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The Local Government Capacity
Programme 2012-2016 is
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An introduction

Local Government Capacity | LGCP Programme

Implemented by VNG International

Many developing countries are currently experiencing economic growth figures that would evoke jealousy among the countries of today's Europe. Although the hardship remains distressing in many places, more and more people are managing to escape poverty. While this feat is primarily achieved through own strength, a stimulating environment can play a decisive role in the ultimate chance of success. An essential role in this is assigned to the local government, the layer of administration that operates

closest to the population. Often local governments in developing countries are not sufficiently able to efficiently and effectively create the circumstances required for a stimulating environment. VNG International has therefore launched the **Local Government Capacity Programme (LGCP)**. The programme will be implemented in the period 2012-2016 and contributes towards capacity development of local governments and local government associations in nine countries.



> Local governments increasingly important

Local governments in developing countries play an increasing role in stimulating and facilitating economic development. Not only are citizens demanding better government services; central governments are delegating ever more tasks to local authorities' duties. Add to this the irrepressible migration to cities, a trend that creates enormous additional challenges for urban administrators. Over half of the world population already lives in cities, and that share is increasing rapidly year-on-year.

Greater acknowledgement is being given to the important role played by local governments in the development process and the growth of the local economy, for instance with regards to clean streets, clean drinking water, working sewers, a valid title deed registration system and support in setting up businesses.

Local governments are not always well equipped to properly fulfil this role. The decision-making process is often slow, partial interests are pursued and many civil servants lack sufficient technical and management capabilities.

> Sustainable economic development requires better administrators

Sustainable local economic development is hard to realise without an effectively functioning local government. The objective of the **Local Government Capacity Programme** is therefore to strengthen the capacity of local governments and local government associations in nine countries. The programme aims at improving the municipal conditions required for economic development. Ultimately, the programme helps those local governments to be in a better position to provide for:

- food security
- water management
- the safety of their citizens and legal order
- the sexual and reproductive health and rights of their inhabitants

These are, not coincidentally, also the priorities of the development policy pursued by the Netherlands. An effective local government contributes towards sustainable local development and thus also to achieving the objectives underpinning Dutch development cooperation. Local governments provide stability and contribute towards the development of the state at local level. In most cases, they have primary responsibility for adequate water management and guaranteeing food security.

The purpose of the **Local Government Capacity Programme** is to enable local governments to be better equipped in:

- developing and implementing policy
- taking steps in the development process
- adapting themselves in response to changing situations
- cooperating with external parties
- creating cohesion in their working methods

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> Implementation in nine countries

The **Local Government Capacity Programme** is largely aimed at Africa: seven of the nine countries are on this continent. The programme is carried out in Benin, Burundi, Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, South Sudan, Nicaragua and the Palestinian territories.

The programme deploys the expertise available among local governments in the Netherlands to strengthen the local capacity in the partner countries. Research has shown that this colleague-to-colleague method is highly effective and efficient. The programme provides municipal expertise through VNG International to the nine countries in close consultation with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Wherever possible and worthwhile, it also calls on the specialised knowledge available among provincial authorities, water boards, housing corporations, welfare umbrella organisations, knowledge institutes, etc.

The programme focuses on two types of actors: elected decision makers (mayors, aldermen, county council members) and the local civil service (town clerks, department heads, policy implementers, the staff of local government associations).

> Over 20 years' experience with capacity development

VNG International has been implementing programmes to support the capacity development of local governments in developing countries since 1991. In each and every case, the underlying goal is to enable local government bodies to function autonomously and at higher levels. Local governments obviously do not function in isolation: they are connected in myriad ways to other government layers, the private sector and society in general. While acknowledging this complex interrelationship, the focus remains on local governments, their knowledge and their performance. Many years of experience with capacity development among local governments and their umbrella organisations has proven that such programmes can play a unique role within development policy. The **Local Government Capacity Programme** builds forth on these earlier experiences.

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