Preface

This book emerged from our growing awareness that social scientists know relatively little about a contemporary trend to devolve political and economic power to local governments throughout the developing world. While some academic studies of the impact of decentralization in particular contexts have appeared recently, a comparative perspective on this institutional transformation has not been available. We therefore organized a conference and invited experts involved in development as academics or policy practitioners from a number of different countries that have embarked on significant devolution initiatives to describe these experiences in some detail. The May 2003 conference was funded by the MacArthur Foundation Network on Inequality and Economic Performance and was hosted by the Suntory Toyota International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines (STICERD) at the London School of Economics. We are grateful to the MacArthur Foundation and STICERD for their generous support. In particular, we would like to thank Sam Bowles of the Macarthur Foundation Network on Inequality and Economic Performance for his encouragement and Tim Besley and Kate Perry of STICERD for being such gracious hosts.

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