GOOD PRACTICE

CASE STUDIES

ARIAL

programme

GOOD
PRACTICE

CASE STUDIES

June 2013

Acknowledgements

Contact

Contents

Introduction

Local governments play a central role in the daily lives of people and provide those facilities crucial for personal development. Strengthening the capacities of local governments is therefore an essential requirement for a successful development policy. Strengthening local governments however, is only possible when their needs and ambitions are heard. By improving the capacity of Local Government Associations (LGAs) to advocate and lobby on behalf of their members, local governments are better equipped to participate in the political dialogue on local development policies with various partners such as civil society, the private sector, the national government and international donors like the European Union.

Within this context, the ACP Secretariat and the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International) are proud to present to you this publication on good practices of Local Government Associations (LGAs) in political dialogues with national institutions and development partners. The good practices discussed in this publication exist as a result of the support provided by the ARIAL programme. The ARIAL programme, financed by the European Union, offered a wide range of capacity building activities to national, regional and sub-continental LGAs across the entire ACP region and supported the LGAs in the form of advice, training and coaching related to key policy and management tools.

This publication provides the reader with practical examples, lessons learned and useful tools an tips on how these good practices could be replicated by other LGAs. It includes good practices of Regional Local Government Associations (RLGAs) as well as cases from recipients of the Emerging Local Government Association Facility (ELGAF). By describing and sharing these good practices, the publication aims to stimulate exchange of ideas and knowledge between LGAs.

We hope the content of this publication will inspire and motivate many Local Government Associations to participate as key actors in political dialogues on local development, to engage more with both donors and national stakeholders, and more generally to continue to improve their organisations, and thus, by doing this, contribute to the strengthening of local government worldwide.

Michèle Dominique Raymond

Assistant Secretary General
Political Affairs & Human Development Department
Secretariat of the ACP Group of States

Mr Peter Knip

Director VNG International

The ARIAL programme

The ARIAL programme is an EU-funded project which started in August 2010 and lasted for three years. The ARIAL programme was implemented by a broad consortium of experienced local government practitioners representing the whole ACP region and led by VNG International (www.arial-programme.eu).

The overall objective of the programme was to promote the political recognition and engagement of local governments as important players and partners of development. The specific objective of the programme was to strengthen local governments representative institutions at the national, regional and (sub-)continental level so that they will be able to take part in the implementation of development policies, in particular with the EU, and play a political role as provided by the Cotonou Agreement.

Local Governments (LGs) play a central role in the daily lives of people and provide services, which are crucial to the well-being of citizens but they are also important actors in the pursuit of development goals. This important fact is recognised in the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and ACP countries, which calls for a greater involvement of local governments in development cooperation. However, local governments have thus far not been able to take up this role as well as they could. Many ACP countries have established associations to represent the interests of local governments at national and international levels. These Local Government Associations (LGAs) have the potential of becoming important players in decentralisation efforts together with the local governments they support. A strong LGA can provide services to its members (thus making them stronger), represent local governments at the national level and act as a platform for the exchange of experiences among members.

However, many associations in the African, Caribbean and Pacific states are not yet taking up this role effectively.

This is why the ARIAL programme has aimed to strengthen their capacities so that the LGAs are more able to provide effective support and help their members fulfil the expectations of the Cotonou Agreement on the role of local decentralised authorities in development cooperation. In this context, the ARIAL programme offered a wide range of capacity building activities to national, regional and subcontinental LGAs across the entire ACP region. Support took the form of advice, training and coaching related to key policy and management tools (for more information on these tools see www.arial-publications-tools.eu/hb0000/).

Purpose of the good practices publication

This publication is compiled for local governments and their associations. Its objective is threefold: (1) to describe and share good practices on the participatory role of LGAs in political dialogues with national institutions and development partners, (2) to describe and share good practices of newly started, emerging local government association and (3) to stimulate exchange of ideas and knowledge between LGAs.

The cases

Local government associations in developing countries, and especially newly formed and emerging associations, all face problems in capacity and funding. Much of this is because their own members are themselves on very limited budgets and so in some cases it can be very difficult to fund even core activities by raising funds from members.

Where LGAs have been involved in the ARIAL training programme, they have all found it invaluable in increasing skill levels to improve their effectiveness in carrying out their functions of representing and supporting their members. Many of the case studies illustrate how increasing the knowledge and skill levels is spearheading new lobbying initiatives to change national policy, developing position papers that will affect future policy (such as CALGA's position paper on EU development policy) or has provided a greater understanding of how development partners work to help access funding for R/LGAs and their members.

For some, especially the small states with newly emerging LGAs, the technical and training support has been vital in establishing the organisational planning and implementation with assistance in development of strategic plans or lobbying and communications plans. This is not without its challenges and one case study (Vanuatu) shows how factors such as personnel changes can derail even the best of activities if such situations are not planned for in advance.

The compilation showcases the participatory role played by LGAs in political dialogues with national institutions and development partners. In all cases, the roles that LGAs played are highlighted and analysed, and the lessons learned extrapolated. The current publication contains 20 case studies which were selected by the implementing partners of the ARIAL programme on geographic representation and thematic coverage. The publication includes cases from all four Regional Local Government Associations (RLGAs) participating in the ARIAL programme as well as cases from recipients of the Emerging Local Government Association Facility (ELGAF). All cases presented resulted directly or indirectly from the training received by the ARIAL programme.

The good practices are designed to share the lessons learned so that others can take these into account when embarking on similar projects. We have outlined the steps that should be followed for undertaking a similar project, but of course these must be adapted to take into account the local circumstances and context.

We hope that these good practices will provide the impetus for others to follow the examples in dealing with their own issues and challenges.

All annexes mentioned in this publication are available on the ARIAL website (www.arial-publications-tools.eu/hb0000/).

"I hope that once the case studies are published, associations will use the contact details to exchange ideas and learn from each other, which can be done without external funding. I also believe that increasing links and dialogue with other organisations can be of enormous help."

Samuel Kaninda – former senior technical officer of the Southern African Regional Organisation (SARO)

The good practices highlight the issues that are being addressed by the particular project or activity:

THEME	R/LGA
Relationship building	
Developing a funding strategy and building relationships with development organisations	The Association of Municipalities of Mali (AMM)
Building relationships with national and international partners	Kiribati Local Government Association (KiLGA)
Building a strong relationship with central government	Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA)
Advocacy and lobbying	
Lobbying on constitution by developing a position paper	Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania (ALAT)
Lobbying international institutions such as EU	Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities (CALGA)
Developing a combined advocacy strategy and action plan for rural and urban councils	Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA)
Citizen engagement	
Increasing citizen engagement and participation in decision making	Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA)
Improving communications by developing an SMS system, particularly in rural areas	United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (CVUC)
Association capacity development	
Merging three organisations to create an umbrella group and single voice for local government	The Belize Mayors' Association (BMA), the National Association of Village Councils (NAVCO) and the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA).
Securing funding to increase capacity and reputation of association	National Association of the Municipalities of Chad (ANCT)
Strategic planning	
Improving strategic planning	East African Local Government Association (EALGA)
Using a customer satisfaction survey to increase the effectiveness and quality of services	The Union of Local Authorities of Togo (UCT)
Using a survey to develop a strategic plan for 14 national associations in the region	United Cities and Local Governments of Africa – West Africa Regional Office (UCLG-WARO)
Decentralisation	
Securing devolved functions and finances from central government	Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone (LoCASL)
Addressing implementation of decentralisation	Association of Municipalities of Niger (AMN)
Gender balance	
Developing women's forums and participation in local government	Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities (TTALGA)
Financing local government	
Improving finance systems	South African Local Government Association (SALGA)
Developing funding application skills	United Cities and Local Governments of Africa – Southern Africa Regional Office (UCLG-SARO)
Council services and management	
Learning succession planning	Local Authorities Association of Vanuatu (LAAV)
Improving services for councils and ability to influence	Swaziland Local Government Association (SWALGA)

An introduction on Local Government Associations

Local governments are the form of government closest to the people and play a central role in their daily lives: they not only deliver many of the basic services such as water, sanitation, primary health, but are also in the best position to consult local people and identify their needs to make the changes that will lead to more prosperous and vibrant communities. Sustainable development can therefore only be achieved by local governments being recognised as equal partners in the development agenda.

However, their capacity to do this is usually very limited. Governments and other stakeholders on their part do not like to have a plethora of lobbying from many different institutions (e.g. local governments). They are more likely to respond to an organised approach which gives a unified voice on a particular issue. Local governments thus need to be organised and need to be able to speak with one voice to ensure that local government's issues and opinions are heard. They need representation to be seen as a key partner in development by national governments, international agencies, other stakeholders and the development partners and other organisations from who they seek funding and technical support for their activities.

This is no different at the regional level. Countries in certain regions often have common development challenges and opportunities and are increasingly working together for the development of their regions by looking at common policy approaches and supporting each other in a number of ways: thus the East African Community (EAC) has become an established organisation in itself, as has the South African Development Community; the Caribbean states work together through CARICOM and the Pacific through the Pacific Islands Forum.

In these regions, it has therefore been appropriate for local government to establish some regional collaboration of local governments to provide a regional voice representing the national local government associations at this level. Some of the case studies in this report demonstrate the importance of this regional voice in dealing with both regional and international organisations, for instance in developing a common position on EU policy on local authorities and development as in the CALGA case study. Indeed, regional associations such as CALGA, EALGA, SARO and WARO have been instrumental in delivering the ARIAL project in providing a focal point for organising the seminars and workshops, which in turn helps their own visibility in the region, and in their involvement in assisting other LGAs in their respective regions.

Roles and Functions

In any topic relevant for the tier of local government, from fiscal decentralisation to basic health care and sanitation, an LGA can play its role in the framework of three major tasks. For instance, carry out a strong lobby in name of local government towards sector ministries and parliament in order to obtain more fiscal autonomy for the local level. Offer its membership guidelines and other services, tailor-made for local government. And facilitate information exchange on topics relevant for local government.

An LGA offers local governments a united and unified voice towards central government. LGAs can assist local governments in their tasks as basic service providers and LGAs can be instrumental in mutual learning.

The tasks of an LGA are mainly three-fold:

1. Lobby/advocacy

LGAs can lobby in those places where decentralisation is not a natural phenomenon, also in those circumstances when already decentralised tasks and provisions threaten to be recentralised. LGAs represent their members towards central government and the outside world in general.

2. Service provision

Local governments are not always capable of catering for all the demands put upon them by central government and their citizens. Here, LGAs can assist on common issues such as legal matters concerning local government, and training and capacity building of local government staff and the locally elected.

3. Offering a platform for information exchange

LGAs are instrumental in the exchange of experiences. This exchange can take place in various shapes and forms: meetings and the annual general meeting of member local governments, or publications such as the LGA magazine for the membership.
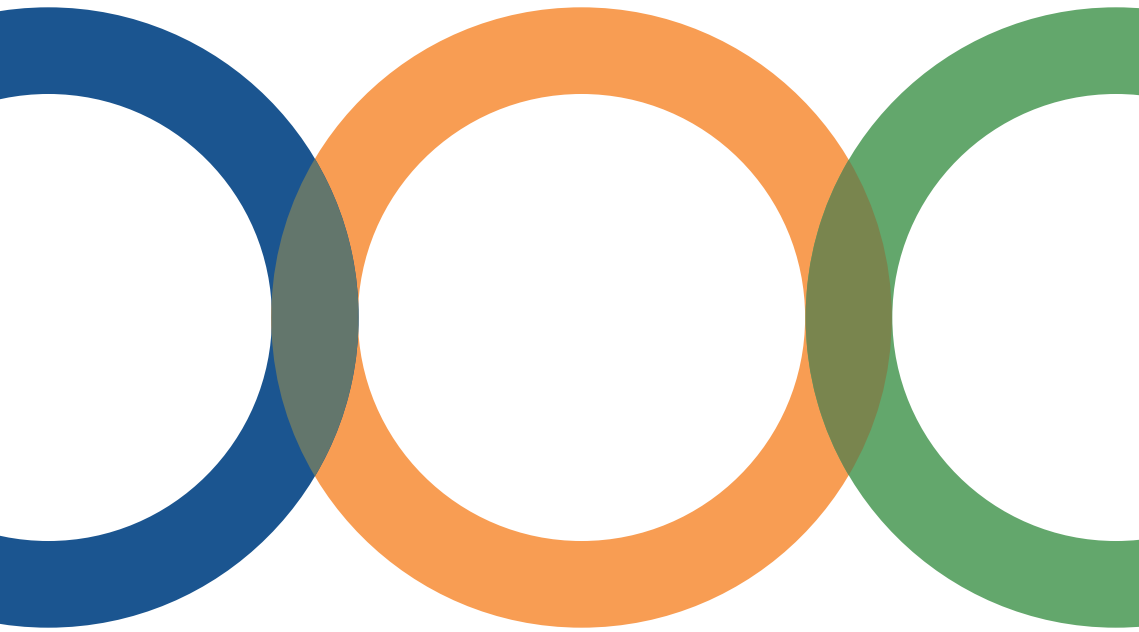
CASE STUDIES

Kiribati

KiLGA action plan for political dialogue with development partners

---

LGA

Kiribati Local Government Association
(KiLGA)

Contacts

Mark Dacombe
mark.dacombe@wearelocalise.com

Rikiaua Takeke
rtakeke@yahoo.com

KiLGA has used the ARIAL planning tools to develop and implement an action plan to improve its dialogue with national and international partners.

The case study shows how targeted training and technical support, especially for an emerging new association, can help boost an association's skills and capacity to forge the relationships it needs to gain acceptance and credibility and to build relationships with development partners to seek technical assistance and funding for activities to respond to issues identified by the association and its members and partners.

"Although the ARIAL Programme will cease from July 2013, its impact to local government in Kiribati is outstanding and recognised. It has created an Association helping build the capacity of its members to serve their communities more effectively. KiLGA is a new word in Kiribati but it is already quite well known for what it stands for: lobbying for council issues, council information gathering and advice, to assist councils become more financial sustainable and establish collective ventures for its members."

Rikiaua Takeke, CEO

KiLGA – supporting councils in a small island state

Kiribati is an island in the Pacific with a population of around 92,000. Local government is established on all inhabited islands and is single-tiered. There are two types of council: town (urban) and island (rural). There are three town - two on the capital Tarawa and one on Christmas Island - and 23 island councils.

KILGA was officially set up by March 2012 with support from ARIAL and its partners The first AGM, where all 23 councils were represented, adopted the constitution and agreed the setting up of the association. As a new association it needed to improve its ability to play an advocacy role to effectively represent its members with national and international organisations.

Since it was established, KiLGA has recruited staff and developed an annual work plan and services to members. To help strengthen KiLGA capacity building and training has been carried out both on site and by involvement in regional workshops and lobbying and advocacy meetings.

Kiribati's central government is very stable and fully supports and assists local government.

Helping councils meet their current challenges

The island councils that KiLGA represents are very remote and isolated islands, vulnerable to climate change, have considerable problems with communication and transport due to their distance from the capital city, operate with communities on subsistence economies and so have limited resources and sources of income, and thus lack institutional and human capacity.

Urban Councils face all the challenges of urbanisation and meeting the basic needs of people in urban areas - water supply, sanitation and solid waste disposal, poor road access and limited community facilities, development and maintenance of infrastructure – as well as social issues and environmental degradation.

To face these challenges they require assistance from the government and donor partners. A key role for KiLGA on behalf of the councils it represents is to lobby for support and funding from international agencies to help councils to tackle the challenges they face and to build effective partnership with other organizations and countries.

KiLGA needed to develop an action plan to develop its relationship and dialogue with national and international agencies to support its key activities alongside its lobbying and advocacy strategy.

Kiribati Local Government Association

- KILGA was formed as a local government association to represent councils in Kiribati in 2012;
- Since then, with the support of ARIAL and other partners, KILGA has worked on developing its policies, administrative instruments and working tools to enable it to support the 23 council members;
- KiLGA's key role is to assist councils to serve their communities better in dealing with current issues and challenges.

ARIAL training sets KILGA on road to developing political action plan

KiLGA representatives attended the ARIAL regional training workshop on communication, advocacy and lobbying held in Fiji in June 2012. As a result of learning gained during the workshop, KiLGA staff, with technical assistance from Pacific lobbying and advocacy adviser Mark Dacombe (funded by ARIAL), were able to develop and action plan for dialogue between KiLGA and its development partners, including how dialogue can be started, developed, and maintained with the European Union.

The Action Plan was developed using a number of ARIAL tools, instruments and publications including:

• The ARIAL toolkit for local government associations to become better at identifying and responding to the needs of local governments;
• ARIAL information package on Cotonou agreement with information on how to access EU funding.

The action plan covers:

• Which development partners are being targeted for which activity against all KiLGA's activities for 2012-14;
• Position papers to be developed for dialogues;
• Funding proposals to be developed.

Implementation of the action plan, which has been monitored by ARIAL, is well under way.

Among other things, the association has:

• Met with the President of Kiribati;
• Had a number of meetings with staff at NZAID and AusAID, the biggest development funders to the country's central government, to discuss development issues for KiLGA and its members;
• Met with the Ambassador of Taiwan to discuss local government issues and develop partnerships with local government associations in Taiwan.

Plan boosts international recognition and support

The development and implementation of the plan has enabled KILGA to develop many relationships with international and other organisations, and get the recognition and support it needs to take forward its work and support its members. The partners are an important resource to the organisation as they are able to assist by providing technical advice and support to strengthen the association's capacity and help use resources most effectively.

One example of how this has achieved results is how the association had a number of meetings and discussions with AusAID and Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) resulting in signing an MOU on connecting the outer islands to the internet to improve communications and lower administrative costs.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Identify key partners.** Research the agencies working in the area, particularly those who are interested in local government and the functions it performs, and other partners in the country including national government.

Step 2: **Form relationships.** Deals are done when people trust and are comfortable with the other party. Get to know the key people in donor agencies; particularly those represented in-country. Meet with them from time to time to exchange information. Invite them to functions that the LGA is holding or have member Councils invite them. Learn what their interests are and be an alternative source of reliable information for them. If they are transferred away before they leave get the outgoing person to introduce you to the new one in the post either personally or in writing. Get them interested in and knowledgeable about what you and/or your members are doing.

At the very least, start doing this before you submit a funding proposal.

Step 3: **Research donors' interests.** Make sure you understand the donor countries' interests and programmes so that you can target the appropriate donors for the right activities. Be knowledgeable about other projects they are running or are facing difficulty with.

If it is within your power either formally or informally help them resolve the issues they may be having trouble with. Be informed if their interests change and tailor your approach to fit the new framework.

Step 4: **Build a solid relationship with your national government.** Some donors will deal only on a Government to Government basis. Work to have your projects supported by the national government. Be a reliable and credible partner for government. Maintain your independence as an advocacy organisation for your members and their communities but it helps if you can align your interests with those of your government so they will support you when asked, as they will be. If you find yourself at odds with your government argue strongly the issues and never attack the person. Maintain your integrity.

Step 5: **Build your constituency with your members.** Keep them well informed. Understand their issues and advocate for them. Assist any members that are struggling. Actively seek out partnerships to help strengthen weaker members.

Step 6: **Be strategic.** Most LGAs and RLGAs will have a diverse range of members with wide ranging interests. It is appropriate and inevitable that the LGAs will have a broad agenda of issues that they are working on at any one time. Take a strategic approach in deciding the issues and opportunities you will put you limited resources into seriously progressing.

"I have promoted the use of the Political Dialogue Action Plan to many colleagues, the most recent being Betio Town Council"

Rikiaua Takeke, CEO

LESSONS LEARNED

- Relationships take time to develop and mature (if the only time they see you is when you are asking for money they will stop seeing you);

- Research donors' interests and programmes and submit proposals that match those interests. Follow through is important, don't take a "scatter gun" approach with proposals;

- Build strong relationships with the national government;

- Build the LGA constituency with its members, ensure good communication and enlist membership support for proposals that benefit their communities or for the local government sector as a whole;

- Be transparent and build a reputation for ethical dealing with donors;

- Have a broad agenda but be strategic and focused in the proposals that are submitted to donors.

Annex – KiLGA documents
KiLGA Political Dialogue Action Plan
KiLGA newsletter from 2013

Marshall Islands

Mayor's Association promotes a model partnership

LGA

Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA)

Contacts

Mark Dacombe, Senior regional expert
mark.dacombe@wearelocalise.com

James Matayoshi, Chair, MIMA
james@lmbrmi.com

Ms Mabel Peter, Director of Local Government
mabelpeter1984@yahoo.com

Since it was established in 1980 MIMA has developed into a well-established and well-organised forum for local government in the Marshall Islands. MIMA has built its relationship with the national government to the point that it is seen as a credible and influential partner in the governance of the country. There is now considerable potential for this partnership to be further developed and for MIMA to increase its effectiveness in this partnership for the benefit of communities across the Islands and ARIAL support will help them to do this.

Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA)

MIMA is an established association which has NGO status with its own by-laws that set out its governance, arrangements, practices and procedures. MIMA is now in the process of recruiting staff who will take up the challenges of making the organisation more visible, and provide services to strengthen the position of and participation by its members. A director, Lawrence Muller, and administrator, Carlton Abon, have now been secured.

MIMA – the voice of the Marshall Islands communities

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a scattering of Islands in the south Pacific, with a population of around 68,000 spread over thirty-four low-lying coral atolls. There are 24 local councils, each headed by a mayor and council. Local government has a key role in the delivery of services and the development of communities in a country which is very spread out geographically.

The Marshall Islands Mayors Association (MIMA) was established in 1980 to bring together the 24 mayors of the Marshall Islands to address issues of concern to the people who live there. During its early years it established a regular dialogue with the national government, later formalised into an annual Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Executive Leadership Conference which immediately follows MIMA's annual meeting.

An essential partnership

As the Marshall Islands is very spread out geographically, local government is important for the delivery of basic services and the development of communities as the sphere of government that is on the ground to interact with these communities. The vision of MIMA is to improve the quality of life for local government constituents through being an effective advocate for member councils and their communities. For the government, with the population spread out across the atolls, it needs to be seen and to be in touch and not remote from those other than the capital.

A partnership and dialogue between the local governments and national government is therefore essential both to address local needs but also to implement the national government priorities.

However, though MIMA has put in place a firm foundation for participation in political dialogue, they lack capacity to build on this to work more effectively for their members and make sure that agreed actions are carried through.

A firm foundation for meeting community needs

The Mayors work with their communities during the year so they are fully informed of the issues, concerns and aspirations; they then bring these to the MIMA annual conference in the form of resolutions. During the conference week, the mayors are also addressed by wider groups of stakeholders including ministries, civil society organisations and the business sector. They then look at all the resolutions and agree which will be taken forwards to the Leadership Conference immediately afterwards.

During the Leadership Conference, various government ministries and Agencies attend to discuss the MIMA resolutions that fall within their area of responsibility, with the ministries and agencies making presentations on their own priorities and programmes. The MIMA resolutions which are supported are then referred to the relevant ministries for action.

MIMA have in place a firm foundation for participation in political dialogues but do not have as yet a formulated action plan or strategies for lobbying, advocacy and communications.

One current weakness is that, due to lack of resources, MIMA's effectiveness to maintain focus on the agenda and actions agreed at the Leadership Conference is constrained, so there is not always enough follow up with ministries and agencies on the progress in implementing the agreed resolutions. One of the MIMA members was able to attend the ARIAL regional training where they were able to identify the need to develop such strategies to take the organisation to the next level, and along with ARIAL experts working in the region have reported how this lack of resources is affecting the potential of this relationship. This has been a key driver in ARIAL's decision to support MIMA to take this good practice to the next level. ARIAL has now agreed to fund a programme for strengthening MIMA, including action planning and in particular to look at how MIMA can work with governments and local governments on issues such as climate change.

A genuine partnership between MIMA and the RMI government

MIMA and the Republic of the Marshall Islands Government have a genuine partnership. The relationship between MIMA and the national government is one of the strongest LGA-government relationships in evidence. The fact that the President chairs the Leadership Conference and devotes a whole week to it demonstrates the importance that the national government places on local government as a partner in the governance of the country and the delivery of services. The format of the MIMA conference immediately followed by the Leadership Conference means that issues and resolutions are carried through and those agreed targeted for action.

This case study is thus not only a very good model for small island states, which due to their geography are widely spread out so the local level must have a key role in delivering services, but the strong partnership is one which could be emulated by many other countries with local governments. A bill was passed just recently stating that the Senators or National government Representatives from one Atoll are seated automatically as ex-officio in an Atoll's Local Government.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Form relationships.** The success of the MIMA model is based on the relationships that have been formed between the Government and the Mayors over many years. Sound relationships are based on trust, consistency and reliability. This won't happen overnight so be prepared for some disappointments. Be prepared to stick to it and find advocates at a senior level in government.

Step 2: **Be strong and co-operative.** An LGA's membership is most likely to be diverse. Urban Councils will have different issues to rural Councils, remote Councils different to those closer to centres. The LGA needs to actively manage that diversity so that it can generally present a united front. An LGA's value in a partnership will be devalued if its members are not united on issues and squabble amongst themselves.

Step 3. **Align your agenda with the national government.** Demonstrate the value of local government as a partner in the governance of the country. Climate change is a good example of an issue very much the province of national government but which local government is at the forefront of in dealing with matters that affect local communities.

Local government's involvement in finding solutions to problems caused by climate change, and seeking out the opportunities it offers, is indispensible to national government.

Step 4: **Build your constituency with your members.** One of MIMA's strengths is that the Mayors come to the MIMA and Executive Leadership tables fully empowered by their communities to take up their local issues and to find solutions in co-operation with other Mayors. Communities recognise the value of the Mayors' involvement and support it.

Step 5: **Build a wide base.** Local governments' voice can be strengthened by building a wide support base. LGA partnerships with business, civil society, churches and other representative groups can add significant value to the credibility of the LGA in the eyes of government.

Step 6: **Be known for your integrity.** The old adage of "do what you say you will do" consistently and to the best of your ability and resources will ensure you have credibility and support. Leading and promoting a high standard of ethical behaviour in the local government sector at political and officials' level is critical to the LGA's credibility with Government.

Step 7: **Be strategic.** The wide range of issues coming from a diverse and dispersed membership will always create challenges and conflicts. This will mean that the LGAs and RLGAs all of which have limited resources will have to make choices about where to apply their attention. In response to and in support of their members LGAs will always have a broad agenda of issues they are actively involved with but they need to take a strategic approach in deciding where to focus their people and resources to get best overall result.

LESSONS LEARNED

- MIMA is a strong partner for national government because all Mayors are members and it can get the majority support on key issues for local government;

- Don't use your power for political manipulation. Long term relationships built on trust can be destroyed if misused. Use influence positively, be independent and argue your case strongly as an equal partner;

- Recognise that, while the relationship is a partnership, the national government does have a leadership position by virtue of it being the national government. The more the LGA's interests can be aligned with the interests of the national government the more they are likely to want to engage;

- Like all partnerships you have to continue to work on the relationship. Regular contact at both the political and officials level is essential and capacity is needed to do this;

- Work with members to encourage self-help and independence. Wherever possible demonstrate the return to government from any assistance being requested. This return can take many forms from improvements in public health through to generating increased revenue;

- Have a broad agenda but be strategic and focused in setting priorities.

Vanuatu

LAAV learns the lessons of succession planning

LGA

Local Authority Association of Vanuatu
(LAAV)

Contacts

Mark Dacombe , Senior regional expert
mark.dacombe@wearelocalise.com

Albert Cerelala, Regional Governance Program Manager, Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI)
albert.cerelala@fspi.org.fj

LAAV is a very recently established association. Though initially on track in developing as a new association, the loss of two key people at a critical time has meant significant challenges in taking its work forward. Thanks to technical support from ARIAL, some of the momentum has been maintained while recruiting a new CEO and the tools developed at the ARIAL workshops have been used to support the new CEO in his role.

Local Authority Association of Vanuatu (LAAV)

LAAV represents the nine local authorities of Vanuatu comprising the six provinces and three municipalities.

The association's objectives are to provide a forum for local authorities to raise and discuss issues and problems common to local governments and to seek best practice experience through common solution sources both locally and internationally.

LAAV – the newest association in the Pacific

The Local Authorities Association of Vanuatu (LAAV) is a very new association. It was launched with the help of the government of Vanuatu Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2012 following a long campaign by Shefa Province which had been the leading authority in representing Vanuatu's local governments.

The heads of the six provincial and municipal councils took part in the launch which took place at the Shefa provincial headquarters in Port Vila, which is hosting the new association. The association's constitution and corporate plan were also launched at the same time. The then President of Shefa, Lami Sope, was elected chairman of the new association. Following his election, he said the birth of the association came as a result of strong partnership with the national government, regional partners, donor partners and NGOs.

The funding support for LAAV and other Pacific local authorities associations is managed by FPSPI and comes from VNG/ARIAL. Members of LAAV also pay an annual subscription fee to help fund the operations of their local association.

"Documenting the experience is worthwhile as they will all at some time face this issue. The management of it can make the difference between a seamless transition without loss of momentum and a less than comfortable change over."
Mark Dacombe

Change in personnel slows down progress in establishing LAAV

Following the establishment of LAAV in 2012, the association has appointed a CEO and was making a good start in developing an action plan with particular emphasis on its relations with national and international agencies and potential partners including the Vanuatu Department of Local Authorities, UN Women and some of the partners providing training in the region.

While the association was initially making good progress, the CEO resigned in August 2012 to move to Shefa Provincial Council as Secretary-General. This loss of personnel at a critical and vulnerable time in the development of the association has meant a loss in momentum. In addition, there was also a change in the Chair of the organisation. This loss of two key people meant that the association has faced major challenges in loosing the two key people at the same time.

ARIAL support helps to put LAAV back on track

Following its establishment in early 2012, LAAV was making a good start, having developed a corporate plan to carry out some of the essential things the LGA should be doing.

This included:

- Council capacity-building. Following a the Ministry of Local Government's desire to create Area Councils as part of the decentralisation programme, LAAV saw a significant role for the association to assist members and staff of area councils to develop the skills necessary to fulfil their functions;
- Financial sustainability. This was an important priority as members were not paying their fees;
- Bulk purchasing project. LAAV was starting to work with the Kiribati Local Government Association (KiLGA) to look at opportunities to assist members and create an income stream for the two associations through the co-ordination and facilitation of bulk purchasing for goods and services.

The Association also scored a major coup when Secretary General of ACP Group, Dr Mohamed Ibin Chambers and Assistant Secretary General of ACP Secretariat, Michelle Dominique Raymond, confirmed their support for the emerging association during a visit to Shefa Provincial headquarters in June 2012. The visit was a result of discussions with Ms Raymond after CEO Michel Kalworai attended a meeting in Brussels and met up with Ms Raymond who promised that she would visit the LAAV representatives in Vanuatu when she attended the ACP-EU conference hosted by Vanuatu. The visit was very successful in confirming the EU's support for the emerging local government associations throughout the Pacific, and in setting in motion the idea of a regional local government association – the Pacific Regional Local Government Association.

Though the association had until that time been quite active, including in developing relations with potential development partners, the loss of key people meant that there was a loss of momentum in the work and the organisation was not achieving what it had set out to do.

However, ARIAL and FSPI regional experts supported them through this transition until a new CEO was appointed.

A new CEO, Job Boe, was appointed and started in February 2013. Since his appointment he has been receiving on-the-ground support from FSPI and more specific technical support from ARIAL's regional expert to facilitate the handover to him. As a result of the tools developed for the regional training workshops and the support from ARIAL and FSPI the new CEO, Job Boe, has been taken through the action plan, and has been set up with some tools to help him work with development agencies such as AusAID, NZAID and the EU. This has including help from ARIAL on concept note development.

∘ WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE ∘

Handover training helps new CEO hit the ground running

Despite the major setback of losing two key people at a critical stage of the new association's development, with the technical assistance from ARIAL using the tools developed for the training programme and on-the-ground support from FSPI, the organisation was able to go through the recruitment process and then bring the new CEO up-to-speed with the association's plans and begin to take forward its action plan to get it back on track. The former CEO also maintained a watching brief with LAAV to assist in taking things forward and a smooth handover. Thus the organisation itself went through a learning process on the need for succession planning and a smooth handover, and how to keep stakeholders informed and on board so there is no break in the relationship.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Succession planning.** It is far easier to manage the change of a senior employee if it is thought about in advance. If we know how we intend to handle a change, the process of going through the change will be much smoother.

Step 2: **Planned and managed hand over.** When someone is leaving, make a plan for the transition. This plan should include:

- What we need to know from the person leaving;
- Program to advise key stakeholders of the impending change and the provisions being put in place to ensure continuity;
- A planned hand over either with the outgoing person of by way of briefings.

Step 3: **Introduction of the new person to key stakeholders.** Make sure this happens as soon as possible after the new person takes up their post. Members of the LGA will want to know that their interests are being maintained while the transition takes place. Donors will want to know that projects and programmes that they are funding or are interested in continue to be managed effectively. Maintaining confidence through the transition is critical.

Step 4: **Induction and training:** Hopefully the new person will bring many good skills and experience to the LGA. They will still need to quickly get an understanding of the organisation and its issues. If - as is the case with LAAV - there is a programme part way through implementation, it is very important for its continuity that the new person is quickly briefed and receives appropriate training. The most cost effective way to do that may be to send him or her to spend some time with a sister LGA and to support that with some targeted professional development.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Planned and managed handovers are essential to ensure minimum disruption when people change roles. People in senior roles build relationships which may be lost if they move on and so it is important to actively manage the change;

- Succession planning is important. Key people sometimes move on. It is important to have a plan in place for when that happens. Are we developing our staff? Are they able to step up into a higher role of called upon, even in an 'acting' capacity?

- When a change of senior personnel takes place it is the organisation's responsibility to let stakeholders know. They should be advised of the impending change, the arrangements that are being put in place for continuity of services, and they should be kept informed of when an appointment is likely to be made to the position. If there is any delay the stakeholders must be informed. Rumours flourish in an information vacuum;

- When the new staff member comes on board, it is helpful to make contact with key stakeholders as soon as possible. This helps to reassure them that the level of service is going to be maintained or improved;

- Induction of the new staff member is very important to ensure that he or she is provided with as full as possible information on the LGA. This can be incorporated into the managed handover mentioned above. Ideally the new employee will meet with the outgoing employee. If that is not possible then the outgoing employee should leave a briefing note and desk files;

- Where there are development programmes under way those funding and managing the programmes need to ensure that new staff are fully briefed at an early stage. In some cases this may mean investing in repeating the training for the individual or providing the opportunity for the individual to spend some time with another LGA.

Annexes
Web page on launch of LAAV
Press cutting on ACP visit

Belize

Bringing together three local government organisations to increase influence and strengthen representation and partnership working

LGA

The Belize Mayors' Association (BMA), the National Association of Village Councils (NAVCO) and the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA)

Contacts

Enrique Carabello, Executive Secretary BMA
mayor@btl.net

Franklyn Harvey, Local Government Association Expert
vpfrank1@rogers.com

The project will increase the lobbying capacity and influence of local government at the national level by creating an umbrella organisation for new and existing local government associations in Belize. It has also led to improved collaborative working with central government.

This case study demonstrates how an effective national association, or umbrella group, can be established by drawing on the membership of existing local government associations that represent diverse components of local government, and ensure that all members are fully represented in national development.

Local Government in Belize

Belize has a single-tier local government system, comprising two city councils, seven town councils and a network of 192 village and community councils. The Mayan communities in the south have a parallel system, the Alcaldes.

Local government has been represented by three organisations: the Belize Mayors' Association, the National Association of Village Councils and the Toledo Alcaldes Association.

Achieving decentralisation through combined efforts

Belize has two levels of government: state and local. Responsibility for legislation and regulation for local government rests with the Ministry of Local Government; and, for village councils and the Alcaldes system, with the Ministry for Rural Development.

The Alcaldes system is named after the alcalde or local magistrate, operating at the community level in the most southern part of the country by the indigenous people of Belize. Unlike the chair of a village, the alcalde has a judicial role and can decide who lives in the area. Although mainly practiced by Mayan communities, any rural community can adopt the alcalde system as long as the citizens agree to it being implemented.

The last five years has seen a greater trend towards decentralisation and autonomy through a local government reform process. Until recently, Belize had three separate organisations representing local government: the Belize Mayors' Association (BMA), the National Association of Village Councils (NAVCO) and the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA). From the perspective of central government, the existence of three separate local government organisations makes any consultation process more complex and time consuming. For the associations, their ability to influence is limited as they only represent a particular section of the population.

Giving local government a single, but stronger voice.

With the potential for increased decentralisation and autonomy, it is vital for local government to articulate its views with a strong and effective voice to directly impact on decision-making affecting future development. This is much better achieved by having a single focal point for communication. However, although each of the three existing organisations was concerned with local governance, they all had their own distinct membership and priorities; and the challenge is to increase the ability to influence, while ensuring that all members are fully represented.

⊙ THE APPROACH AND ARIAL SUPPORT ⊙

Designing an action plan for unity

To assess the viability of the umbrella association project, an ARIAL local government expert was engaged to work with the BMA to develop an action plan. Working with local stakeholders, a costed plan was produced, outlining the necessary actions in relation to the Emerging Local Government Associations Facility (ELGAF) programme and other support. Although the BMA was the primary partner, as it had submitted the initial bid for ELGAF funding, the expert worked closely with all three associations and conducted a comprehensive assessment of the readiness of the three organisations to form a national body; their operational status; and capacity needs to launch the association.

All key relevant documents were reviewed; and questionnaire frameworks for central government and LGA leaders developed to compliment a series of meetings with officials from the three organisations, LGA leaders, mayors and government ministers. There was a broad review of the BMA, NAVCO and TAA Boards and staff, which resulted in advice being given on structures, staffing, equipment and accommodation needs. Following a series of workshops with LGA officials, the costed action plan for the new umbrella association was produced, outlining key recommendations, including further technical support required to assist implementation.

○ WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE ○

Building strong foundations for the new association

The ultimate result of the umbrella association project is to increase the ability of local government to influence national decision-making and planning; while continuing to support and reflect the views of all members involved in local governance. The detailed and thoroughly researched action plan produced as a result of the detailed scoping exercise provided a firm foundation on which to build an umbrella association; and has also served as a review to highlight the role and effectiveness of each organisation and provide advice on practical issues, such as staffing and equipment. The inclusive way in which the project was undertaken has opened up channels of communication and contributed to better cooperation and joint working between the three organisations - with accommodation needs being assisted by NAVCO; and with central government - improving collaboration with central government. The project is a work in progress and, although a lot has already been achieved, it is in its infancy in terms of the potential achievements.

"This is a major step towards enforcing our cause for an effective and efficient decentralisation and autonomy of local governments in Belize. This Umbrella organization will serve as the forum for a more participative and effective role in national issues and for the socioeconomic development of Belize."

Enrique Carballo
Executive Secretary

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Make a quick assessment at the outset.** It will help your work in bringing the organisations together if you try to gauge how capable and motivated each one is from the beginning. Look at existing and historical relationships to identify issues that might need addressing. Involve all partners in identifying the benefits of joining together and look for the problems and strongly-felt issues that will be easier to solve through a single organisation.

Step 2: **Take your time to achieve the best results.** Encourage the different organisations to agree on an incremental action plan that can be implemented over, say a two-year period. Adopt a flexible approach to allow you to change the plans if something isn't working; or to take advantage of a new opportunity as the new association evolves.

Step 3: **This is a merger, not a take-over.** Treat all partners equally and with respect to foster commitment across all three organisations.

Step 4: **Look out for potential leaders.** In the course of discussions with the different organisations, you are best placed to spot the dynamic and talented people who can begin to build the new association.

Step 5: **Consider logistical factors when you design your action plan.** Your ideas may look good on paper, but are they achievable in reality. Is there really enough time to meet with everyone on your list; and have you factored in travelling time to get to the more remote locations, and between appointments. A telephone discussion is better than nothing. Be flexible and be prepared to make adjustments where possible to accommodate everyone.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Although the initial funding application was submitted by just one of the organisations, if you are seeking to bring together three bodies to create a single umbrella association, it is important to have the input of all three organisations, i.e. NAVCO and TAA, and not just the applicant, the BMA. This means that all organisations must be prepared to actively contribute by giving their views and listening to the suggestions of others;

- The time frame for the scoping exercise was quite tight, which meant that it was not possible to consult with all partners, or devote the same amount of time. This problem was further exacerbated by the geographical location of some of the stakeholders, i.e. the Toledo Alcaldes Association. More attention could have been given to reaching stakeholders, for instance, by organising telephone or SKYPE interviews;

- The original scoping exercise that underpinned the project to create an umbrella association was quite labour intensive. However, the information it revealed about each of the organisations helped not only in creating a single body, but also in improving/building on different aspects, such as staffing structures;

- It was useful to be able to maintain on-going contact with technical experts throughout the life of the project, and get the view of experts on various issues as they arose;

- If it is likely that you will need further funding to support the new association, you should pay attention to this, even if the funding sources are not immediately obvious, or when you priority is getting the single association up and running;

- When bringing together three very different organisations, be prepared to use a variety of methods such as interviews, workshops and joint working sessions.

Annexes
Action Plan - Franklyn Harvey, Arial consultant
Mission Report - Franklyn Harvey, Arial consultant
Arial Programme Report 2013 - Enrique Carballo

Trinidad and Tobago

Women in local government as agents of change

LGA

Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities (TTALGA)

Contacts

Sandra Singh (CALGA)
ssaannddrraa2@yahoo.com

Sherry Oilivierre (TTALGA)
ttalga@gov.tt

The Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities in partnership with women local government representatives and activists, has written a successful project proposal and obtained funding for setting up and supporting a women's local government forums and a national caucus of women in local government as a result of their capacity-building support from the training provided by the ARIAL project.

The case study shows how targeted training can help boost an association's skills and capacity to respond to issues identified by members and partners and develop project proposals to seek funding to help local governments and partners address these issues.

The Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities

Trinidad and Tobago is an island in the Caribbean with a population of around 1.3 million. Local government is single-tiered with Trinidad divided into 14 municipalities. The Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities (TTALGA) was set up by legislation in 1990. Its membership is the 14 municipal corporations and it is funded by the government through the Ministry of Local Government.

TTALGA's aims are to:

1.   Promote the effective and efficient management of municipal government corporations;

2.   Act as a medium of communication;

3.   Provided representations for local government on government or public bodies.

TTALGA takes a lead on supporting women in local government

Traditionally there have been obstacles to women's participation in decision and policy-making in local government in Trinidad and Tobago, resulting in their rights, needs and demands often being marginalised. Women have been underrepresented in local government bodies. There was a general lack of awareness among both men and women on how gender issues affect local issues. Before the 1996 local elections, the training of women and a campaign to encourage women to take part in the electoral process was undertaken. This was backed up by successful lobbying with TTALGA support to ensure that, where no women were elected, women would be selected as aldermen, thus ensuring that every municipal council had at least one woman.

Following a Commonwealth symposium in 1997, the women's movement and TTALGA set up a project on Engendering Local Government to improve the environment for women to participate in local government, using a variety of opportunities such as seeking to appoint women to advisory committees to input into policy and decision-making. After their campaign to increase support for women candidates, the number of elected women increased dramatically to almost one third (32%) in the 2010 elections.

Boosting women's participation in local government

As a result of the campaign, a greater number of women became aware and involved in local government and, with the impetus of the Commonwealth theme of Women as Agents of Change in 2011 (when the Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister the Hon Kamla Persad Bissessar set a lead by becoming the first woman chairperson-in-office of the Commonwealth), women in local government met to discuss gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting and resolved to establish a national caucus for women in local government to take forward these issues and encourage women to be more active. However, they did not have any funding to take this forward.

ARIAL training boosts TTALGA capacity to prepare project proposals

In November 2011 the ARIAL project provided capacity-building training to local government associations in the Caribbean including participants from TTALGA. This training helped familiarise the practitioners attending with the EU development cooperation processes, including guidelines in writing projects and project proposals for funding. The TTALGA practitioners used this new knowledge to put together a concept note for a project on Women in Local Government as Agents of Change to submit to the EU for funding from EuropeAid.

The concept note prepared by the women's movement with project writing support provided by TTALGA and submitted to the EU was successful and the Association was invited to submit a full proposal. TTALGA, in cooperation with the women's movement, put together a proposal to establish women's forums in local government areas that would form the basis of a national caucus for women in local government. The local women's forums would also include local activists, and local chapters of the national women's caucus.

Though the proposal did not receive funding from the EU (on a technicality because one of the partners was not eligible), the partnership were not deterred and submitted the proposal to the UN Fund for Gender Equity where it was successful. The was granted some US$ 200.000 over two years from the Fund to help and train some 300 women, including current and prospective candidates for the 14 municipalities and the Tobago House of Assembly, as well as supporting women and civil society to lobby for change towards a more inclusive and participatory approach to local and national governance.

○ WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE ○

Setting up a forums for the empowerment of women in local government

The funding has enabled the setting up of women's forums and caucuses in many municipalities to strengthen women's networks in local communities, as well as outreach work and training programmes. These forums include local activists and young people to encourage young women to become more involved in community development with a view to them becoming future candidates for local and national elections.

The women's forums will also encourage discussions cross-party and between districts and regions on issues of common interest. These networks, underpinned by the outreach and training, have resulted in better networking, and skills in advocacy, lobbying and consensus building.

According to TTALGA representative Sherry Olivierre, the project was successful because of the training and outreach that went directly into local communities and many local community groups: the response to the campaign has been excellent, and women's training and the setting up of the women's forums has led to more women coming forward to put themselves forward for public service. The increased skills and knowledge has helped them build capacity that could be applied to other campaigns and issues.

"The ARIAL training was vital to kick start this whole process; now we would like to see further training to expand this work to other target groups."

Sherry Oilivierre, TTALGA project officer

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Formulate a clear topic that already has some momentum** (as the women's movement has in Trinidad and Tobago), and that enjoys the support of the members of the LGA as well as of other relevant stakeholders.

Step 2: **Establish partnerships.** Donors are keen to see different type of stakeholders working together. In the case of engendering of local government, it is key to involve NGOs/women's movements.

Step 3: **Approach central government.** The need for central government to take local government seriously is very important so that issues such as women's empowerment are seen as serious issues and taken up and supported at national level as well as locally.

Step 4: **Draft a concept note based on the formats supplied by the donor.** Request assistance from the regional local government association if present (CALGA in the case of the Caribbean), make use of the training material supplied by the ARIAL programme (www.arial-publications-tools.eu/hb0000/).

LESSONS LEARNED

- Partnership working produces synergies with LGA contributing their skills and civil society contributing policy information and working at grassroots;

- Central government backing is crucial so that issues are taken seriously;

- When the proposal is rejected by one donor, find other donors whose objectives match that of what you are trying to do;

- Regional associations such a CALGA can assist an LGA in preparing a concept note and/or recommend relevant experts to assist in this.

Caribbean

CALGA's position on the EU and local authorities in development

---

LGA

Caribbean Association of Local
Government Authorities (CALGA)

Contacts

Sandra Singh, Senior technical officer CALGA
ssaannddrraa2@yahoo.com

Bishnu Ragoonath, Senior regional expert
Bishnu.Ragoonath@sta.uwi.edu

The European Commission is reconsidering the EU policy in support of local authorities in partner countries. Through its network of members in the region, CALGA was able to inform its members about the changes and opportunities ad consult them to develop a position paper to put to the EU to influence its communication on Local authorities in Development.

CALGA

Membership of CALGA is voluntary and open to all countries in the Caribbean, including the LGAs in: The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

Where there are no national LGAs, CALGA engages with ministries responsible for local government in: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname.

CALGA – the voice of the local government in the Caribbean

The first meeting of local government practitioners in the Caribbean took place in Port of Spain November 1991 attended by several Caribbean LGAs and with the assistance of the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities (TTALGA). A key purpose of the meetings was to explore the idea of forming a Caribbean local government association.

CALGA acts as a support mechanism for different organisations of local government in the region. In undertaking this role, with support from ARIAL, CALGA has taken the lead in helping LGAs in the region to understand European policy and funding and lobby for changes to make it easier to access funding directly.

Local governments face change in European policy

Up to the end of 2011, the EU institutions have dealt with non-state actors (NSAs) and local authorities as one group, exemplified by the thematic programme and aid instrument for Non-State Actors and Local Authorities (NSA-LA). Since then, the European Commission has been redefining its policy on the future involvement of local government in development projects. This is of great importance for the local governments in developing countries, not just those in Europe, as it may provide better opportunities to access EU funding directly.

At the end of 2011 the European Commission announced that it intended to deal with local authorities in a separate Communication, which it planned to publish in early 2013. Local governments and their representative institutions in developing countries needed to be informed and consulted on the content of the communication and its implications.

CALGA formulates its position

With support from ARIAL, CALGA has undertaken a number of initiatives to inform LGAs in the region about the institutions of the EU and how it works and the current funding arrangements.

In the light of the proposed changes to the EU policy on local authorities in development, it initiated a series of consultations to formulate a position paper and encourage other LGAs to also put in submissions to influence the final EU Communication.

Activities included:

- A regional training workshop which took place in November 2011 for LGAs in the region to learn more about European development policy, in particular the ways in which local government could be a more proactive partner in helping to influence how development finance is spent in their countries, and to understand better how to directly access resources which are available. This training provided LGAs with the necessary knowledge on how to get involved in the dialogue on development policies with national institutions and development partners (especially the EU);

- The local government associations learned about the basic roles of these organisations, as well as the content of the existing policies/projects and upcoming programming concerning local governments;
- An issue paper was formulated by CALGA staff and distributed to its members so that they could take this on individually in their countries. The Issue Paper was sent to the EU as part of the local government consultation organised by Platforma (the local government platform in the EU). It recommended a series of strategic interventions and programmes where the EU can support local governance/democracy.

ARIAL's support in strengthening CALGA has allowed it to unify LGAs in the region and provide a unified voice on this and other issues. The ARIAL programme and other support made it possible for CALGA to reinvent the relationships between LGAs in the Caribbean and establish CALGA as the voice for LGAs in the region.

○ WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE ○

A regional approach

CALGA was able to put together a regional policy for its submission to the EU, having much stronger impact than individual LGAs in its recommendations on how the EU can better relate to local authorities in its development work. The process of putting together the position paper helped CALGA to further build its relationships and be seen as the voice for local government in the region and an important focal point for the relationship between local authorities in the region and the EU.

"Before the development of the ARIAL programme and funding from the EU, the LGA's in the Caribbean were not as jointly collaborative and involved in a unified proliferation of developing local government bodies. The programme funded by the EU and assistance from different development partners made it possible to reinvent the relationships between LGAs in the Caribbean and the establishment of CALGA to strengthen this effort."

Bishnu Ragoonath, UWI

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Inform your members.** Members need to be informed about new policies and developments that could affect the way they work or their access to funding.

Step 2: **Develop a regional position.** Consult LGAs in the region who are affected or have an interest in the policy or issue on which you are developing a position. Find the common ground to reach an agreed position; the more backing the stronger the case in putting a position to institutions such as the EU.

Step 3. **Be proactive in communicating your position.** Once you have formulated your position make sure that it is widely publicised amongst your members and other stakeholders so that they can support the position when the opportunity arises and you are speaking as one voice.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Enhancing the capacity of the regional association will have a knock on effect on individual LGAs in the region as it can bring them together on wider issues for training and lobbying;

- There is strength in numbers. A united regional position will have more impact on institutions such as the EU than an individual voice;

- Planning and support for initiatives and communication between LGAs can be lengthy when working across a number of countries, made more difficult by lack of resources and miscommunication of messages. These limitations can be curbed by proper planning, establishment of rules, hierarchy, ethical considerations and proper communication;

- There is no easy solution to problems when communication across countries. Constant involvement and a regional institution which seeks to integrate LGAs is a good starting point.

Tanzania

ALAT- getting local government's voice heard in the constitutional review process

LGA

The Association of Local Government Authorities of Tanzania (ALAT)

Contacts

Habraham Shamumoyo, Secretary General ALAT
Habraham2009@gmail.com

Jerome Byukusenge, Senior technical officer EALGA
byjerome@gmail.com

Guardiner Isaac Manikai, Senior regional expert
nyashashava@yahoo.co.uk.

www.alat.or.tz

The European Commission is reconsidering the EU policy in support of local authorities in partner countries. Through its network of members in the region, CALGA was able to inform its members about the changes and opportunities ad consult them to develop a position paper to put to the EU to influence its communication on Local authorities in Development.

ALAT

The Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania (ALAT) is a national membership organisation which brings together and unifies all the urban and district councils in Tanzania mainland. The Association was established in 1985 and draws its mandate from its own constitution as a registered civil society under the laws of Tanzania.

ALAT has as its members all 161 urban (city, municipality, town) and district councils. The Annual General Assembly of ALAT draw representatives from: Mayors and Chairmen of all 133 urban and district councils; Directors of all 133 urban and District Councils; and, members of parliament - one from each of the 21 regions in Tanzania mainland.

Consultation on a new constitution

Tanzania is currently undergoing a review of its constitution, a process which began in 2011 when President Kikwete announced that Tanzania would undergo reforms. A law was passed by parliament establishing a number of organisations to ensure that there was public consultation and public opinion was collected, coordinated and analysed. The law created a draft constitution for consultation and stated that there would be a referendum for the people to vote on the constitution at the end of the process.

The Constitution Review Act of 2011, as amended in 2013, guides how people will participate to give their opinion, guides the setting up of institutions to do this and provides for national forums for constitutional review.

From July 2009 to June 2014, Tanzania is adding more emphasis on decentralisation. ALAT is a unifying voice and representative body of Local Government in Tanzania. In discharging its mandate ALAT interface with the Government, the Parliament and regional government structures.

A legal framework for decentralisation

The vision of the Association is that Tanzania should have responsible and autonomous local governments that effectively and efficiently deliver quality services and respond to the needs of the people.

While local government issues have often been sidelined nationally, decentralisation by devolution is a key element of the reform process. However, despite the importance of this policy, the legal framework that is in place does not adequately address this, one of the reasons being that local governments are currently not given emphasis in the constitution.

As the representative body and voice for local governments in Tanzania, and fresh from the ARIAL training in lobbying and advocacy, ALAT saw that the adoption of a new national constitution was a golden opportunity for establishing an environment for local authorities to flourish. A key focus of its work should be to join in the discussion on the new constitution and ensure adequate recognition of local government. To do this it needed to develop a position paper to set out the challenges and have a clear picture of the policies it would like to see in place to guide its presentation to the Constitution Review Commission.

"We know and believe that strengthening local government through improved governance, human capacity building, and strategic resources will promote sustainable local development. This is our ultimate goal."

Hon Dr Dida Massabuti, Chairman, ALAT

Developing a position paper

ALAT representatives had attended two ARIAL training programmes in Arusha, one on Development Possibilities with National Institutions and Development Partners in November 2011 and one on Lobbying, Advocacy and Communications Strategies, held in July 2012. A lot of the knowledge and skills gained during these seminars helped officers at ALAT to formulate their approach to the dialogue on the constitution: what they wanted to do to and how they wanted to do it.

Recognising their own limited capacity, ALAT sought help from development partners in commissioning a position paper, and received financial and technical support from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) in developing a paper.

A consultant was commissioned to develop the paper with Commonwealth East Africa Local Government Adviser, facilitating consultations and the preparations of the paper.

The consultant undertook library research and field visits including meeting with members of ALAT, meeting local governments and other relevant stakeholders. The preparations also included a review of literature to find out the approach of other countries to local government in their constitutions.

The final position paper recommends eleven key areas that should be addressed including that the constitution must define and protect the legal status and autonomy of local government authorities, the financial autonomy of LGAs, that LGAs should be recognised as autonomous with independent structures and decision-making mechanisms, and should provide for independent elections to LGAs.

ALAT makes its position clear to lobby the Review Commission

ALAT has been able to define its position on the place of local government in the constitution to feed in to the review process. The way it has developed the paper has ensured consultation with its members so that they also gain an understanding of the position and can support lobbying to achieve their goals. The paper has clearly defined objectives and recommendations, with their justification, so that it is very clear what is being sought.

The final position paper also provides a benchmark for ALAT and its members and stakeholders to assess whether the new constitution has addressed decentralisation by devolution and local democracy.

"ALAT's position paper to embed decentralisation by devolution in the forthcoming Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania is the result of efforts and endorsement of various stakeholders including ALAT Secretariat, Executive Committee and AGMs."

Hon Dr Dida Massaburi,
Chairman, ALAT

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Analysis and assessment.** Identify the issues where you want to make an impact and what you want to achieve from the project. Assess where you are now and formulate what you want to achieve and what the objectives are in having a position.

Step 2: **Do the research.** Look at the background and context you are working in, and review the available relevant literature. Look at comparative systems in other countries that can help support your case.

Step 3: **Involve your members.** The job of the LGA is to represent its members' views, so they must be consulted to determine what the position is. They can be guided by the way that questions are asked and information presented, but they must be fully behind the final position. This may mean some compromises.

Step 4: **Spell out your position.** What are you asking for? What things do you want to be addressed or taken into account? It is essential to be quite clear what you want when approaching. Having a clear position on paper gives clarity to everyone. Make sure that all your stakeholders are also informed about what you are asking for so that they can also put the case on your behalf.

Step 5: **Use the paper to benchmark** and monitor how successful you are in getting your points included.

LESSONS LEARNED

- If you do not have the resources to carry out the activity fully yourself seek help from those agencies who have the expertise and are interested in this activity or doing similar activity with other organisations or countries;

- Look at what other similar organisations and countries are doing: this can often help formulate your own ideas but also give some justification and clarity to what is being recommended;

- It is important to consult and involve members and other stakeholders in the process so that there is consensus and that they have some ownership of the product;

- Producing a position paper is just the beginning. Getting your recommendations known and accepted and presented to the Review Commission requires a more detailed stakeholder and lobbying and communications strategy.

Annexes
Embedding decentralisation by devolution in the proposed constitution of Tanzania, ALAT constitution position paper, ALAT, 2013

East Africa

EALGA's new strategic plan 2013–17

LGA

East African Local Government
Association (EALGA)

Contacts

Jerome Byukusenge, Senior Technical Officer
byjerome@gmail.com

Guardiner Isaac Manikai, Senior regional expert
manikai@bestpractices.co.zw

Tony du Sautoy, Senior regional expert
dusautoy5@aol.com

EALGA's first strategic plan was not as effective as it should have been and many of the targets and outputs had not been achieved. With technical support from ARIAL the Association has been able to make a reassessment of its approach to strategic planning and develop a new plan that is more relevant, realistic and achievable and supported by its members.

EALGA

EALGA represents five national associations from the partner countries of the East African Community:

- Association of Local Government Authorities of Tanzania (ALAT);
- Association of Local Authorities of Kenya (ALGAK);
- Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA);
- Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA), and
- Association Burundaise des Elus Locaux (ABELO).

EALGA has a comprehensive constitution and is run by a Governing Council made up of all the members, and a third of whom must be women. It has a small staff headed by a Secretary-General based in Arusha, Tanzania.

Effective planning across the region

EALGA was created in May 2005 as the apex organisation for local government associations in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, initially with four members and then joined by Burundi in 2008.

EALGA has observer status with the East African Community (EAC) secretariat which allows it to work directly with the EAC on issues on integration in the EAC.

One of the key activities agreed at the inaugural meeting in 2005 was the preparation of the first EALGA Corporate Strategic Plan, including identifying areas where development partners might be able to support its activities. The first plan was produced in 2007 outlining policies and strategies for five years.

However, despite some successful activities achieved with external support, not all the objectives were successful due to lack of capacity in terms of both staff and funding.

The original plan was a comprehensive document, but set over ambitious targets and too many activities many of which were not achieved.

"I commend the ARIAL programme for the technical and financial support for EALGA's development, especially the realisation of the Strategic Plan"

Cllr Ole Taraiya Kores

Developing a realistic and achievable plan

Though the 2007 Strategic Plan was structured and well-written, it was over complicated and confusing, and the logical plan framework was over-complicated and not SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timescale).

There was therefore a need for a new plan which was more realistic and achievable.

ARIAL supports development of a more realistic strategic plan

ARIAL provided direct technical support to the Association, first to make undertake a review and analysis of their initial plan and how effective it had been, and then to help the development of the new EALGA corporate plan, learning the lessons from the assessment of the first strategic plan. The activities were part of the ARIAL-supported strengthening the East Africa Local Government Association programme.

A strategic planning questionnaire was sent out to all EALGA members. From the results of this and the recommendations of the ARIAL assessment, the EALGA secretariat used the ARIAL strategic planning tools to develop a draft plan as a basis for discussion.

A multi-stakeholder regional workshop was held in Arusha, Tanzania in July 2012 bringing together all the EALGA Board members and key partners. Before the workshop, a number of papers were circulated to help participants understand the strategic planning exercise, including an organisational assessment of EALGA, an analysis of the responses to the strategic planning questionnaire, and the draft strategy for 2013-17.

The workshop was carried out in a participatory way to give participants maximum opportunity to share their views and ideas. It included a PEST (political, environmental, social and technical) analysis, a SWOT analysis and a reappraisal of the organisation's vision, mission and strategic objectives. Participants then identified five strategic priorities for the organisation to focus on in its plan.

The plan was presented to members at the Annual general Meeting and is now being implemented.

"With this plan, EALGA will fulfil the purpose for which it has been established by undertaking coordination, advocacy and representational roles for its members at regional level, encouraging, promoting and fostering and maintaining consultation and cooperation on the status of local governments," said Cllr Ole Taraiya Kores, Chairperson, EALGA.

○ WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE ○

Plan is more realistic and achievable

The EALGA new Strategic Plan 2013-17 sets out the organisation's vision, mission and values, identifies its partners, and clearly states its priorities and action plan to deliver the objectives.

The new plan has been simplified by reducing the number and complexity of the targets. It is less ambitious but more realistic about funding and what is achievable. It recognises that not all objectives can be implemented if the necessary resources do not exist. It also has a commitment to effective monitoring and evaluation, including mid-term review, to ensure that things are on track and if not allow adjustment.

The implementation of the Strategic plan is now under way and key actions and activities are under way:

- the EALGA team have developed a position paper on the role of local government in East African integration which was sent to the East African Community (EAC) Secretary-General in March 2013. Since then they have met with the EAC Secretary-General who has promised to assist in mobilising funds to help implement the Strategic Plan, particularly in the area of regional integration;
- a lobbying, advocacy and communications plan (LAC) has been developed supported by a detailed action plan which includes several of the key result areas from the Strategic Plan to help put the Plan into operation. This lobbying strategy is crucial for such as regional association to achieve its goals.

With ARIAL support, the EALGA Secretary-General has visited key partners in Dar-es-Salaam including the delegation of the EU, GIZ (the German Development Agency) and JICA (the Japanese development agency), and is planning to visit others based in nearby East African countries to develop a dialogue for future collaboration. Further ARIAL support will bring in a technical assistant to develop a concept note to be sent to EAC and EU partners identifying key areas for future assistance.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Assessment.** Assess where you are now; how good is your current plan and has it been effective. Have you been able to meet the targets, and if not, why not.

Step 2: **Framework.** Set out the context and purpose of the plan and how it will guide future action.

Step 3. **Consultation.** Involve members and key stakeholders in the process for developing the strategic plan and be inclusive to take account of a wide range of people and ideas.

Step 4. **Identify resources.** Know the resources that are available for the proposed action, whether through members (including in kind) or development and project partners.

Step 5. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Ensure there are mechanisms in place for monitoring and evaluation to constantly review and revise as necessary.

"The Strategic Plan constitutes a step towards building stronger local government associations in the East Africa region and addressing various challenges and weaknesses in local governments and promoting the role of local government associations as development partners"

Cllr Ole Taraiya Kores

LESSONS LEARNED

- Any planning must be a result of consultation from the bottom to ensure ownership of the plan by members which will mean they are more likely to get involved in delivering the targets and outcomes;

- Don't be too ambitious: be realistic. Targets and outputs must be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound;

- Identify areas where there is funding and be realistic about activities where funding may be achieved; do not include activities where there is little chance of funding;

- Follow up the Strategic Plan with detailed strategy and action plans in key areas, for instance a Lobbying and Communications plan. This is a key area for all LGAs but is particularly important for a regional association which must work at many levels and with many partners and stakeholders to influence policy and mobilise resources for itself and its members.

Annexes
EALGA Strategic Plan 2013-17
Lobbying, advocacy and communications strategy

Malawi

Strengthening local government systems to engage with communities and citizens

LGA

Malawi Local Government Association
(MALGA)

Contacts

Charles Chunga, MALGA Executive Director
Charles_chunga@yahoo.co.uk

Samuel Kanida, Senior technical officer SARO
sampkan@gmail.com

Richard Madavo, Senior regional expert
r_madavo@yahoo.com

www.malgamw.org

This case study shows how the Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA) was able to improve citizen engagement and representation, particularly in the case of marginalised groups, such as women, young people and people with disabilities. With support from ARIAL and Tilitonse, MALGA has increased the capacity of councils to develop systems to connect with citizens and increase their participation in decision-making processes affecting local services. Furthermore, it has sought to reassure communities that their views will be taken into consideration.

This three-year project began in October 2012 and is funded by Tilitonse; a funding pool jointly supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission, IrishAid and the Royal Norwegian Embassy.

The Malawi Local Government Association

The Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA) is the representative body for local government authorities.

There are 35 councils, administered by district commissioners and chief executive officers who are appointed by the central government. District commissioners administer district councils while city and town councils are administered by chief executive officers.

Giving citizens a voice

With a population of around 15 million, poverty continues to affect more than half the people of Malawi. Since May 2012, the government has been implementing tough, but critical macro and structural reforms to improve the economy.

The first local elections in the multi-party era took place in November, 2000. The second round of elections was originally scheduled for May 2005, but postponed several times and will now take place in 2014. After a successful start with the national government promoting and legislating far-reaching decentralisation policies from 1998 onwards, the current status of local government is weakened due to the repeated postponement of elections and the absence of local councils since 2005. With few channels for communities to give their views, particularly marginalised groups, the result is a lack of belief in the ability to exercise democratic rights.

Participatory governance is at the centre of the vision for inclusive societies and this project aims to help councils facilitate increased involvement by citizens and communities in shaping local services.

Creating communication channels for citizens

With no elected councillors, and therefore no effective means of day-to-day local communication with citizens on decision-making, this project seeks to address this issue and improve dialogue.

For local authorities, this project aims to:

- Create a flow of information between councils and citizens to inform service delivery;
- Address the lack of communication mechanisms to engage with citizens; and
- Make council structures less intimidating.

For citizens, this project aims to:

- Demonstrate how minority interests can be translated into wider policy issues;
- Reassure citizens that, even in the absence of councillor representatives, they can influence council decisions; and
- Dispel community suspicions that council funds are being misappropriated.

'We would like to applaud MALGA for this project. This is the first time that we have seen several officials from the council come together to us to talk about developmental issues, especially the budget.'

Community leader from Zomba District

Policy development and practical support

The programme began with a start-up workshop to map the outcomes; this also served as a way to introduce the project to stakeholders, develop the aims and gain a shared understanding.

ARIAL supported the development of a Lobbying and Advocacy strategy for the association and subsequent training for MALGA staff. Taking place over a three year period and involving eight councils, technical and financial expertise is being provided to help the councils selected to undertake a more participatory approach to policy making. The project was funded by Tilitonse and administered by MALGA.

Citizens are empowered to participate in council programmes that directly affect them; and communities encouraged to articulate their needs and challenges; increasing transparency and accountability between councils and citizens. The citizens were mobilised to take part in the projects by the councils themselves, using the existing development structures namely, Village Development Committees (VDC) and Area Development Committees (ADC). Members of ADCs and VDCs represent citizens in communities and articulated their community needs and the projects they wanted to see prioritised in the 2013/14 council budget. After the consultation process, councils consolidated the views from the different ADCs. The prioritised activities/projects were costed by council secretariats and included in the council draft budgets, which were presented to District Consultative Forums for consideration and approval.

The next steps include supporting councils in providing feedback on the implementation of the budgets; facilitating links and networks between local authorities; coordinating peer learning and exchange visits; lobby for devolution of key sector ministries and advocate for increased budget allocation to councils for their programmes.

Policy development and practical support

Even in the early stages, this project has already yielded tangible outcomes. The lessons learned from the target group of councils can be replicated for use in other local authorities; and also in the dialogue with national government. The project has provided an excellent foundation on which to build stronger participatory policies and tools.

The project is ongoing but has already had an impact in the following areas:

- ARIAL technical support funding for the development of a Lobbying and Advocacy strategy has increased the capacity of MALGA in this area;
- Creating a conducive environment for learning, MALGA has facilitated increased networking and information sharing between councils; and
- Local authorities have been encouraged to adopt a more consultative and multi-stakeholder approach to the development and implementation of public policies through increased dialogue and civic engagement. The councils targeted by this project have all developed their 2013/14 budgets using a participatory process, taking on board the views of the community.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Consultation is key.** Communication between local government and the community should be ongoing and regular. Every opportunity to initiative dialogue and facilitate discussion should be used. Participants must be made fully aware of the remit of a project and be able to have an input at each stage.

Step 2: **Look at existing communication structures.** When you are scoping the ways to connect with citizens, look at the systems and structures already in place. Can you tap into these and use established groups or forums to reach community members and enhance relationship.

Step 3: **Avoid raising too many expectations.** Ensure that communities are properly briefed on which issues/projects fall under the responsibility of councils and the cost implications.

Step 4: **Establish a point of contact.** Appoint a key person in the council to serve as a focal point for information and to drive through the process.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Using the existing community structures or ADCs was of major importance to connect with citizens, as was providing continual feedback to communities on progress;

- Not everyone progressed at the same pace and it is advisable to regularly check that everyone taking part in the project is at the same stage and that nobody is left behind;

- It was worth taking the time at the outset to introduce the communication and advocacy project to a wide audience, particularly when there is general disenchantment in the ability to influence the democratic process;

- Providing training to MALGA staff on the new Lobbying and Advocacy strategy was really helpful. Once the strategy was in place, it was important to reinforce the key points to staff and give them practical help in implementing it;

- If you haven't got the resources to follow up on the initiatives suggested by community members, make sure you explain this at the outset. Some of the citizens were disappointed when they discovered that their ideas as part of the budgeting exercise would only be implemented if the resources could be found and became disillusioned.

Southern Africa

Mobilising resources to strengthen local governance in Africa

---

LGA

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa–Southern Africa Regional Office (UCLGA-SARO)

Contacts

Francis Duri, Acting Secretary General of SARO
duripf@yahoo.com.au

Estery Madavo, Technical Officer SARO
uclga.saro@gmail.com

The project enabled UCLGA-SARO to secure EU funding to support local government improvement and development by building its capacity to make funding applications.

This case study shows how working with experts on the complex procedure of writing an EU funding application, UCLGA-SARO was successful in securing funding for activities, but also gained invaluable experience in writing future bids, which can be shared with a wider audience.

UCLGA – SARO

UCLG-SARO is the representative body of local government associations in Southern Africa; members include Angola*, Botswana, Lesotho*, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In order to strengthen local government associations and improve service delivery to communities, the priority areas for support in the region include:

- Advocacy and lobbying;
- Capacity building of LGAs;
- Resource mobilisation;
- Knowledge sharing;
- Profiling LGAs.

*These countries are not included in the EU proposal.

Funding improvement in Southern Africa

Founded in 2005, the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa - Southern Africa Regional Office (UCLGA-SARO) is the umbrella organisation of local government associations in Southern Africa. Its vision is to achieve strengthened, integrated and organised local government associations by becoming the recognised representative voice for organised local government, providing a platform for capacity building and networking.

One of the main mandates of UCLGA-SARO is the mobilising of resources to support improvement and development activities in local authorities.

The common problems identified among local authorities in Southern Africa were a limited capacity to manage public policies and deliver services; the lack of networking opportunities to facilitate collaborative working; and limited expertise in local government associations for lobbying, advocacy and representation. UCLGA-SARO wanted to implement a project to enhance the effectiveness of local authorities and associations of local authorities in a number of targeted countries. Donors identified included the European Union.

Increasing skills and know-how to make a successful funding application

While the aims of UCLGA–SARO have been clearly defined and the needs of individual local government associations identified; progress cannot be made in implementing initiatives without the necessary resources to tackle these issues.

Although potential donors had already been identified, UCLGA-SARO had little experience of writing funding applications. This is a critical specialism, as the application procedure and eligibility criteria are very complex; and the process very competitive. Filling this skills gap is crucial to enabling UCLGA-SARO to forge ahead with its key aims to meet the needs of its members.

◦ THE APPROACH AND ARIAL SUPPORT ◦

ARIAL training helps to secure EU project funding for the region

With detailed training in putting together a funding bid provided by ARIAL experts, an application for EU funding was made in response to the Restricted Call for Proposals 2011 for Local Authorities under the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development programme; the project was entitled, 'Strengthening Local Governance in Southern Africa (SLG-SA)'. Coordinated by the UCLGA-SARO secretariat, once the initial concept bid was written, it was further developed by seeking and incorporating input from all members.

Consultation with SARO member LGAs from participating countries was a key feature throughout the whole process to secure regional ownership and commitment to the project.

Training that yields benefits for immediate and long-term impact

The application for funding was successful and, once the contract has been signed, the planned activities can be implemented. They include training workshops on a range of subjects such as policy review and formulation, and advocacy; technical support; research; and direct thematic support to councils. The funding will also contribute to staffing costs and the use of expert consultants; and office equipment, supplies and travel costs.

The immediate impact of this project in increasing the capacity of UCLGA-SARO and allowing it to implement a range of improvement initiatives is also matched by the potential longer-term benefits of increasing UCLGA-SARO's ability and confidence to make further funding applications. Much of the expertise acquired is transferable and can be used in applications to other donor organisations; and the experience and principles learned can be shared more widely with member associations.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Assemble a small team to look at the application criteria.** Having an extra set of eyes to view complex materials is very useful. Share the responsibility for interpreting the guidelines to ensure that every condition is identified, understood and able to be met.

Step 2: **Make sure that everything is in place.** Before you embark on writing an application, to avoid interruptions and delays as far as possible, try to assemble everything you need. Make sure that you have completed all the necessary actions, such as registering on PADOR if you are submitting a bid for the EU.

Step 3: **Seek advice from previous applicants.** Associations that have already been through the application process are perfectly placed to give you invaluable practical advice. They can suggest short cuts and solutions and also reassure you that you are doing the right thing. It is also useful to learn about a project that has already succeeded in securing funding and conquering the process.

Step 4: **Identify and promote your Unique Selling Points.** Try to understand what the donor is hoping to achieve through the funding programme and make sure you articulate the unique factors about your application, particularly if they align with the donor's priorities.

Step 5: **Allow enough time for your application.** Be aware of the deadlines and use robust systems to monitor progress and chase missing information. If there are technical issues, such as network coverage, build this in to your timetable.

Step 6: **Retain and re-use the expertise.** Recognise the skills and experience involved in applying for funding that are transferable and ensure they are considered for use in other applications. Share this knowledge with other associations and councils.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Involving and working closely with the SARO member associations on the application process, ensured that they were able to contribute throughout, and that any information relating directly to these associations was comprehensive and correct;

- The EU application process is highly complex and competitive with a number of complicated requirements and eligibility criteria. Therefore, a high level of commitment and attention to detail is needed to ensure that a potentially strong project is not rejected because of the failure to meet one of the administrative criteria;

- There were unexpected technical issues. PADOR, the online EU registration process, was quite complex and temperamental, and relied on technology working efficiently. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that, as a regional association, all the member LGAs had to be registered on PADOR as well;

- Making sure that everything is in place before making an application to the EU will avoid unnecessary delays. This includes registration and having the necessary information and documentation in place;

- Because the funding proposal linked in to ongoing UCLGA-SARO initiatives, there was already an existing coordinating mechanism to support the work, and this appeared to be important to the donors;

- Regional initiatives, or proposals involving several countries, appear to be particularly popular with donors. Although more complex to design and manage, when several countries or associations take part, the resulting benefits and legacy appear to have a more strategic impact and affect more people.

Annexes
EU grant application form 'Strengthening Local Governance in Southern Africa'.

Swaziland

Improving national local government representation

LGA

Swaziland Local Government Association (SWALGA)

Contacts

Jabulani Nxumalo, SWALGA Director
nxumalojabu@gmail.com

Richard Madovo, Senior regional expert
r_madavo@yahoo.com

The Swaziland Local Government Association has increased its influence and effectiveness through organisational transformation leading to a new structure, constitution and relaunch.

The case study shows how concentrating resources on the institutional development of a strategic body can lead to short and long-term improvements at a local and strategic level. It can also pave the way to increase influence and recognition beyond the national level.

SWALGA

Swaziland is a landlocked country in Southern Africa with a population of 1.1 million.

The country is divided into four administrative regions, which have their own governors; and there are three tiers of urban and rural local government.

Set up in 2001, in the 2013-18 Strategic Plan, SWALGA identifies the following priorities:

- Sustainability of SWALGA;
- Advocacy and lobbying role;
- Provide Service to Members;
- Platform for Information Sharing

Increasing local effectiveness

The Swaziland Local Government Association (SWALGA) came into being in 2001, and was the successor to the Swaziland National Association of Local Authorities (SNALA) founded in 1999. The aim of both organisations was to give a single voice to local government and ensure that local government was included in decision-making processes to impact positively on community governance and wellbeing.

With decentralisation becoming more important to improve the delivery of a range of services including health care, education, transport and infra-structure; and the understanding of local needs by increasing grass roots level participation in policy making, building the capacity to influence was even more crucial.

The challenges to SWALGA in achieving this included the lack of formal structures such as an effective secretariat to direct activities; and a constitution, setting out clear objectives and, therefore, a lack of recognition.

Making an impact

SWALGA had little impact nationally and there was no effective relationship with national government. This made lobbying activities and general communication very difficult as, although Swaziland's population is not large, the system of local government is complex.

Supporting strategically and practically

The ARIAL programme supported a number of strategic and practical actions. Start-up capital was used to purchase equipment for the initial SWALGA office and support in setting up the secretariat, which allowed for the payment of fees. Technical expertise was provided through ARIAL-funded international missions by local government experts from VNG; and capacity building and international dialogue events, including planning meetings, training on lobbying, advocacy and community strategy, decentralisation development and the launch of SWALGA itself.

These events brought together various partners and experts from a range of disciplines including all urban local authorities from the four regions in Swaziland; the Chief Executive Officers Forum, the Local Authorities Managers Association, and the Institute for Municipal Finance Officers.

Improving association services, leadership and status

While the emphasis of the ARIAL programme has focused on organisational change at the association level, the benefits are far reaching and can be evidenced at both a strategic and local level. The association now has a clearly defined organisational structure and a new constitution, endorsed by all members of SWALGA, achieved through enhanced communication. The 2013-18 Strategic Plan represents the views of a wide audience, setting out priorities, objectives and also a full assessment of the risks and challenges.

As a result of the ARIAL programme, SWALGA is much better equipped to provide leadership for national local government with more formal and robust tools and mechanisms, including structural improvements and a constitution to articulate its mission. Legally registered with the relevant ministry, SWALGA is officially recognised by the government of Swaziland and a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with Gender Links and Justice housed within the Family and Gender Unit in the Deputy Prime Ministers Office.

This enhanced status and profile has also empowered SWALGA to strengthen links with a range of global organisations, including the UNDP; and to revive the relationship with United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), and actively participate in the activities of the UCLG Southern Africa Regional Office. Communication with SWALGA members has been improved by the introduction of a quarterly e-newsletter. With immediate impact, the benefits of this project will also be felt in the long term.

'I want to thank ARIAL for a fully-fledged and efficiently functioning SWALGA Office. This makes it easier to perform and execute my duties in the Ministry. SWALGA is now a registered and accepted entity in the Kingdom whose role is fully understood'.

Senator Pastor Lindiwe Dlamini, Minister for Housing and Urban Development, launch of the Swaziland Local Government Association, November 2011.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Adopt an inclusive approach.** Cast your net far and wide to ensure that all relevant stakeholders and partners are consulted and involved in developmental processes; from decision-makers at all levels, to practitioners and communities.

Step 2: **Look for opportunities to connect with people.** Tap into existing groups and community gatherings to hold open discussions with communities to nurture dialogue and encourage ideas and input.

Step 3: **Finding the funding.** Throughout the process of organisational transformation, remember that securing financial and technical support is key to being able to implement the ideas contained in the strategic plan.

Step 4: **Include a range of achievable activities as part of the action plan.** Make sure your action plan offers a variety of activities to bring about improvements at the local level. Be realistic and scope the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each activity.

LESSONS LEARNED

- People should be at the heart of any discussion about creating a new constitution. It is important to pay careful attention to their ideas, needs and culture. If they help create the constitution, they will be more likely to own, respect, value and protect it. The association's role should be as a facilitator to elicit ideas and opinions, and encourage people to speak freely;

- Communities themselves are full of good ideas and citizens are best placed to identify the problems and solutions in their own environment;

- To create a successful strategic plan, involve as many stakeholders as possible, particularly local and central government decision-makers, ministers and council leaders; as they are best placed to ensure that any constitution is upheld. The input of technical and financial experts is also important to produce robust proposals;

- Achieving recognition by central government increases an association's confidence and ability to play a part in discussions on a global level, for example with UN bodies.

Annexes
Copy of the Constitution
SWALGA 2013-18 Strategic Plan

South African

SALGA: Reviewing the Equitable Share Formula (ESF) within the local government fiscal framework to improve the allocation of financial resources to councils

LGA

South African Local Government Association
(SALGA)

Contacts

Reuben Baatjies
rbaatjies@salga.org.za

SALGA has worked with member councils and government departments to review the existing method of allocating horizontal local government funding within the Local Government Fiscal Framework. Following consultation and careful analysis, a new Equitable Share Formula (ESF) has been developed and will result in the prospect of a much fairer allocation of financial support, helping all councils to deliver its services.

The case study shows how the comprehensive review of a strategic function by a national association can improve the situation at the local level. By giving careful consideration to all the factors involved in allocating resources, the system will be made more effective in responding to the particular circumstances and needs of councils.

South African Local Government Association (SALGA)

SALGA is recognised in the Organised Local Government Act 1997. It represents 278 councils on several intergovernmental forums, including the President's Coordinating Council, Minister and MECs forum, the Budget Forum, the National Council of Provinces and the Financial and Fiscal Commission. It has offices in Pretoria and all nine provinces.

Priorities are to:
- Represent, promote and protect local government interests;
- Transform local government to enable it to fulfil its developmental role;
- Raise the local government profile;
- Ensure full participation of women at the local level;
- Serve as an employer body;
- Develop municipality capacity.

Giving all councils a fair share of resources to deliver services

Following the abolition of apartheid in 1994, South African local government has been tasked with addressing the urgent need to develop and maintain basic services. The significant funding required for this activity is diverting financial resources away from the much needed support for economic growth and development. This financial gap was highlighted at the 2011 national Budget Forum; when it was estimated that of the R750 bn investment needed for capital expenditure over the next decade, only half this amount will be available. There is an urgent need for local government to review its financial procedures, including billing and collection; tax and tariffs; debt management; and general efficiency savings.

Key to this is the allocation of resources to councils. The budget process sets aside 45% of national revenue for provincial and national government and around 10% for local government. This is divided among the country's 278 metropolitan, district and local councils, enabling them to provide basic services and perform the functions specified in the national Constitution. The allocation is done through a formula that uses objective data to prevent the split being arbitrarily manipulated to benefit an individual council.

Aligning resource allocation to the variable costs of service delivery

Although SALGA is also keen to embark on a campaign to tackle why local government receives only 10% of national revenue when it is the implementation sphere of government; the more fundamental issue is how the money is allocated to councils. The cost of delivering services and the challenges to councils vary enormously depending on issues relating to location, infrastructure and changing demographics. The Equitable Share Formula (ESF) must consider these factors if the division of resources is to be truly equitable and provide the best support to councils.

Consulting and reviewing

SALGA submitted a position paper to the 2010 Budget Forum recommending that an independent commission undertake a review of the horizontal budget allocation. The review took place in 2012, with the objective of creating a new formula to determine funding allocation to councils in the 2013 budget.

The first step in the process was to establish a national task team to conduct the review, comprising representatives of the National Treasury, the Department of Cooperative Governance and the South African Local Government Association, in partnership with the Financial and Fiscal Commission and Statistics South Africa. The process was designed to be comprehensive and highly consultative process in order to enrich the review with the ideas and insight from councils and other interested stakeholders.

During the first phase of the review, the working group circulated discussion papers to all councils for comment. These discussion papers provided analysis of the current equitable shares formula and proposed a set of principles and objectives for the new formula. In addition to circulating these discussion papers, six workshops were held in venues around the country with different types of councils. These workshops produced robust and in-depth discussions on municipal views of the current formula and expectations for the new formula. During this process 43 councils participated in the workshops and 17 submitted written reports.

Discussions took into consideration the failure of the existing formula to acknowledge key issues affecting funding in councils across the country, such as the variation in the real cost of service provision in different areas and the impact of topography. Once the review was completed, a revised formula was devised and submitted for approval within the new policy framework.

° WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE °

Creating a more level playing field for councils to provide services

The Local Government Fiscal Framework is constantly being revised, however, SALGA lobbied for, and achieved a much more comprehensive review, ensuring that changes were of a structural nature with a more permanent and long-term impact.

The review process was thorough and included extensive consultation with all councils, as well as other stakeholders, and the revised formula incorporates updated data from the 2011 census.

The discussion papers that formed part of the consultation process provided a background on the history and structure of the formula and some analysis of the allocations determined through it.

The outcome of the review of the local government equitable share formula will affect all municipalities; hence the process was structured to be as open and transparent as possible to give all councils an opportunity to be a part of the review.

The impact of the new Equitable Share Formula is that the division of revenue that councils currently receive has the potential to be altered as a result of better and more current information which will ensure that councils really do receive the appropriate share of resources to meet their circumstances.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Establish a formal task group.** A project of this importance and affecting councils across the whole country needs a dedicated team to manage the work and drive it forward.

Step 2: **Consult widely.** The issue is about allocating funding to all councils and, therefore, all councils must be given the opportunity to contribute their comments. Draw up a consultation action plan and try to include as many ways as possible to elicit information; i.e. meetings, workshops and inviting written submissions. This is a national issue, so try to extend the consultation to the regions by providing opportunities to councils across the country to offer their views. Set a clear deadline for the submission of views.

Step 3: **Prepare councils in advance.** If you want to have a meaningful input into an issue, make the process as easy as possible for the target audience. Provide information in advance of any meeting or to accompany a request for written submission, explaining the aims of the process; the background and the main issues; and stimulate by suggesting options and questions for consideration.

Step 4: **Be open and transparent.** Publish all written communications relating to the issue and make it available on websites wherever possible. Set up a mechanism to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of progress and outcomes at the earliest opportunity.

LESSONS LEARNED

- When considering budget allocation, it was very important to strike a balance between responding to policy priorities, such as urbanisation and developing cities; and the practical realities, for example, the geographical location and nature of a council, which can seriously impact on the cost of providing services;

- Consulting a broad range of stakeholders was vital. As the aim of the initiative was to identify the special or unique factors in different councils to ensure that the funding allocation formula was fair, this could only be achieved by hearing a range of views and experiences;

- Providing stakeholders with information in advance of the consultation process was useful. The two discussion papers explained the issues, such as the background to the issue, and highlighted the positive and negative aspects. The papers also indicated the key area for consideration. Having this information enabled stakeholders to engage more fully with the review of the Equitable Share Formula.

Annexes
SALGA Website www.salga.org.za/pages/Municipal-Focus/Municipal-Finance

Zimbabwe

Developing a combined national advocacy strategy and action plan for urban and rural councils to increase the capacity of local government as a whole

LGA

Zimbabwe Local Government Association
(ZILGA)

Contacts

Rodgers Mozhentiy , Chief Executive Officer (ARDCZ)
ceo@ardcz.co.zw

Tserayi Machinda, Programmes Manager (UCAZ)
ucaz@ucaz.org

Having brought together the two bodies representing urban and rural local government, the Zimbabwe Local Government Association produced a combined advocacy strategy and action plan to facilitate a strong and unified way forward. This case study shows how targeted training can boost an association's skills and capacity to respond to the needs of all its members; to bring about improvements for urban and rural councils; and to strengthen its influence on behalf of all local government.

The Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA)

The Zimbabwe Local Government Association (ZILGA) is the representative body of all local authorities in Zimbabwe. Current membership stands at 90 Local Authorities (100% membership). Of these, 60 are Rural District Councils and the remaining 30 are Urban Councils.

ZILGA's aims are to:

- Represent, promote and protect the interests of Local Governments in Zimbabwe;
- Promote decentralization, local autonomy and sustainable local governance;
- Ensure the full participation of women in local government.

ZILGA is wholly funded by membership subscriptions and occasionally donor grants.

Unifying local government

Local government in Zimbabwe is regulated by two separate pieces of legislation; the Urban Councils Act and the Rural District Councils Act. Similarly, there are two separate associations, the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe and the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe.

Tremendous strides were made in unifying the two associations and, in 2007, they merged to become the Zimbabwe Local Government Association, with one President. However, the merger was superficial, as the two bodies continued to function separately.

The purpose of creating a lobbying and advocacy strategy and work plan is to establish a ZILGA Secretariat and move to a unified local government association. The successful development of a combined national advocacy strategy and action plan will consolidate the amalgamation efforts of the two associations under one umbrella (ZILGA). Further, the strategy intends to impact the decentralisation drive and entreat the harmonisation of legislation relating to Local governance.

Sectionalised legislation and associations

The existence of a strong local government association is vital to effective advocacy and lobbying, as well as building the capacity of councils. Global experiences provide evidence to the effectiveness of having a strong single local government association.

However, local government in Zimbabwe has always been characterised by two separate policies for urban and rural areas. Having two separate pieces of legislation has resulted in giving different mandates to local authorities and, in effect, having two local government systems. It was therefore rational to have two associations, the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ) and the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe (ARDCZ) to support and lobby on behalf of their members.

Developments in Zimbabwe and global trends have meant that viewing local government as a single entity is a priority; and councils stand to benefit more from a single association than two separate bodies. The challenge is to unify policies and come up with a single way forward.

Building the capacity of ZILGA to develop key strategies

In June 2012, ZILGA representatives attended an ARIAL funded, regional workshop on developing local government association communication, lobby and advocacy strategies. This training enhanced the capacities of the participants in policy development and priority-setting and facilitated the preparing of a lobby and advocacy strategy. The ARIAL programme further assigned regional experts to help with the development of the draft communication, lobbying and advocacy documents by the association to be used in relevant national political dialogue.

The first step in creating the strategy was to establish a task team made up of ARDCZ and UCAZ programme officers to produce an initial draft. The plan was further developed through a workshop coordinated by an ARIAL funded political expert, and supported by SARO. Wider consultation was conducted with member councils through meetings, telephone interviews and via the Town Clerks' Forum. Executive committee members were consulted and the draft approved.

Consolidation and complementarity in local government initiatives

Increasing the technical skills of ZILGA has enabled a major shift in the way local government operates. Service delivery is the key function of local government; and the lobbying and advocacy strategy outlines a series of combined efforts and actions to achieve policy reforms in all councils, and in the country as a whole. This is evidenced by the constitutional recognition of local government which is a result of the integrated lobby document produced by both the Urban and the Rural Associations in the constitution making process.

Though a lot still remains to be done in the strategy, significant progress has been made towards achieving the goals of the communication, lobbying and advocacy strategy. The new constitution fully recognises local government and not less than 5% of the total national revenue collected is to be allocated to provinces and local authorities.

Creating a unified association helps to consolidate and prioritise capacity building initiatives and ensure equitable development throughout Zimbabwe. This also means that potential donor agencies will not be faced with the conundrum of which sector to support, urban or rural.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Establish an interim executive committee and secretariat.** Merging the policies and operational practices of two different associations is complex and represents a major change. Communicating this to member councils and relevant government ministries is crucial and can best be achieved by creating these interim bodies. The committee and secretariat will serve as a focal point both for the creation of joint policies and to cement the merger.

Step 2: **Broaden participation to achieve a joint approach.** To encourage commitment to a unified approach; and to secure the best possible expertise and input for the strategy, it is vital to involve all stakeholders, at every stage of the process. This includes national politicians, technical experts, and the most senior and influential politicians and executive officers from both rural and urban councils.

Step 3: **Develop the strategy by looking at the national perspective.** Identify and prioritise national issues for advocacy and lobbying, rather than pro-rural or pro-urban, as this will place local government as a whole at the forefront of proposals.

Step 4: **Draft and adopt a constitution.** Undertake a review of the constitutions of the two associations; and compare with the amalgamation processes and constitutions of any other associations in the region. Draw up a harmonised constitution to be agreed by the interim executive and adopted.

Step 5: **Dissolve and merge.** Take the steps to formally dissolve the previous associations and establish the new body. This serves as a powerful reinforcement to support a unified association and approach or strategy.

Step 6: **Propose a single local government act.** To complete the process of unifying two associations and, effectively, two types of local government, it is important to make legislative changes. The creation of a single Act will help rural and urban councils to be viewed local government assist the development facilitate integrated planning for both urban and rural local authorities and synchronizing service delivery will harness Urban-Rural Migration.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Encouraging broad and active participation from a number of stakeholders in the development of the strategy helped to increase commitment for unified activities and it increased the feeling of ownership;

- It was important to create a politically-neutral environment, particularly as the leadership of the association is made up of politicians; and to stress that the focus of the work was on increasing the association's ability to articulate the views of local government, not party political policies;

- Making a concerted effort to view the population and local government as a whole, and not categorise it into rural or urban, was important to creating a combined forward plan to serve everyone;

- Even when you have made enormous advancements and enhanced the capabilities of your association, there is still room for further improvement. You should look for further help and to benefit from the experience of others. ZILGA recognised that the regional association, UCLGA-SARO, could help in preparing the strategy and recommend relevant experts to assist in the process.

Annexes
ZILGA Lobby and Advocacy Strategy (draft)

Togo

Increasing the effectiveness and quality of the association's services using a customer satisfaction survey of member councils

LGA

Union of Local Authorities of Togo
(Union des Communes du Togo, UCT)

Contacts

Joachim Hunlede, Executive Secretary
spuct@yahoo.fr

Alhassan Ziblim Al-Hassan, Senior Technical Officer, WARO
ziblimaa@yahoo.co.uk

www.uct-toga.org

The Union of Local Authorities of Togo (UCT) designed and administered a survey for its membership, focussing on specific areas. Through careful analysis and interpretation, the UCT was able to use the results to gauge satisfaction levels and recommend changes to services and operational systems.

This case study shows how an association can use a comparatively inexpensive method to identify structural and service improvements while, at the same time, demonstrate a high level of commitment to engaging with, and responding directly to the needs of its membership.

The Union of Local Authorities of Togo (UCT)

he Union of Local Authorities of Togo (UCT) was created in 1996. Following the local government reforms in 2001, it now has 21 members and is committed to working with councils to implement decentralisation.

Supporting decentralisation

Togo has a population of over six million people and is divided into five administrative regions, each supervised by an inspector. The regions are subdivided into 30 prefectures and four sub-prefectures, with inspectors and prefects appointed by the president. The prefectures have elected councils and the first direct local elections were held in 1987. A policy of decentralisation is currently underway and nine of the 30 councils are now fully independent with an elected mayor; and the remaining 21 are semi-independent with the prefect acting as mayor.

As the decentralisation process continues, the national association has a crucial role to play in representing the views and interests of member councils; and by providing support, particularly to help councils exchange their experiences of decentralisation and the impact on services.

Finding out what member councils want

With few resources, and at a time of great transition, it is even more important that the changes or additions a national local government association makes to the way it operates or the services it provides, are supported and wanted by the membership. Although the UCT was aware of the need to adapt the association to help councils through the decentralisation process, they had little information about what councils wanted or needed; or how the association was perceived by the membership.

Designing a survey to get the right information

ARIAL was the inspiration behind this initiative. The idea for a survey was conceived during a training workshop and a presentation of the tools developed by the ARIAL programme. Using the expertise they had acquired, the UCT staff carefully crafted a survey to elicit the views of its membership on four key areas: knowledge of the association; services on offer; operational methods; and relationships and contacts. The survey was administered between May and June in 2012.

Assisted by the ARIAL training, the UCT staff were able to analyse the information provided in the completed surveys and identify the strengths and weaknesses in the key areas. The results were used to inform recommendations to change various aspects of the association and align the UCT more closely to the expectations of the membership.

The ARIAL programme also funded the recruitment of a consultant, engaged specifically to work with the Executive Secretary on the UCT's advocacy action plan. As a key part of this initiative was to demonstrate the association's commitment to customer satisfaction, the findings of the survey were made widely available to the membership.

Improving member services and relationships

This initiative has shown how, with some expert training, an association can create a highly effective, and yet simple and inexpensive tool to find out how it is regarded by its membership. By highlighting the perceived strengths and weaknesses, the customer satisfaction survey enabled the UCT to implement changes that they are confident the membership will support and welcome.

Although many of the outcomes are very tangible and practical, i.e. producing reliable information on which to base policy/operational changes; the benefits in terms of public relations and improving relationships between the association and member councils have the potential to impact in the long term by increasing the support of the members.

The new skills acquired by UCT staff in eliciting feedback from members can be used repeatedly to gauge opinions and satisfaction levels on other new initiatives.

'The ARIAL training has increased the lobbying and consultation skills of staff in the association's secretariat; and it has raised awareness of the crucial role of consultation in representing the interests of member councils."

Joachim Hunlede, Executive Secretary, UCT.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Plan the content and structure of your survey carefully.** You will only receive an answer about a subject, if you pose the right question. Make sure your survey covers all the subjects you want feedback on and that the questions you set are simple and explicit. If you want to know about a specialised issue, involve the technical experts in formulating the questions.

Step 2: **Promote the survey for maximum impact.** In general, response rates to surveys are relatively low compared with the number issued. Make sure you use existing systems - websites, newsletters and events, to explain the survey and encourage participation. Build in a system to chase responses.

Step 3: **Set a clear deadline or cut-off point for completed surveys**. If you do not provide an 'end' date to the survey, there is a danger the process will meander on and fail to yield coherent consequences. Set a date for the completed surveys to be analysed and the findings considered.

Step 4: **Action the findings**. Once the results have been interpreted, develop a plan of action. Implement the changes that are relatively easy and, for the more costly or complex suggestions, explain to members why such changes cannot be immediately implemented and what you intend doing about the issue.

Step 5: **Feed back the results**. Ensure that you have a mechanism in place to follow up on the survey and inform members about the results and future actions. The membership is a key part in this process and will want to know the outcomes. Failure to engage could result in worsening relations.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It was critical at the initial design stage to ensure that the content and format of the survey covered the issues that were deemed to be most important. It was worth spending extra time and effort on this at an early stage;

- By using open and closed questions, analysing the completed surveys was relatively easy. With some subjects, however, like the methods an association uses to deliver services, anecdotal comments can be more informative; but this will affect the time and effort in interpreting the responses;

- It is really important to demonstrate your responsiveness to the views of members and implement changes that have been highlighted in the customer survey. Even if limited financial resources makes this difficult, try to address issues that are relatively easy to make as this goes a long way to cementing relationships. The UCT magazine was well known, but members felt there wasn't enough coverage of what was going on in individual councils. Members were familiar with the association's website, but found it of little use. The UCT made changes to address these concerns, for example, by using the web site to launch and publicise key documents;

- Be prepared to receive negative as well as positive comments about your association; and treat all comments as constructive feedback. The survey revealed that members were dissatisfied with the amount of direct contact they had with the association. This criticism was turned into a positive and paved the way for changes to provide more regular visits to councils and strengthening direct communication.

Mali

Developing a funding strategy to build relationships with development organisations and secure funding

---

LGA

The Association of Municipalities of Mali
(Association des Municipalités du Mali, AMM)

Contacts

Youssouf Diakite, Executive Director AMM
ydiakite@am-mali.org

Gerrit Jan Schep, Senior Regional Expert
schep4@WXS.nl

The Association of Municipalities of Mali (AMM) has adopted a new approach to working with donor organisations and produced a comprehensive action plan to seek support from development agencies.

This case study shows how increased expertise and knowledge can be used to radically change the approach used by a national association to seek support from donors; and, through the creation of a strategy, formalise and giving greater direction to fund raising activities to increase the capacity to help in critical regions.

Association des Municipalités du Mali (AMM)

The Association of municipalities of Mali was established in November 2000 and has 704 members and a permanent secretariat.

The aims of the 2013-15 Strategic Plan include achieving decentralisation for the towns with a stronger capacity; increasing the capacity of local government to manage and deliver services; and revising the approach to lobbying.

Priorities for the association are:

- Increasing lobbying capacity;
- Strengthening the influence of the AMM;
- Mobilising resources.

Local government operating at a time of crisis

Mali is a country that has endured great conflict and crisis, particularly in the communities located in the north and centre of the country; and local government is operating under very difficult circumstances. Securing aid from development organisations to provide assistance is, therefore, of paramount importance.

After the military coup in Bamako in March 2012, almost every donor withdrew from Mali and existing projects were put on hold, with the exception of an AMM initiative with VNG International, supported financially by the Dutch government. AMM made immediate efforts to assist local government in the occupied northern region, through a project using counterpart councils in the south to help refugee students finish their education; but these initiatives require resources. The conflict, and accompanying economic crisis, has made it difficult for the AMM to collect membership fees and donor involvement is still on hold.

The classic approach of the AMM to seeking funding was to develop a project without any external input, and submit it to a potential donor. However, the failure to relate the bid to the priorities or areas of expertise of the donor organisations meant that AMM was unsuccessful. Faced with the urgent need for development funding because of the political instability, and the lack of success in gaining approval for project proposals, there was an urgent need to re-think the way in which the AMM worked with development organisations and sought support.

Adopting a new approach to increase the ability to secure funding

The need to secure external funding from donor organisations to support communities in crisis was clear; and with the limited success of the AMM in having project proposals accepted, so too was the need to improve the way the association interacted with donors; and to find a more effective way of developing proposals to ensure that the objectives, activities and outputs met the requirements and priorities of donors.

Revising approach and mechanisms

In 2011, members of the AMM attended an ARIAL funded workshop in Benin on 'identifying development opportunities'. They used the new techniques they had learned to radically change the way they approached and worked with development organisations.

Through a series of strategic meetings hosted by the external partners, the AMM worked with potential donors to produce a comprehensive Strategic Plan for 2013-15. The first meeting with donors from France, Germany, Monaco, the Netherlands and UNDP identified a common vision and objectives for the projects; with a report sent to the other agencies that were unable to attend. The second meeting identified the main areas of intervention and project activities, methodology and expected results; and AMM was tasked with submitting a budget proposal to the next meeting.

The third working session allowed proposals to be amended and the budget put forward by the AMM was approved. Previously restricted information meetings were opened up to include other partners such as technical experts and EU officials, the German Ambassador, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and UCLGA, demonstrating an improved and more inclusive relationship between the proposed project and other ongoing actions. This allowed each partner to identify the activities of interest. Once finalised, the document was circulated to the Prime Minister and the Presidency of the Republic, the National Assembly and government departments.

The AMM's 2013-15 Strategic Plan sets out the priorities for local government and recognises the importance of developing effective relationships with development organisations. The strategy contains a comprehensive action plan to increase the association's capacity to raise funds; listing donors, contacts, project ideas, previous meetings with aims and outcomes and a detailed SWOT analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The plan represents a more formal and effective tool to use in securing development support and details the aims and impacts in the short and medium term; including, for example, the need to draw up a baseline study of the needs of councils, followed by a training programme; increased communication and advice through e-newsletters and an on-line resource centre.

∘ WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE ∘

Increasing long-term prospects for funding applications and donor relationships

A follow-up project, Programme d´appui à l'AMM, to the one that ended in December 2012 was immediately formulated by VNG International and this is, to date, awaiting approval from the Dutch Embassy/Government.

In 2012, AMM received funding totalling €122,000 from different partners to organise an international forum on the crisis in Mali as a result of the military coup. Other projects are underway, including the reconstruction of basic social infrastructure in the north of the country; the supply and installation of lamp posts and other solar powered equipment in selected communities in the northern region; and the implementation of funding from Switzerland to redevelop communities.

Increasing the association's skills in applying for funding will greatly help the AMM's capacity to deliver projects that will directly benefit communities in the most troubled areas of Mali in the north and central regions. By leading and implementing these projects, the AMM will also increase its own income, securing much needed funding for the association through management and administrative fees for running these projects.

This has heralded a new era of cooperation between the AMM and development agencies. There is now greater recognition of the leading role of AMM in the management of crisis in Mali by partners.

This experience has helped the AMM to strengthen its credibility not only with cooperation agencies but also the state and other institution in the Republic and National Assembly.

Steps extrapolated from this Good Practice

Step 1: **Be methodical and comprehensive in the planning stage**. Approaching donor organisations requires skilful planning. Before you even submit a funding bid, draw up a detailed plan containing information about the donor organisations, their priorities, your priorities, all previous meetings and contact, the potential objectives/activities for each funding programme, and practical information about how you will take this forward, i.e. setting up meetings, organising visits, writing outlines. This will create a strategic approach and overview, enabling your association to effectively address multiple organisations and programmes.

Step 2: **Create a strong relationship from the outset.** Nurture the interest of the donor at an early stage in the design of the project. Gauge their level of interest or approval in the project and incorporate their opinions, advice and proposals.

Step 3: **Share information**. Make sure that you contact and update the development organisations at every stage of the initiative. Demonstrate that you are working in a proactive and responsive way. Your donor may be able to give valuable advice if there is a problem, or if the project can link to another initiative.

Step 4: **Be interested in your partner**. If you show an interest in your partner, they are more likely to show an interest in you. Be proactive about your relationship and keep yourself updated about the developments in donor organisations as this could increase your chances of funding and support.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Having a detailed action plan increased the confidence and ability of the association to seek funding. All the information about the donor organisations and different initiatives was available to everyone at the association and taking this strategic approach meant that lessons could be learnt and replicated or abandoned;

- Working more closely with a donor organisation meant that project applications were better informed from the outset. It was helpful to share with donors the earliest ideas, even though they were unformed. The feedback received was a clear indication of the likely success of the bid and it gave better direction to the project;

- Rather than restrict contact to formal reporting mechanisms, regular conversations with the donors let them know how the project was progressing and allowed informal discussions about various issues. This was also an opportunity to demonstrate to the donor that their advice was valued and taken on board.

Annexes
AMM Strategic Plan 2013-2015

Sierra Leone

Achieving the direct transfer of devolved functions and finances from the central government finance ministry through effective lobbying and advocacy

---

LGA

Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone (LoCASL)

Contacts

Mr Sahr Moigua, Executive Secretary
josephinepaul94@yahoo.com

The Local Government Association in Sierra Leone was able to secure the direct transfer of functions and finances from the national Finance Ministry by applying new lobbying and advocacy skills.

This case study shows how enhancing an association's skills through training and providing the necessary tools to seek more local autonomy from national government, significant progress can be made.

The Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone (LoCASL)

The Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone (LoCASL) was launched in 2011 to support and represent local government through advocacy and capacity building through training initiatives.

Sierra Leone has a population of around six million people and local council responsibilities vary depending on location and urban or rural status. Traditional leadership or chieftancy is an important feature in some areas, with chiefs elected from within the historical ruling families.

Securing the status of local government

Local government and intergovernmental relations in Sierra Leone have had a tumultuous history. During colonial rule, the early system through a structure of District Officers (DOs) was very weak, but this situation improved following independence when the first prime minister took steps to strengthen local government. However, local government was disbanded in 1972 by the new regime, and responsibility for service provision transferred to government ministries. With no institution to lobby in favour of local government, this continued until 2004. At this point, the new president, who had personally benefited from local council education, reinstituted local government through an Act of Parliament.

Influencing national government

To assert the position of local government in Sierra Leone, the national association needs to secure more autonomy over financial capacity and the services it provides. Effective lobbying skills are required to achieve this, and to advocate for local government to be enshrined in law to prevent it from being disbanded once again. Although supported by member councils, a major challenge to achieving this is the lack of expertise and resources within the association.

ARIAL funded training on communication, lobbying and advocacy

The first step was to constitute a lobbying team to lead on advocacy and discussions with the national government. The association held meetings with local councils to determine the key issues and lobbying priorities. A lobbying strategy was drawn up with five objectives, including the transfer of funds to local councils.

The other lobbying objectives identified by LoCASL were:

- Achieving diplomatic status for the heads of councils;
- The appointment of the heads of councils to the position of justice of the peace (a privileged and respected position in Sierra Leone);
- Local economic development; and
- Other financial benefits such as increases in allowances.

One of the major lobbying tools employed was to make use of networks and contacts. Building on the existing personal relationship between the President of Sierra Leone and the President of LoCASL, the local government association was able to focus its lobbying activities through the Head of State, paving the way to influence national government decision-making.

This work was made possible because of the ARI-AL funded communication, lobbying and advocacy skills training received by key members of LoCASL. The Emerging Local Government Association Facility (ELGAF) support also provided the association with a range of tools and publications to help develop its own lobbying and advocacy strategy to impact on national policy and influence other development partners.

○ WHAT MAKES THIS GOOD PRACTICE ○

Increasing resources locally and influence nationally

LoCASL was able to make excellent use of the ARI-AL training by maximising the benefits effectively and efficiently. The five objectives drawn up by the association in conjunction with local councils to form the lobbying and advocacy strategy were all achieved. Furthermore, they were achieved after only one year of the association being in existence.

Lobbying national government has resulted in local councils having more resources at the local level but, more importantly, also having autonomy over these resources and it is the communities who will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

The experience gained by LoCASL could be invaluable to other national local government associations, as the issue of the transfer of resources and autonomy to local government is still a major priority.

This experience has helped the AMM to strengthen its credibility not only with cooperation agencies but also the state and other institution in the Republic and National Assembly.

Steps extrapolated from this Good Practice

Step 1: **Establish an advocacy team.** Form a working group to lead on all aspects of the lobbying activities; from determining priorities and consulting councils, to implementing all stages of the advocacy work. Ensure the group comprises a range of skills and experience. The group will serve as a focal point to provide information, increase visibility and maintain the momentum.

Step 2: **Be strategic when consulting with councils.** As the devolution of resources and finances profoundly affects all local government, conducting a comprehensive consultation exercise to agree the priority areas and issues with councils is crucial. Draw up a consultation action plan as this will allow you to scope the existing and potential opportunities to communicate with councils; for example, to identify existing networks, meetings, websites and newsletters.

Step 3: **Be even more strategic in your lobbying campaign.** Create a plan to include the aims, methodology and outcomes or the Who, What, Why and How. Identify what you want to achieve; the stakeholders — including beneficiaries and the organisations/bodies/individuals that you need to lobby — and recognise any pre-existing relationships and contacts that might be useful; the key messages you want to deliver, and how these might need to be adapted depending on the target audience; the different methods or lobbying strategies you might use; and the desired outcomes and outputs, and how you will measure the success and effectiveness. Add to this a timetable mapping out the opportunities in terms of meetings, events, publications and other milestones that might relate to lobbying activities; and, finally, the resources, financial and other, that you need to achieve this.

LESSONS LEARNED

- While it is relatively easy to understand the needs of local government and the decisions or policies required to meet these needs; recognition alone will not change matters. Having a clear strategy to outline the ways in which these issues can be tackled was so useful in helping to define a work programme or plan of action;

- Your strategy must reflect the people it is intended to serve or benefit. Hearing from the councils themselves about their thoughts on lobbying priorities and objectives was crucial; it helped to confirm that the association was on the right track in terms of the issues it prioritised, and also highlighted other issues that councils deemed important;

- Establishing a dedicated team that was responsible for leading on lobbying and advocacy really helped to drive forward the strategy and give it a strong identity;

- A useful rule in lobbying is to cultivate relationships with key people and organisations that have influence and can progress your case or viewpoint; or to use existing networks and contacts. The fact that the president of the association already had a personal connection to the president of the country was an enormous opportunity to push the LoCASL agenda and to influence governmental decision-making.

Niger

Community open days develop decentralisation in Niger

LGA

Association of Municipalities of Niger
(Association des Municipalités du Niger, AMN)

Contacts

Arizika Harouna, Permanent Secretary
arzikarouna@yahoo.fr

Alhassan Ziblim Al-hassan, Senior technical officer
ziblimaa@yahoo.co.uk

Facebook : AMN-Association-des-Municipalités-du-Niger

With the lack of capacity of central government to implement and monitor decentralisation, the AMN has organised annual Community Open Days — a meeting of mayors/technicians from ministries and public institutions, development partners, civil society and community members - to discuss key issues around decentralisation and development and look at ways that the government and municipalities can be assisted in tackling these issues.

Association of Municipalities of Niger (AMN)

The association was first formed in1989 as the Association of Towns and Communities of Niger (l'Association des Villes et Communes du Niger - AVCN).

Following the municipal elections in 2004, and an annual meeting in 2005, AVCN became the Association of Municipalities of Niger (AMN) and is now the body representing the current 255 communities and towns of Niger (251 communities - of which there are 37 urban - plus four towns or statutory communities that comprise 15 districts).

AMN is now an established LGA which has an annual general assembly linked to the Community Open Days, a national executive that meets every quarter, a permanent secretariat, and a regional office in each of the now eight regions of the country as a focal point to help coordinate its activities.

Niger develops decentralisation

Niger is a landlocked country in West Africa. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, coming 186th of 186 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2012. Following independence in 1960, despite some attempts at democratic elections, successive coups have seriously undermined the socioeconomic life of the country. The country's geography is also difficult with the non-desert areas often facing drought and its position adjoining Libya and Mali also pose problems of security. As one of the poorest countries in the world, Niger's government services are minimal due to its low resource base.

Since independence, successive legislation had laid the ground for decentralisation and the free administration of local government including local elections. This did not really begin until 2004 when the first municipal elections were held. This marked an important step in the lengthy reform process designed to bring in a decentralised political and administrative system. In this initial stage, 265 municipalities were established (231 rural and 52 urban) as the basic territorial units

From 2011 a second phase of decentralisation began with the setting up of seven regions.

Open days define problems of decentralisation

Once the new administrative decentralisation was in place, the urgent question was how to support the fledgling municipalities. As the state could not afford to support them itself, it turned to its technical and financial partners. These provided help, depending on their interests and the areas in which they operated, either for the national institutions responsible for establishing and supporting the municipalities or directly to the municipalities themselves. However, this help was not evenly distributed around the country. One year after the elections, while some municipalities received plenty of financial and technical assistance, others were still wondering how they were going to get their municipalities up and running. This led to a two-speed decentralisation: some municipalities were adequately funded and working well and others, with no partners and little funding, struggling.

The elected representatives wanted a way to enable them to get together to look at how the decentralisation process was taking shape and discuss these issues of common concern. During the 2006 AMN General Assembly, the elected local councilors, accepting that central government did not have the capacity and resources to really put decentralization into action, agreed that they should take control themselves and not leave it to external agencies. This led the mayors to decide, as part of their new strategic plan, to create a Niger Community Open Days to look at progress on the implementation of decentralization and what could be done to improve this, and to select some key common themes and issues for debate.

Community days discuss details of decentralisation

Following the proposal by AMN, the first Community Open Day took place in March 2007. The terms of reference for the organisation and objectives of the event were drawn up by the AMN secretariat and this was sent to ministries and funding partners to assess whether funding could be made available. The organisers also met with the President to inform him about the event and its theme and get his backing for holding it and receiving the recommendations.

Preparatory meetings were held in each of the regions to consult on the themes and objectives.

Delegates attending the first open day event included two from each of the 255 councils, one of which was the mayor, all the AMN national executive members and secretariat, regional advisers, technical and financial partners, civil society, traditional chiefs, and representatives of pan-African and international organisations. The day included workshops and roundtables on different themes and plenaries to discuss the outcomes and communiqués. Delegates agreed an official memorandum to send to the President on all the difficulties around the decentralisation process and the functioning of the councils. This was sent as an official presentation to the President.

The second community open day took place in 2008, and the third in 2009. Each one produced a memorandum addressed to the state, technical and financial partners, and civil society to give their support to the process of implementing decentralisation, outlining many of the practical things to be done to achieve this.

Due to funding and other organisational issues, the fourth Community Open Day did not take place until April 2013. Before that, in July 2012, the political and technical leaders had taken part in the first ARIAL training on development opportunities and training of key AMN personnel in lobbying and advocacy. The training has helped the secretariat and politicians to hone their skills to better plan such events and know how to better approach donors and sponsors to run things more effectively. This fourth day was opened by President Elhadji Issoufou Mahamadou and resulted in a communiqué covering a number of themes on decentralisation and the effective working of the councils.

A forum for decision-making on decentralisation and local development

The community open days are an excellent means for a tripartite forum bringing together elected local representatives, the state, and other partners to discuss the problems around decentralisation and local development. It is also the place where partners and other groups can present their own experiences. The event benefits the different groups in various ways:

- Local elected representatives – who get to discuss the difficulties of the state, help with capacity building, knowledge and experience sharing, case studies for the association;
- Partners – who can present their activities, get the attention of the elected representatives, and create a synergy with amongst themselves;

- National government – elected national representatives gain information on the politics of development, and are reminded of their roles and responsibilities.

The Community Open Days provide a focus for analysing the progress of implementation of decentralisation in Niger and to debate common themes and problems for local councils, and allow communities to participate in decision-making and planning to meet their future needs. The outcomes in the form of memoranda and communiqués propose an action plan on measures to be adopted to make progress in decentralisation.

○ REPLICABILITY ○

Steps extrapolated from this Good Practice

Step 1: **Identify the theme.** Identify the central theme for discussion for the open days. Preparatory meetings on a regional or other basis can help feed in to this.

Step 2: **Work out the terms of reference.** The secretariat should work out the terms of reference (TOR), including clearly defined objectives, and the desired outcomes, for endorsement by the association's executive. Consult funders and other key partners who may have their own requirements from the day.

Step 3: **Send the TOR to partners and potential funders.** Send these terms of reference to ministers, and partner and potential financing institutions to begin to make contact and determine who are the potential funders. Follow this up to engage the funders and ensure the finances are in place before the event.

Step 4: **Preparation.** Prepare communications to the relevant state organisations and other partners to ensure that the key partners are informed and involved in the preparations. Try to get an audience with someone at the top (in this case the President) to brief them about the event and get their support for it. This helps in getting sponsorship and funding. Prepare information about the central theme and decide on the structure of the event.

Step 5: **Decide who to invite.** Decide on who will be the main participants: who are the main contributors to the discussions and will the discussions affect; who will help achieve the objectives; and who will help take forward the outcomes?

Step 6: **Organisation.** Set up an organising committee in the region hosting the event to plan and make the preparations for running the event.

Step 7: **Publicity.** Publicise the event to ensure good participation.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is not always possible to organise this type of event on a yearly basis (in Niger between 2007 and 2013 they have managed to organise four such days); the capacity needed to organise such an event, the need for finance and the difficulties of attracting sponsorship, mean that there are always challenges in running such an event annually;

- Do not underestimate the capacity needed for organising such an event – getting stakeholders together to prepare the TOR, logistics, sending out invitations, publicity about the event, etc. If possible, get one or more of your members to host the event and help with the local logistics to add to your capacity in organising the event;

- Technical and financial partners should be involved as much as possible in working out the terms of reference and other preparations so that they can input into the development of the days so that it meets their needs as well as yours;

- To define the objectives and set the framework for the event, it is useful to begin with preparatory regional meetings involving the relevant stakeholders;

- A committee should be set up comprising the state government, the LGA and partners to take forward the recommendations that come out of the day;

- The Community Open Days are the starting point for creating a means to bring partners together for political dialogue: this must be followed up by regular dialogue with them between meetings;

- Work with members to encourage self-help and independence. Wherever possible demonstrate the return to government from any assistance being requested.

Annexes
Memorandum from 1st Community Open Days
Final Communiqué 2013 JCN

West Africa

Assessing the development needs of the regional local government association of West Africa (UCLGA-WARO)

LGA

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa – West Africa Regional Office (UCLGA-WARO)

Contacts

Alhassan Ziblim Al-Hassan, Senior technical officer WARO
ziblimaa:yahoo.co.uk

UCLGA-WARO has used a survey to develop their Three Year Strategic Plan to serve the needs of all its members, which comprises 14 national associations across the region.

This case study shows how enhanced training in consultation techniques can assist a regional association to produce a strategy that defines the needs and reflects the views of a diverse range of national associations.

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa – West Africa Regional Office (UCLGA – WARO)

The UCLGA is the umbrella organisation and united voice and representative of local government in Africa.

With four regional offices across Africa, WARO represents 14 national associations in the West. Along with the other regions, it shares the mission to build African unity and drive development from the grassroots level.

Defining association needs across the region

UCLGA-WARO is the association with responsibility for representing 14 national associations in the West Africa region.

There are disparities in the level of decentralisation between countries in the region especially with regard to constitutional provisions and their application in favour of local governance and transfer of competencies and resources to local governments.

In order to develop a strategic plan outlining future aims and activities for the whole region, and to satisfy the needs of all the member national associations, it is vital to establish a needs-based approach. Understanding individual priorities and giving all national associations the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the strategy is vital not only to deliver the services that members want, but also to secure support and commitment for activities.

Given the general institutional weaknesses of the national associations in West Africa, the need to empower them technically and logistically remains a key objective. Above all, it is clear that WARO cannot deliver the required services without a proper diagnosis of the needs of LGAs and the member local government units.

Finding an effective and simple consultation process

The importance of having a clear strategic plan that would benefit all members of the regional association was clear to UCLGA-WARO. However, with such diversity and so many different national priorities, the challenge was to find a way to facilitate such a broad consultation process that was effective in identifying needs and yet inexpensive and easy to implement.

Designing and administering a questionnaire

Technical officers at UCLGA-WARO worked under the guidance of an ARIAL expert to create a questionnaire which would help to identify the needs of local government associations in West Africa. The intelligence gathered would then be used to develop a plan to define the strategic direction of the organisation over the next few years.

The survey targeted political leaders, such as mayors, and technical staff, including the executive secretaries and other officers of the national local government associations in West Africa. The surveys, or questionnaires, were distributed to members in each of the 14 associations to elicit views on the priority development needs that should become the focus of the proposed strategic plan for UCLGA-WARO. Using a simple format of closed questions, the associations were asked to indicate and grade the level of importance they placed on particular issues.

There was also an opportunity to specify any other subject that they considered to be relevant to the questionnaire and grade according. The analysis of the questionnaire consisted of a simple cumulative score method, which ranked the issues in order of priority.

The ARIAL programme went on to provide further support to WARO by extending the services of an expert to help with the development of the Three-Year Strategic Plan.

Improving communication and consultation techniques

This initiative allowed an association that represents a vast geographical region to define the development needs of its many, and diverse national associations; and to go on to use this information to inform its future strategy for local government in West Africa. A potentially complex activity became less complicated and achievable with the expert training from the ARIAL programme.

The simple grading system in the interpretation of the survey revealed that the promotion of decentralisation and institutional strengthening and capacity building of national associations was regarded as the top priority for the UCLGA-WARO strategy. This was followed by supporting local economic development and building lobbying and advocacy capacity for members. This is all the more crucial if UCLGA-WARO is to establish itself as a credible, legitimate and accountable organisation that can deliver long term sustainable services to its member local government associations.

Once acquired, the new consultation skill or tool can be used in future communications to seek the views of complex audiences.

'As umbrella bodies of local governments, LGAs need to do more to rally our members around the issues of engaging our central governments on deepening decentralisation, effective local government financing, constitutional amendments that favour local government and to improve service delivery and accountability to the citizenry.'

The Hon. Nwabueze Okafor, President of the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria - ALGON

Steps extrapolated from this Good Practice

Step 1: **Identify your target audience(s) at the outset.** It is important to decide who you want to survey and what you want to find out. Be aware of both the commonalities and differences in your audience(s), and ensure that you give everyone an equal opportunity to contribute.

Step 2: **Consider the data processing stage.** When you design the survey, think about how you will analyse and interpret the information. The way you ask for information, and the questions you set will have a direct bearing on this; quantitative information is much easier to interpret than qualitative. Build into the survey an opportunity for people to express their views on wider issues in a less structured way; but be prepared to interpret this.

Step 3: **Give all stakeholders an equal opportunity to input**. When writing a strategic plan that will affect a diverse range of associations and communities, it is vital that the views of every association are obtained. Devise an action plan to ensure you can achieve this, and look for opportunities, such as other meetings or gatherings to promote/explain the survey and encourage participation.

Step 4: **Try to find the best option for all members.** With such diverse needs, satisfying everyone is likely to be difficult. However, if you offer a series of possible answers, and ask respondents to rank them in order of preference, this will reveal the most popular option, but also give you an idea of the popularity of the options as a second or third preference. The ranking system will also identify anomalies, where something is of particular importance to a minority of members; and these issues can be followed up on a one to one basis.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Keeping the survey simple made it easier to process the results. A series of closed question and a simple grading system were used to determine the perceived importance by each association for different activities. However, there was an opportunity for participants to make wider comments;

- Adopting a bottom-up approach was an effective way to sample the views of national associations in relation to the strategy, but it also made members feel more connected to the process;

- The responses in the survey were quite enlightening and allowed the regional association to learn more about the national associations. For example, rather than helping to promote regional economic development, the national associations were more keen for UCLGA-WARO to provide support in harnessing trade and economic development at the local level in the respective countries;

- It is possible to use unrelated and unforeseen events to progress your project. When many of the national associations were already assembled together at a regional training meeting in 2012, UCLGA-WARO used this opportunity to hold a side meeting about the survey, with no extra expense or effort in convening the meeting.

Annexes
Strategic plan 2012-2015 WARO

Cameroon

Improving communication systems between the national association and its members by setting up an SMS messaging system

LGA

United Councils and Cities of Cameroon
(Communes et Villes Unies de Cameroun, CVUC)

Contacts

Ludovic Etoundi Essomba Many, Executive Secretary CVUC
ludovic.etoundi@cvuc.cm

www.cvuc.cm

The project has improved communication between the local government association and its members. By introducing an SMS messaging system using technology that is widely available, the association is able to reach its membership more efficiently and effectively.

This case study demonstrates how an association can make a significant improvement to the way it provides support to its members by developing a strategy that responds directly to membership needs.

The United Cities and Councls of Cameroon (CVUC)

CVUC was formed in 2003 from the merger of the Cameroon Association of towns and the Cameroon Union of towns and councils. It provides members with information, training and capacity building, financial services and good practice disseminates.

The Association also defends local autonomy and represents the interests of Cameroonian councils when dealing with the Government and partners. It supports members on daily political and technical management.

Responding to membership feedback

Local and rural development is a key priority for local government in Cameroon. With around 41% of the population living in rural areas, it is difficult to ensure consistent and efficient communication between the United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (CVUC) and its members.

This project came about following a membership survey conducted as part of the CVUC 2012 Strategic Plan. It highlighted that communication with members was not effective, especially for those living in rural areas. A website had been created for CVUC regional offices, which are closer to members in rural areas, however, this did not solve the problem.

Representing 'hard to reach' members

In order for a national body like the CVUC to effectively represent all its members, and provide a consistent level of service to everyone, it is vital to have an e-communication system. With almost half membership living in rural locations, important information from the CVUC was either not being received by all the membership, or it was delayed in certain areas.

ARIAL workshop boosts capacity

Once the CVUC survey of members, undertaken as part of the association's annual strategic plan, identified the need to improve the way in which the association interacted with its members, a strategic plan was developed to address the concerns of members. Creating the comprehensive and innovative plan was made possible because of an ARIAL funded workshop on the strategic planning of communications and advocacy, held in Chad in July 2012. The CVUC delegation attending the event received expert training on techniques to enhance communications and lobbying strategies.

Using widely available technology to address an issue and connect with members

This project has shown how the provision of expert training can increase the capacity of an association to address a fundamental issue, and recommend and implement effective changes. With careful consideration, the association found a way to solve the problem through the use of an existing and relatively common resource – the mobile phones.

The development of an SMS messaging service has allowed CVUC to reach more of its members in rural areas, and communicate instantly and at any time of the day. The initiative has responded directly to the views of members, demonstrating a high level of responsiveness by the association; and feedback has indicated a much better flow of communication and a feeling of being much better informed.

"I am very happy to receive information on my mobile phone because it is accessible 24/7."

Yarounde Council.

"We do not have access to the Internet as we live in a remote area, with the SMS system we are always informed of UCCC activities."

Makari Council

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Relate your strategy to the context.** Think about the physical and practical aspects of the environment and people involved in the implementation stage of your strategy. Is your strategy appropriate, desirable and feasible for everyone. Pre-empt the challenges and adapt your strategy accordingly.

Step 2: **Be aware of all resources.** As well as the financial and staffing resources required to implement a strategy, think about all the other assets or resources that you might not normally consider, i.e. new technology and mobile phones. Be creative and brain storm ideas to produce an 'audit' of these resources, particularly those based in the community.

Step 3: **Make use of existing technical expertise.** If you are introducing a new strategy that makes use of technology, such as setting up an SMS system; go the experts that already operate in this field. Identify and contact your mobile phone provider(s) or other appropriate technical experts for advice and support.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The communications strategy must be tailored to the environment and climate for which it is intended. For CVUC, the ability to communicate with members depended very much on where they were located, and with more than 40% of the population living in rural and sometimes isolated areas, this was a key consideration throughout the strategy;

- When developing the strategy, it was useful to 'think outside the box' and look at existing resources that might make problem solving easier. As mobile phone ownership was already common amongst members, introducing a new system requiring their use proved to be a comparatively easy and cost effective solution;

- Setting up an SMS system relies heavily on the available IT infrastructure in a country and a particular skill or knowledge. As the mobile phone operators already have this expertise, it was invaluable to call on their help to set up the system. In Cameroon there are three providers, but this varies from country to country.

Chad

Developing a strategy for the national local government association to increase its capacity and mobilise funding

LGA

National Association of the Municipalities of Chad (Association Nationale des Communes du Tchad, ANCT)

Contacts

Jeanot Minla Mfou'ou, Senior Regional Expert
jeanminla@gmail.com

Dr Annaim Oumar Abderrahman, Executive Secretary ANCT
annaimoumar12@yahoo.fr

Through ARIAL funding and technical expertise, the National Association of the Municipalities of Chad has been able to improve the way in which it serves and represents member councils; improving its standing with member councils and national government.

This case study shows how the exchange of expertise and experience can enable a national association to work in a more structured and productive way; attracting external and international support; improving its standing and influence with central government; and providing viable support to local councils.

The National Association of the Municipalities of Chad (ANCT)

A large proportion of Chad's 11 million people live in poverty.

The country is divided into 22 regions headed by a governor appointed by the president. The decentralisation process is slow. however, local government development has taken place at the grass roots level, where the traditional chiefs have worked with international aid organisations to build new social, political and economic structures. Projects focus on social-housing, capacity building and humanitarian aid such as access to water, sanitation and health. The National Association of the Municipalities of Chad (ANCT) is increasing its capacity to work with councils to speed up the process.

Playing a key role in decentralisation

With the growing importance of decentralisation, there was an increasing need to ensure that the interests of local councils and their communities were effectively represented in decision-making at the national level. The existing association, the National Association of the Municipalities of Chad (ANCT), had lost influence and was not very highly regarded or recognised by councils or central government; or with technical and funding bodies. As the ANCT was dependant on membership fees, there was little opportunity to change the situation. This created a vicious circle; with the poor reputation of the association doing nothing to encourage external or international support. When a former Executive Secretary, who had previously led the association, took control again, the main challenge to making improvements was the lack of funding.

Improving the reputation and standing of the national association

The national association of Chad had been in existence for several years, but had little impact in influencing decision-making at local or central government level. The association was entirely dependent on subscription fees from member councils for running and implementation costs.

The poor reputation of ANCT, together with the weak financial position of the councils and their inability to finance their own service delivery let alone make a contribution to the national association; meant that the ANCT did not have the resources to improve this situation.

Decentralisation was a priority, but without a key body to represent views and disseminate/explain policies, the process was seriously hampered.

Using increased skills and knowledge to achieve institutional transformation

Having attended the ARIAL funded workshop in Cameroon on funding opportunities, lobbying and advocacy, the Executive Secretary of Chad's national association acquired a great deal of knowledge on these subjects and about mobilising resources. Using the opportunity of various meetings in Central and Western Africa, he was able to talk to the heads of other associations and learn about their practical experiences in raising funds.

Through this peer exchange and increased capacity, the association was able to develop and implement a strategy in 2012 which secured UNDP funding for the preparation and organisation of the General Assembly and enabled local government representatives to participate in meetings of the international association of francophone mayors in 2013 by helping with registration fees, travel and subsistence; as well as funding printing costs for written materials and rental of a stand to promote work on decentralisation and Agenda 21.

The ARIAL grant is funding the salary of the association's Executive Secretary until July 2013 and further financial help has been pledged by UNDP and the French government to provide support for three years from 2014.

The increased capability also enabled the ANCT to successfully apply for EU funding and, in 2012, a two year project to build a resource centre in the city of Moundou in partnership with Poitiers in France was selected for support. In 2013, ANCT and eight of its members applied to the EU Europeaid programme and six projects have been selected.

These resources, financial and other, enabled the association to undertake a series of activities which, in turn, gave legitimacy to this association, with its own members, technical and financial partners, but also the National Government of Chad.

Increasing effectiveness to deliver services and provide representation

To become recognised as a key player in the decision-making processes with central government, the association firstly needed to improve its reputation with member councils and provide better services. Increasing the association's capacity for lobbying was crucial to this, but so too was securing funding to support the day to day work of the association in directly serving its members.

This transformed the image and reputation of the national local government association; increasing credibility with member councils, technical and financial partners and central government. The association had previously been regarded as ineffective and of little significance; but the ARIAL support in strengthening its capacity to effectively represent the interests of local government has turned this around. Since 2012, the level of financial subscriptions from local councils has increased and there is greater support/input by members, for whom decentralisation has become much more attainable. This increased credibility has allowed the association to play a key role in this process and to become a much more likely partner to receive external support/funding.

Steps extrapolated from this good practice

Step 1: **Get to know your donor**. Cultivate a good working relationship with the key person in the organisation who is responsible for providing assistance. Learn about their business to ensure that you understand exactly what they can offer and how they can help. Determine the donor's priorities and try to align your request for help accordingly.

Step 2: **Be realistic with your proposal.** Begin by making modest requests and try to secure the option of asking for more support as the project continues. Make sure that you have the capacity to handle the funding you are given and deliver the objectives. Be clear about your needs and capabilities and articulate this information assertively to your donor in negotiations.

Step 3: **Get the best technical input**. Involve local government technical experts in an initiative from the outset, particularly at the planning stage.

Step 4: **Promote your Unique Selling Points**. Competition for donor funding has never been so tough. Make sure you emphasise the Unique Selling Points of your situation, project and members that might set you apart from other funding applicants; think about the similarities of your requests to the priorities of the donor.

Step 5: **Be open to learning from others.** Just because certain practices or methods have never been used before, or are not an ideal fit, they could still bring enormous benefits. Be prepared to look objectively at new ideas and to be creative and consider the potential transferability.

Step 6: **Record success and publicise it**. As well as the obligatory reports and financial records, keep a list of the achievements and outputs made possible by the external support. Look for creative ways to inform audiences (i.e. member councils, national government and potential donors) about the successes through events, presentations, websites and newsletters. The positive PR for the association and the donor will motivate everyone to continue and improve on existing initiatives.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Developing the strategy directly with donor organisations through formal meetings, hosted by the potential donors, really helped to produce an action plan that was relevant and representative of current needs and views. Using this collaborative style also demonstrated to donors the commitment of the ANCT to bringing about improvements;

- Working concurrently with several organisations resulted in better coordination of the ANCT's efforts to secure funding and made it possible for the donors to understand exactly what the ANCT needed and wanted to achieve on a strategic level. Donors had a better understanding of how they could help, including complementing or linking in to the assistance provided by other donors. This was a great improvement on the previous methods when donors were simply faced with a single, isolated project to which they had little connection;

- It helped to think about the objectives of the donor organisation and try to link the request for assistance to this. Understanding your own needs is important if you are to avoid asking for more resources than you can effectively deal with; and to enable you to say no to the donor if the offer does not correspond to your needs;

- Promoting and publicising the advancements being made through partnership working helped to raise the profile of this work among councils, government and the donor community. Recognise and celebrate the impact of the funding/support received;

- It was important to recognise that, while knowledge can be increased through formal workshops and training sessions, it is also possible to increase your abilities through informal methods. It was useful, following the ARIAL workshop, to talk to counterparts from other national associations about their lobbying methods and activities, and learn from their practical experiences;

- Do not rely on a single donor or partner for support; use the contacts and connections you make through the process to involve a range of organisations.

Annexes
Report on the 2013 ANCT delegation to Africities
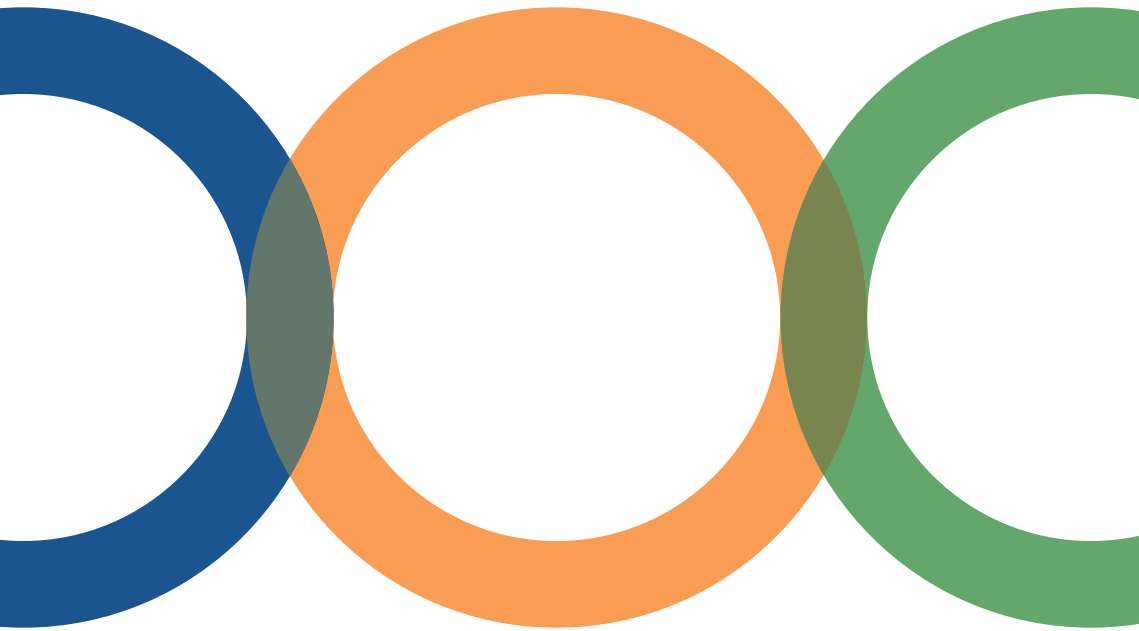
Authors

Susan Rhodes, VNG International expert
Susan Handley, VNG International expert

Other contributors

Nicole Boot, Project manager VNG International
Nicolas Haezebrouck, Project manager VNG International
Micheline Massé, Intern VNG International

Jeannot Minla Mfou'ou, Senior regional expert West and Central Africa
Gerrit Jan Schep, Senior regional expert West Africa
Richard Madavo, Senior regional expert South Africa
Guardiner Isaac Manikai, Senior regional expert East Africa
Hamid Ghany, Senior regional expert Caribbean
Bishnu Ragoonath, Senior regional expert Caribbean
Mark Dacombe, Senior regional expert Pacific
Franklyn Harvey, Local government association expert
Ludovic Etoundi Essomba Many, Executive Secretary CVUC
Charles Chunga, Executive Director MALGA
Jabulani Nxumalo, Director SWALGA
Alhassan Ziblim Al-Hassan, Senior technical officer WARO
Estery Madavo, Senior technical officer UCLGA-SARO
Chandaye Sandra Singh, Senior technical officer CALGA
Jérôme Byukusenge, Senior technical officer EALGA

VNG International
The Hague, the Netherlands
Email: vng-international@vng.nl
Tel: +31 (0)70 373 8401
Fax: +31 (0)70 373 8660
www.vng-international.nl