SUCCESS STORY

How to Make Decentralization Work

The EQUIP2 conference How to Make Decentralization Work: Assessing the Latin America Experience was held on February 17, 2004 at the AED Conference Center in Washington, D.C. with support from EGAT/USAID and in coordination with a two-day World Bank conference on decentralization and accountability in the social sectors. Dr. Donald R. Winkler of the Research Triangle Institute facilitated the workshop, which brought together donors and practitioners in education decentralization to share strategies, practical tools, and intervention tactics. Eighty professionals from USAID, philanthropies, ministries of education, NGOs, and universities discussed lessons learned and helped EQUIP2 identify research and implementation support priorities for decentralization in Latin America.

The participatory workshop addressed EQUIP2’s four major decentralization topics: school autonomy, strengthening intermediate organizations, tools for accountability, and managing the political process. The first session focused on school communities’ methods for dealing with increased power to make budgetary, personnel, and curriculum decisions. The second session looked at how building accountability entails strengthening the voice of civil society and creating consequences for performance, through such tools as report cards and Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). The third session examined political decentralization, education decision-making, and the corresponding need to build management capacity at the sub-national level. The workshop’s final session identified key factors of success and explored decentralization failures and effective political expression.