Orlando, and Dade County, Florida, for on-the-job training in the management of sewer treatment facilities
- Conducting studies of local currency and municipal bond guaranty in Indonesia and Kenya
- Arranging study tours, training events, and conferences in venues that included Czechoslovakia, Honduras, Poland, and Senegal.

New Forces at Work: Decentralization and Democratization

Just as the ICMA program was getting up and running, two historic events occurred: the fall of the Berlin Wall in late 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. These events precipitated a rapid devolution of responsibility from the national to the subnational level in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. As the attention of the world—and USAID—turned to Central and Eastern Europe, the agency modified the scope of the ICMA program to include that region.

After centuries of centralized control of political and financial power, the former Soviet states had virtually no history of autonomous local government.³ Nevertheless, many Central and Eastern European countries set about establishing independent local governments with surprising enthusiasm. Michael Murphy, who served for ten years as the first director of ICMA's international program, cites examples:⁴

- In Poland, in order to counter the discredited, top-down communist system and develop a local political base, the Solidarity-backed central government sought to establish democratic municipal elections.
- In Hungary, the first democratically elected government enacted legislation to create local governments and to decentralize responsibility for many public services to the local level.

ICMA's Approach

From the very beginning, ICMA's international projects have been guided by a core set of principles:

- Leverage the experience and expertise of ICMA's members, their professional staff members, and the resources developed by ICMA's U.S.-focused programs, and apply them to the challenges of developing and decentralizing countries.
- Develop partnerships and networks for sharing information and best practices.
- Engage as many stakeholders as possible, including appointed and elected local officials, nongovernmental organizations, national ministries and agencies, the private sector, and civil society.
- Develop locally appropriate solutions to challenges identified collaboratively with local stakeholders.
- Focus on developing local capacity so that programmatic improvements can be sustained after donor funding ends.

To implement its projects, ICMA has assembled a diverse pool of experts in the subspecialties of municipal management (finance, public works, economic development) and a flexible tool kit of approaches (e.g., assessments, training programs) that can be tailored as needed. The resources developed by ICMA's U.S.-based programs have been the impetus for expanding the international program into such areas as public safety and violence prevention, climate adaptation and sustainability, and performance measurement.

Decentralization brought new challenges to municipalities with no history of self-government. In Central and Eastern Europe, local leaders, no matter how educated and astute, lacked the experience that would have allowed them to develop decision-making, citizen engagement, and other public leadership skills. With new responsibility for service delivery, local governments needed access to financial resources—either from the national government, which was often reluctant to share revenues, or from local sources, which required new practices, such as assigning property values to establish a base for local taxes.

Among the significant projects in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia during the early 1990s—all funded by USAID—were the three-year Hungary Public Administration Program and multi-year public administration programs in Armenia,

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, and Slovakia. All these programs focused on decentralization, fiscal and administrative management, and capacity building.

Decentralization was occurring at the same time in Latin America, but there the drivers were practical as well as political. In the face of economic pressures and demographic shifts toward urban areas, central governments recognized the advantage of placing responsibility for services at the local level, where they could be delivered more efficiently. Direct local election of mayors became the norm; the new mayors, who were often from the business community, appreciated the value of professional and technical staff in service delivery. Unlike their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin American local governments had access to revenue sharing from the central government, which relieved some of the need for locally generated revenue sources.

In South Africa, democratization came about through the fall of apartheid in 1994 and the nation's first multiracial elections, which led to the presidency of Nelson Mandela. ICMA was called on to help in a number of ways. Historically, the city managers' association in South Africa had been all white. ICMA began working with a newly emerging association of black local government professionals who eventually became the core of a new professional association. Leaders of the association visited ICMA and attended ICMA conferences; partnerships were established between a number of South African and U.S. cities; and Bill Hansell, executive director of ICMA, and Jim Knight, director of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, went to South Africa to meet with a committee of the South African Parliament, which wanted to consult with them on proposed new local government legislation (see photo).



A delegation of ICMA members and staff, including (from left to right) ICMA executive director Bill Hansell, ICMA staff member Russell Hawkins, and former ICMA president Sylvester Murray, with Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

ICMA's Association-Building Initiatives

ICMA's work in Poland, Honduras, and South Africa exemplified the association's many efforts to help establish or strengthen local government associations and other organizations that could provide resources to individual members and seek to influence national legislation for the benefit of local government. In fact, association building became a key activity in the 1990s and, over time, was extended to Bolivia, Bulgaria, El Salvador, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Zimbabwe, and other countries. As ICMA turns 100, the association has formal affiliate relationships with 28 such organizations representing more than 30 countries.

Despite differences in context, the twin trends of decentralization and democratization set the stage for the largest projects of the early years—in Poland and Honduras.

Poland

After decades of Soviet rule, Poland was entering a period of rapid change in the direction of democratization, decentralization, and the introduction of a market economy. The Local Self-Government Act became law in 1990, and municipal elections were held shortly thereafter.⁵ As part of decentralization, the national government had drastically decreased subsidies to cities, which now needed to build institutions for public representation and effective service delivery, and to secure sufficient financial resources to carry out their responsibilities. Many local governments in Poland had serious fiscal deficits and housing shortages; they were also taking charge of a large share of public property (land, housing, economic enterprises)—a complex and lengthy process.⁶

ICMA's assistance project in Poland began in 1990 with two cities: Warsaw, the capital, and Slupsk, near the Baltic Sea. Technical assistance teams met with city officials to identify problems and recommend solutions for housing, infrastructure, finance, land valuation, and municipal management. Particular emphasis was placed on the transfer of land and property: ICMA conducted "train the trainer" sessions on land use management, land appraisal, and communal housing.

Honduras

In 1990, the Municipal Reform Law granted Honduran municipalities financial resources, more control over local resources, and increased autonomy from the

central government. These changes satisfied a fundamental prerequisite for USAID funding and set the stage (and created a need) for management at the local level. ICMA's Honduran Municipal Development Project provided technical assistance and training in taxation, general management, public works, community participation, and other skills and practices that establish a foundation for professional administration.⁷

The first step for project staff was to gain political support from the mayors of the municipalities that had been selected to participate in the initial phase of the project. Their support—and the support of the central government—were critical to the program's ultimate success. The project made significant contributions:

- Strengthening and promoting the Association of Honduran Municipalities (AMHON) as a national organization representing the interests of member municipalities. AMHON began convening well-attended national mayors' conferences and became a visible force for the Honduran municipal reform movement.
- Introducing the concept of the professional administrator as someone who manages day-to-day service provision.
- Documenting practices and delivering training for mayors, council members, and staff to systematize municipal tax administration and revenue enhancement, budget development and administration, accounting standards and financial controls, and other basic management activities.
- Providing mayors with guidance on how to hold successful open town meetings—something they had been reluctant to do for fear of losing control of the forum.
- Improving the delivery and management of public works projects—which included persuading many municipalities of the need for a trained engineer, rather than just a project manager, to plan and execute projects.
- Developing and leaving in place a cadre of more than 50 local consultants to continue working with municipalities after the end of the funded portion of the project.

The Birth of CityLinks

ICMA's flagship international program, now called CityLinks, was established in 1997 as Resource Cities, funded by USAID. Under this program, U.S. local governments formed partnerships with their counterparts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to jointly address local challenges in the non-U.S. countries. These partnerships provided new opportunities for ICMA's

members to participate directly in international contract activities; for many of them, the experience was inspiring and eye-opening. Because members and their professional staffs donated their labor (see photo), the arrangement was also a plus for the funding agency, whose dollars could go further.



During a CityLinks partnership between Tirana, Albania, and Catawba County, North Carolina, Catawba county manager Tom Lundy (left) participates in a cleanup day in the Albanian city.

CityLinks continued through 2008 and resumed with new funding in 2011. Through close to 100 projects, CityLinks partners have assisted municipalities around the world as they seek to improve public works facilities and services, plan and organize for local economic development, initiate citizen participation mechanisms, develop and enhance local revenue sources, and meet dozens of other challenges in just about every realm that local government touches—from public health to transportation, emergency services, tourism development, and code enforcement.

From the start, ICMA's approach has been to put in place policies and practices that can be sustained locally after funding ends. And CityLinks has achieved some remarkable successes, with lasting results. In the past decade, for example,

- A consortium of cities in Bulgaria, together with a national local-government reform foundation, established a local economic development certification program, launched a website to market local assets to investors, and institutionalized training for economic development professionals. Three years after the program's end, these efforts had yielded 2,500 new jobs, €140 million of investment in new and expanding businesses, and a fully established certification program.
- Through the Post Tsunami Recovery Program, Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, two tsunami-

ravaged cities in India, restored damaged property; designed and built community playgrounds; modified infrastructure to mitigate flooding from typhoons; educated citizens about public services; and increased access to reliable, safe drinking water for residents. The program drew on the experience of three Florida cities—Oldsmar, Palm Bay, and Port Orange—that had learned to live with the constant threat of hurricanes and remain prepared for them.

- In Jordan, CityLinks partners designed and implemented centralized medical waste collection and disposal practices that helped safeguard community health and protect the country's precious water supply from contamination. Partners were the Jordan University of Science and Technology, the Jordan Ministry of Health, and East Carolina University. When the program ended in 2005, 21 hospitals were safely incinerating their waste. By 2012, 109 were doing so, thanks to practices that had been put in place during the project.

In addition to programmatic sustainability, CityLinks has fostered lasting partnerships between cities:

- After serving as a key adviser on a program in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, the fire chief of Oldsmar, Florida, arranged for the donation and shipment of protective equipment for local firefighters, who were at constant risk of injury because they lacked proper gear.
- Three years after the two cities' formal partnership ended, the city of Tigard, Oregon, dedicated an Indonesian-style park pavilion in honor of its partnership with the city of Samarinda.
- Years after their CityLinks partnership ended, the director of utilities and engineering in Catawba County, North Carolina, continued to advise public works and planning staff from Tirana, Albania, on materials, guidelines, and management practices.
- Similar continuing relationships exist between Golden, Colorado, and Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria; Port Townsend, Washington, and Umag, Croatia; and West Bend, Wisconsin, and Pazardjik, Bulgaria.

Global Reach

As ICMA's global reach grew, the organization began to set up field offices and form partnerships to solidify its worldwide presence. The first field offices were established in Honduras and were organized shortly after the Honduras program started in 1990. In 1994, ICMA opened its first field office in Eastern Europe—in Romania—and continued to establish field offices for

large programs in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, including Armenia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, and Slovakia. The overseas offices were staffed by a combination of U.S. local government professionals and support staff from the country being served. ICMA staff in Washington, D.C., supervised overseas operations and kept USAID informed of program results.

In 2004, ICMA built on earlier successes in Mexico by launching an office in Guadalajara—ICMA Latinoamérica, later renamed ICMA México-Latinoamérica—to provide a presence in Latin America and the Caribbean. ICMA-ML provides direct services to Mexican cities and promotes professionalism and transparency. A significant step forward occurred in February 2014, when the governing council (*ayuntamiento*) in Navolato, in the state of Sinaloa, created the position of municipal administrator as a nonpolitical council appointee.

In the late 1990s, ICMA began establishing a presence in South Asia, working with the Urban Management Centre (UMC) in Ahmedabad, India, as its project office. By 2005, UMC had evolved into an independent nongovernmental organization that continues to serve as ICMA's "anchor" in the region.

As China became a greater player in the global political and economic arenas, ICMA sought to develop professional relationships there as well. Starting with small-scale projects to provide study tours, training, and technical assistance—and after considerable due diligence—ICMA eventually identified the China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL) as a viable long-term partner.

In 2011, ICMA and CUPL established the ICMA China Center at the university's campus in Beijing. Shortly thereafter, the center was welcomed into the U.S. Department of State's competitive EcoPartnerships program, in recognition of its commitment to addressing common challenges related to energy and the environment. In 2013, the center facilitated a trip by two ICMA members to address local government officials and university students; and in May 2014, it will host the first ICMA International Regional Summit in Yangzhou.

By 2014, ICMA's international "reach" embraced nearly 70 countries in which full-scale projects had been implemented, and perhaps a dozen more countries whose professionals have participated in training, exchanges, and other programs.

Diversification

USAID was the primary funder for many of ICMA's early projects, but as the international program

matured, it attracted awards from other donors and undertook projects in a wider range of technical areas:

- The World Bank, through the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility, funded the Regional Credit Rating Improvement Program, which guided subnational governments in Argentina, Costa Rica, and Mexico as they established practices that would increase their ability to borrow for infrastructure projects.
- The U.S. Department of State has selected ICMA to manage portions of its Professional Fellows program, which has provided reciprocal exchanges for professionals from Australia, China, Indonesia, New Zealand, Thailand, and Timor-Leste and their counterparts in U.S. cities and counties. The first program managed by ICMA focused on sustainable communities, and two others have focused on the legislative process, governance, and transparency.
- The U.S. Department of Defense Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) tasked ICMA with assessing the disaster readiness of communities on Guatemala's Pacific coast and developing a training and exercise program for them. Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, SOUTHCOM also engaged ICMA to support a network of new fire and emergency services stations by making recommendations for organization, staffing, and equipment procurement and designing a program of instruction for personnel.

Conflict and Postconflict Countries

Starting with its projects in Central and Eastern Europe, ICMA often found itself working in conflict and postconflict environments. In such settings, a guiding principle of ICMA's work has been that sound governance and good service delivery are keys to promoting stability.

Following the war in Iraq, for example, ICMA was engaged as a subcontractor to provide support to new local leaders; as part of ICMA's fulfillment of that contract, several ICMA members accepted long-term assignments to provide training in basic management. Later, ICMA assisted newly elected local council members as they learned how to relate to local citizens and to the national government. To help ensure that the success of the project would be sustained, ICMA employed a "train the trainer" approach—teaching local trainers who could, in turn, train current and future council members (see top-left photo on following page).

Conflict in Afghanistan set the stage for ICMA's largest portfolio of international projects, starting in 2004 with a USAID-funded program to strengthen the capacity of the municipality of Kabul, a city whose



Participants in a “train the trainers” workshop conducted by ICMA in Karbala, Iraq, record their points on a flip chart.

infrastructure and public services had deteriorated through years of neglect and war-related damage. Not only were physical facilities in disrepair, but the city lacked the capacity to plan for and manage services. The goal of the project was twofold: to tackle the infrastructure problems and to establish sustainable public services by introducing practices and approaches that could be replicated elsewhere in the country.

Because of the volatile political environment and pockets of anti-American sentiment, project staff generally worked through the mayor’s office or municipal departments so that accomplishments were perceived as originating locally. Using a “learning by doing” approach, ICMA placed local workers in project-funded jobs at various skill levels so that they could perform the needed work while gaining new skills.

Working in several neighborhoods, ICMA was able to help local officials and citizens achieve some welcome progress:

- Basic infrastructure improvements: cobblestone-paved streets, roadside drainage ditches cleaned of trash and sewage, restoration of parks and other public spaces, and identification of private sector organizations that would cover the costs of future maintenance. (For example, a cell phone company agreed to partner with the municipality by committing six maintenance workers to the upkeep of a newly improved park for a year.)
- Solid-waste management improvements: creation of a routing system, acquisition of equipment, closure of illegal dump sites, and education of citizens about their role in packaging waste and placing it at curbside for pickup.
- Pleasant recreation areas and green space provided for families and children.
- Street marking and traffic signage to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety.

Because of the success of the Kabul project, USAID awarded ICMA the contract for the Afghanistan Municipal Strengthening Program (AMSP), which extended ICMA’s previous work to 12 provincial capitals. Only a detailed list of accomplishments can provide a full picture of what “strengthening” meant in the Afghan context: by the end of its lifespan (May 2007–November 2010), AMSP had

- Implemented 81 small-scale municipal infrastructure projects, and collected and removed 88,100 cubic meters of trash
- Provided 184,000 worker-days of employment and paid \$1.1 million in wages to temporary local laborers
- Leveraged \$4.3 million in funds from other donors
- Provided 6,700 hours of training and technical assistance to partner municipalities
- Provided opportunities for youth to engage productively in their communities (4,530 boys and 1,234 girls were involved in capacity-building activities, sports, internships, and jobs)
- Prepared digitized, geographic-information-system-based maps for AMSP municipalities
- Facilitated citizen-driven, strategic municipal action plans for six cities
- Achieved improvements in citizens’ perceptions of quality of life and municipal services (as assessed by citizen satisfaction surveys).

In 2008, ICMA was awarded another major project in Afghanistan: the Commercialization of Afghanistan Water and Sanitation Activity (CAWSA). Scheduled to continue through May 2014, CAWSA works with local water-supply companies to help them establish the physical and management infrastructure to support



One improvement engineered by ICMA programs in Afghanistan was the conversion of manual records to computerized ones.

eventual privatization. Activities include repairing damaged or neglected wells, pipes, and other infrastructure and introducing basic business practices (e.g., computerization of records, financial management, revenue collection, preventive maintenance, and customer service). Management improvements have produced measurable results:

- Thousands of new connections delivering reliable water service to customers
- Reductions in the unit cost of water production
- Improvements in cost-recovery ratios
- Faster response times to emergency calls
- Improved customer service.

ICMA has rounded out its Afghanistan portfolio by serving as a subcontractor on other projects. All of the resulting activities—among them, change management assistance for a national ministry and gender awareness training—have been designed to develop the capacity of Afghans to ensure their country's future. While the future of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan remained uncertain at the time of this writing, ICMA is hopeful that its projects will have a lasting positive impact.

Looking Ahead

As ICMA marks its 100th anniversary, ICMA International is turning 25. The USAID award in 1989 served to solidify the “I” in ICMA, enabling the organization to carry out its mission worldwide and satisfying members' desire to make contributions beyond their jurisdictions' borders. Since that time, awards from

other donors have given ICMA further opportunities to establish a sound reputation in the international development community. ICMA understands that cities learn best from other cities; thus, the association serves as a convener of local government practitioners, supporting a global local government network and providing a platform for continuous learning and information sharing.

Not surprisingly, the focus and direction of ICMA's international program over the years have been steered by worldwide trends and events—decentralization, democratization, urbanization, conflict and other social upheavals, and climate change. Programs are also driven by national priorities, such as crime and violence prevention, ethics and transparency, environmental protection, citizen involvement, and the empowerment of women.

In 1914, only 15% of the world's 1.6 billion people lived in cities, yet ICMA's founders saw the need for an association that would promote good governance and professionalism in local government. Today, as ICMA enters its next 100 years, more than half of the world's 7 billion inhabitants live in cities; and by the turn of the century, that is expected to be true for a projected 85% of the world's 11 billion people. The urbanization megatrend, if well managed, will have enormous economic, political, demographic, social, public health, and ecological benefits for all humankind. Clearly, ICMA is well positioned to contribute to global efforts to ensure that our cities are places in which citizens can enjoy safe, prosperous, and productive lives. The “I” in ICMA is more relevant than ever.

Notes

- 1 David S. Arnold, “ICMA—A Chronicle of Service,” unpublished history of ICMA, July 1986, icma.org/chronicle.
- 2 “The European Connection,” *Public Management (PM)*, July 1976.
- 3 Michael Murphy, “Progress of Local Government Worldwide,” *Public Management*, March 2001, 6–10.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Renata Frenzen, “ICMA Activities in Poland,” *Public Management*, June 1991, 13.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ann E. Bueche, *Making Cities Work: The Honduran Municipal Development Project* (Washington, D.C: ICMA, 1994); a summary of the project appears in Ann Bueche and Pablo Salcido, “Did ICMA Meet Its Goal on the Honduran Project?” *Public Management*, July 1994, 19–22.