Strengthening the social contract in fragile and conflict affected states

A toolkit for development practitioners engaging with local governments and local government associations

Preface

VNG International is the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). Being part of VNG, one of the oldest and strongest local government associations in the world, our roots in local government are deep. Since 1993, VNG International strengthens local governments, associations of municipalities, and local training institutes across the world to provide better futures to their citizens.

IDEAL was one of VNG International's key programmes. It was implemented in seven countries facing fragility or conflict: Burundi, Mali, Palestine, Rwanda, Somaliland, South Sudan and Uganda. Local governments play a key role in supporting the resilience of their communities against instability and fragility. The basic services local governments provide and the policies they develop have a direct effect on the lives of citizens. IDEAL works on involving citizens, including in particular marginalised groups, in local decision-making in order to ensure their needs and opinions are reflected. The IDEAL programme is financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Financed by: The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Version: May 2022

Table of contents

1   Introduction

This toolkit offers experience-based guidance for international development actors including international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), municipal associations, contractors, and donors who seek to strengthen the social contract between local governments and their constituents in fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS).

Toolkit content is based on the Inclusive Decisions at Local Level (IDEAL) programme led by VNG International from 2017-2021 in seven FCAS: Burundi, Mali, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Somaliland, South Sudan, and Uganda. The toolkit is shaped by the lessons and experience of the IDEAL programme and partner staff. Where necessary, it also draws on current good practices in capacity development, inclusive governance, and adaptive programming from similar programmes and the literature.

1.1   Key Concepts and IDEAL Background

The IDEAL programme centred around two key concepts: the social contract and inclusive governance, within the contexts of the seven implementation countries.

The Social Contract

The social contract is "the process by which everyone in a political community, either explicitly or tacitly, consents to state authority, thereby limiting some of her or his freedoms in exchange for the state's protection of their universal human rights and security and for the adequate provision of public goods and services" (UNDP, 2016).[1]
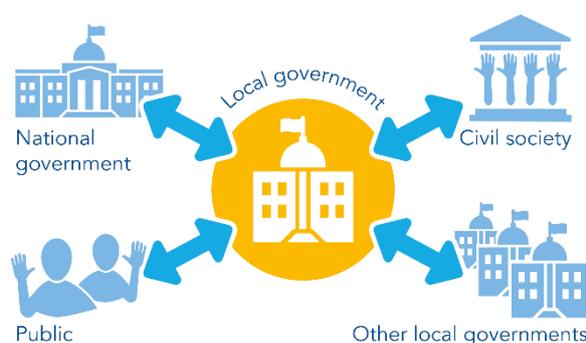
Figure 1: Central role of local governments

According to VNG International, "the absence of a functioning social contract between state (national, regional, and local governments) and citizens reduces prospects of human security, poverty reduction, sustainable social and economic development and proper management of

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[1] UNDP. (2016). *"Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in Situations of Conflict and Fragility."* New York: United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Policy and Programme Support. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/social-contract-situations-conflict-and-fragility

public and natural resources."[2] In FCAS, the social contract is especially strained. There is a low-level of trust between the state and citizens (and other community members) and governments often lack legitimacy. Weak social contracts are further diminished by poor delivery of services and the lack of inclusive decision-making processes alongside challenges such as insecurity and scarcity. Governments are hindered with few resources and limited experience in inclusive governance.

Inclusive Governance

A social contract is not valid if and when the benefits of the state are only accessible to some of the population. According to the UN, "strengthening the social contract in FCAS requires inclusive politics based on transparent and predictable mechanisms that include and engage individuals or social groupings commonly marginalised or wholly excluded from political life."[3] IDEAL focused heavily on inclusive decision making, defining this as a process in *which* "all citizens can participate equally, feel heard and represented, experience ownership over resources, and increase their trust in local decision-making."[4]

Women represent the largest group of marginalised people worldwide, including in FCAS. In addition, gender inequalities can undermine conflict prevention, peace building, and ultimately, development outcomes.[5] In response, IDEAL focused primarily on involving women in local government decision making.
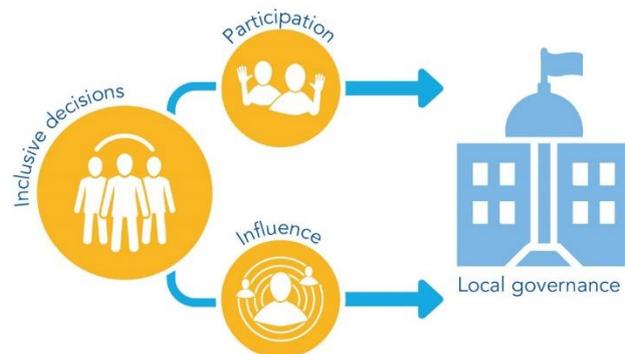
Figure 2: Inclusive decisions are both about participation and influence

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[2] VNG International. (2016). "Narrative Proposal: Inclusive Decisions At Local level (IDEAL 2017-2021)." Den Haag: VNG International.
[3] UNDP. (2016). "Engaged Societies, Responsive States: The Social Contract in Situations of Conflict and Fragility." New York: United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Policy and Programme Support. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/social-contract-situations-conflict-and-fragility
[4] VNG International. (n.d.). "Supporting Inclusive Democratic Local Governance by Strengthening Gender Sensitivity in Fragile Contexts." Den Haag: VNG International.
[5] Ibid.

IDEAL Programme

Funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IDEAL aimed to increase the capacity of local governments to cope with fragility risks and strengthen the social contract between citizens and local governments by promoting (i) more responsive and effective service delivery by local governments; (ii) more inclusive and participatory decision-making processes within local governments; and (iii) an improved institutional and policy environment.

IDEAL is a programme by VNG International that works on the involvement of citizens in local governance in seven countries facing fragility or conflict. The participation of citizens contributes to inclusive decision-making. It improves local governance and the delivery of basic services. It makes local governance more sustainable and increases welfare and stability. Its drive and expertise is to support local governments in building bridges with all their citizens - including marginalised groups.

Country Contexts

IDEAL experimented with and identified various means of strengthening the social contract in countries where governments have limited capacity and/or lack the will to carry out basic functions in an effective and inclusive manner. While each of the seven implementing countries face a unique combination of challenges and varying ability to manage them, the IDEAL programme countries of Burundi, Mali, The Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Somaliland, South Sudan, and Uganda all exhibit social, economic, and political characteristics that qualify them as fragile and conflict affected states.

Figure 3: The intervention zone and topical focus of the IDEAL programme

However, the seven countries are in various states of fragility and are experiencing different political dynamics. In Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, for example, strong, post-conflict central governments dominate local systems. Others like Mali and South Sudan are still experiencing conflict and political upheaval. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Territories and Somaliland govern as unrecognised state entities that are politically ambiguous with unclear power structures.

1.2   Toolkit Structure

Strengthening the social contract amongst citizenry and local governments requires intentional interventions at all stages. This toolkit presents an overview of good practices aligned with the stages of a general programme cycle. These practices within the process guide those engaging local government institutions, officials, and associations in FCAS with the aim of strengthening the social contract between government and the people it serves. The process steps are intertwined and can be applied to both standalone and sequenced programmes. They are:

1. Contextualise

2. Design for adaptability and sustainability

3. Promote

   - an improved institutional, policy, and enabling environment

   - more inclusive and participatory decision-making processes and structures

   - more responsive and effective service delivery

4. Monitor and learn
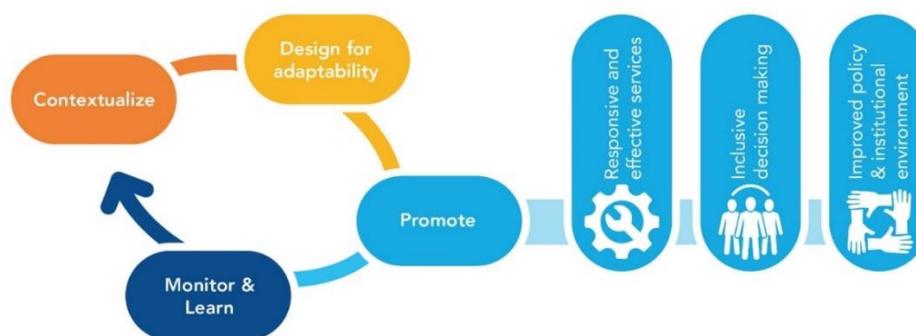
Figure 4: IDEAL process cycle for strengthening the social contract

This toolkit is organised in three sections. **Section I** summarises the process steps, lessons, and the main tools used in the IDEAL programme. **Section II** presents the detailed descriptions of each of the key process lessons. **Section III** contains descriptions of the tools referenced in the lessons. Each tool is detailed with a brief description, benefits, challenges, an example from the IDEAL programme, and references for additional information.

Lessons per process step are summarised in green boxes.

Blue boxes contain **examples** pertaining to the lessons from the IDEAL programme.

IDEAL **applications of tools** are highlighted in yellow boxes.

2 Acronyms

CBO	community-based organisation
CSC	Community Score Card
CSO	civil society organisation
FCAS	fragile and conflict affected states
GCA	gender and conflict analyses
IDEAL	Inclusive Decisions at Local Level
(I)NGO	(international) non-governmental organisation
IWRM	integrated water resources management
LED	local economic development
LGA	local government association
MSC	most significant change
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OTJC	on-the-job coaching
PCDC	Le Plan Communal de Développement Communautaire (communal development plan in Burundi)
PEA	political economy analyses
PDIA	problem-driven iterative adaptation
PPP	public private partnership
ToC	theory of change
ToT	training of trainers
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSLA	village savings and loan association
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene

3   Section I. Strengthening the Social Contract

The following is a summary of the main lessons and tools used by IDEAL programme staff, partners, local governments, and civic actors to strengthen the social contract between government and the people it serves. This section is organised by process step, with a description of the step, the associated IDEAL lessons learnt, and relevant tools.

3.1   Contextualise

Contextualisation refers to the framing of a programme within a region or country's political, economic, sociocultural, and environmental reality. Contextualisation can help determine optimal stakeholders including beneficiaries, participants, programme location, partners, power brokers, interventions, and more.
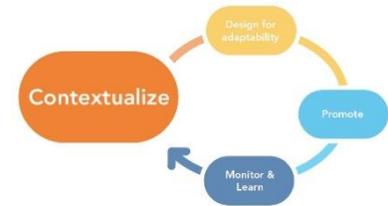
> *"Contextualising the programme is foundational. It is the steppingstone to reality. otherwise you are stepping on air."*
>
> *- IDEAL programme staff member*

Any good governance programme inspires change. Donors and (I)NGOs often promote democratic norms that disrupt traditional power structures, inevitably leading to resistance. Success is more likely when the programme understands and navigates these dynamics. Choosing the right fit for the context in which a programme operates is a critical first step. This is especially important in FCAS, which are often defined by high centralisation, diminished civic space, and limited freedoms where change can heighten tensions and volatility. Acting without first understanding the political, social, economic, legal, and environmental situation in a region or country can lead to ineffective and disastrous results.

As such, initiating a programme may be the most crucial step. The setup and design stages require considerably more time and effort to identify interventions that best fit the context and have a higher likelihood of generating the desired outcomes.

Note that programmes are limited by the programme elements that are within their sphere of control and sphere of influence. Understanding the extent of the donor's flexibility – and flexibility about which elements – is the first step to contextualising a programme. In a programme aimed at strengthening the social contract, the highest-level objectives are likely set before programme inception. However, the specifics about those objectives and the means to achieve them are what programmes must contextualise.

> **Lessons in Contextualisation**
>
> 1. Invest in an inception period.

2. Conduct and regularly revisit in-depth needs, political economy, and gender and conflict analyses of pilot areas.

3. Map relevant stakeholders and engage strategically.

4. Regularly revisit context analyses.

5. Go for 'good enough' and clarity of purpose.

6. Tailor participant selection to local contexts.

7. Select implementation sites based on what fits, not just existing presence or donor demand.

8. Focus on improving access to and participation in services most relevant to target constituencies.

9. Consider how would-be partners fit into the conflict, gender, and political economy factors highlighted through assessments.

10. Involve local partners in programme design and implementation as well as research and analysis.
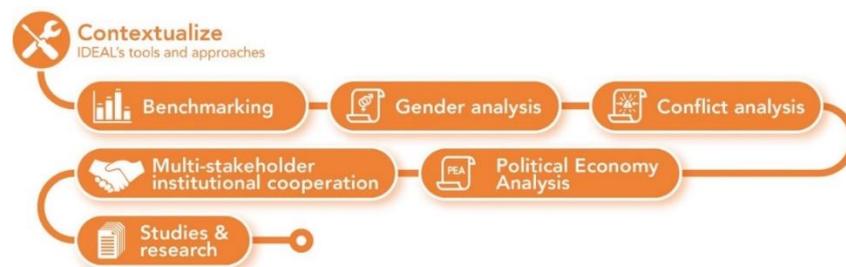
Figure 5: IDEAL's tools and approaches in the contextualise phase of the process cycle

3.2   Design for adaptability and sustainability

Building a social contract is a long-term process, requiring the sustained efforts of both citizens and government officials as well as complementary efforts of civil society actors. Yet, FCAS are especially prone to upheaval which can affect all parties' ability and willingness to engage. Even in stable environments, LGAs and local government leaders are political. Local elections are likely to affect the balance of power and individual and institutional priorities during a typical five-year programme. Elections similarly affect LGA board membership and capacity to engage with the programme. New leaders may be reluctant to support the commitments of previous administrations or may have differing priorities. Staff will change and reform champions as well as capacities strengthened will be lost.

Development practitioners must plan for these certainties and uncertainties. Thorough and routine needs assessments, gender and conflict analyses (GCA), and political economy analyses (PEA)

can provide a sound basis for adaptive planning. Theory of change (ToC) based models, short-term, iterative activities, and flexible budgeting expand managers' options to respond to both expected and unexpected changes. Adaptable programmes, along with country ownership and collaboration with endemic structures, increases the likelihood that reforms will endure.

Note: flexibility within the programme (and the resulting programme adaptability) is often determined largely by donor rules and regulations. Be clear with donors about the inherent challenges of working in FCAS, which requires adaptability to changing circumstances, and update them regularly on changes in context that may impact programming. Encourage donors to focus on impact versus outputs and use a combination of hard and soft measures to demonstrate how smaller, short-term activities contribute to longer-term change objectives.

Lessons for Adaptability and Sustainability

For Adaptability

1. Develop both overarching and context-specific theories of change.

2. Employ flexible budgeting.

3. Consider a problem-driven, iterative approach.

4. Meet the most relevant needs with the available capacities at the time.

For Sustainability

5. Let country teams lead.

6. Build ownership amongst partners and participants.

7. Collaborate with existing structures where possible and practical.

8. Invest in maintaining policy gains and formalised structures.


Figure 6: IDEAL's tools and approaches in the design for adaptability and sustainability phase of the process cycle

3.3   Promote the enabling environment

Promoting a conducive enabling environment is fundamental to the success of any initiative meant to strengthen the social contract. Local governments operate as part of a complex ecosystem of governance and civil society actors:

- the mandate of local government is largely defined at the national level, along with funding and even staff in some cases

- local governments must also work with one another to manage a range of shared issues

- civil society actors often play a role in filling public service gaps and ensuring accountability

- the public dictates the most pressing services and needs for local government to address
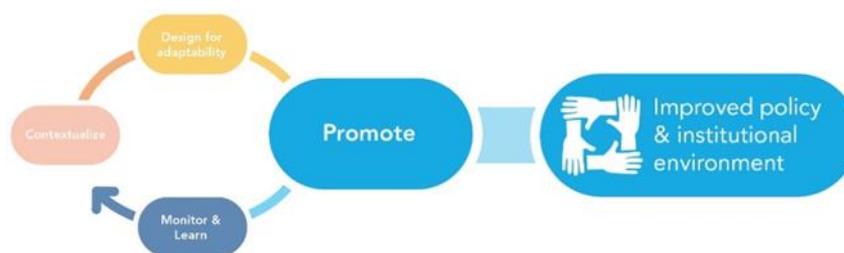
Only when national and local power holders acquiesce to the possibility of reform can change be realised at a meaningful scale. Once realised, changes can include both greater autonomy for local government actors, increased cooperation among local governments, and a more inclusive role for civic actors in decision making.

The operating environment for local governments and government associations is constantly in flux in FCAS, especially those with a semblance of democratic governance. Leadership changes at the national and subnational levels occur frequently, sometimes with little or no anticipation. Civil servants and public officials in FCAS struggle to execute their jobs. This is often more so at the local and municipal levels where investments are usually lower in staff learning, skill building, and basic structure. Yet, local government staff and systems are what constitute the majority of everyday citizens' experience with government, meaning this is where the social contract develops or dies.

By definition, FCAS are rife with conflict and fragility; this environment makes their jobs of local governments more difficult and sensitive. Their interactions with the population are often coloured by political tensions, violence, and general distrust. Local government actors are obstructed in governance actions by such tensions. Therefore, conflict sensitivity is a foundational aspect of how local government actors must operate. Inclusive governance is a means to ease tensions by improving trust between government and citizens, and even shifting the framing of groups historically viewed as problematic – such as refugees – as assets in the governance process instead.

Lessons for Enhancing the Enabling Environment

1.   Ensure buy-in at national and state levels.

2. Intervene locally, while keeping central level in mind.

3. Use intergovernmental cooperation to promote collaboration and good practice.

4. Build or strengthen the role of LGAs.

5. Mitigate differences in the enabling environment for female local administrators.

6. Minimise inhibitors to local governance actors to fulfil their mandated role.

7. Work on building two-way trust.
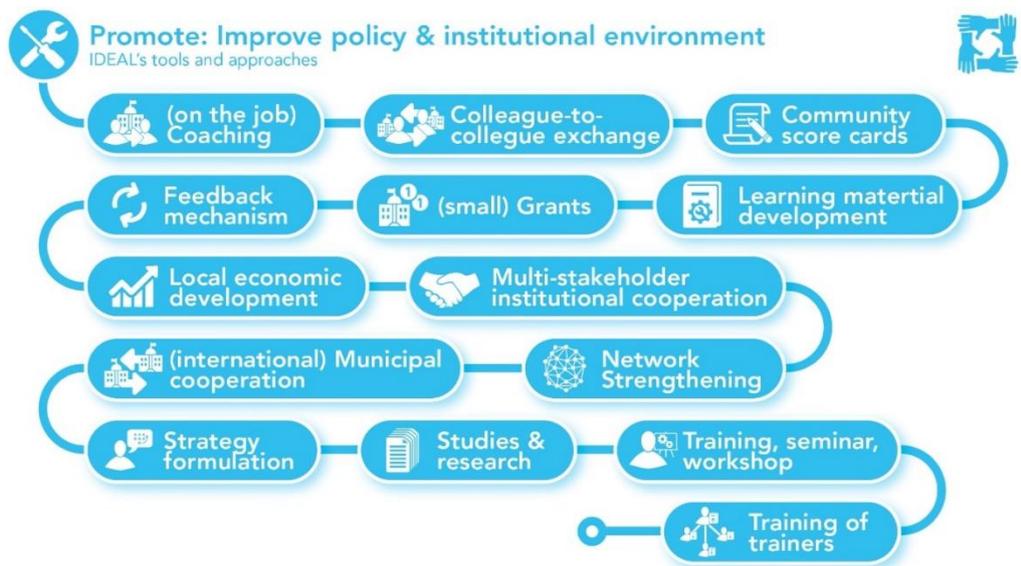
Figure 7: IDEAL's tools and approaches in the promote the enabling environment phase of the process cycle

3.4   **Promote Increased Inclusion**

Local governments can play a role in recognising the existence of marginalised groups (such as minority clans or internally displaced peoples) by including them in the mechanisms of consultation. Leaders must first acknowledge that they have a duty to serve the people and that listening is a critical first step. This requires engagement with existing community governance bodies and representatives like civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs).
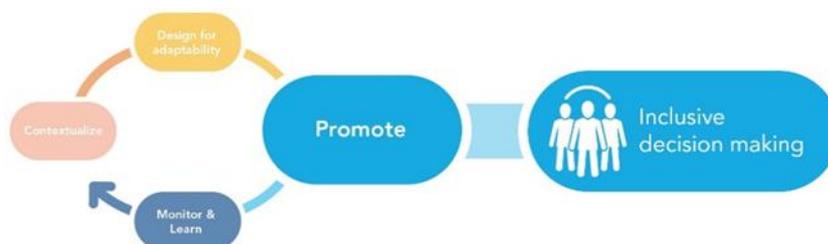
Oftentimes, genuine participation of citizens and civil society in a government decision does more to strengthen the social contract than the delivery of better services. [6]Government staff, CSO representatives, and community members must therefore all take part in owning the development process; the exclusion of any of these groups from decision-making undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme. Inclusion refers to:

- Ensuring traditionally marginalised people in a community are actively and meaningfully involved in governance and decision-making process

- Recognising the diverse needs and attributes of different individuals and groups of people

- Ensuring that people are actively involved and empowered to ensure ownership of their development processes

- Providing accessible and accurate information about systems, processes, and services

Note that inclusion has an important distinction between participation in and influence over governance decisions. Increased participation of marginalised groups in decision-making does not necessarily mean they have influence over the decisions that affect their lives. Influence, on the other hand, refers to a person's ability to compel decisions from power holders reflective of his/her/their demands. It is possible that marginalised person(s) may be granted access to decision making spaces, but their demands remain unheeded by decision makers. While participation is often the first step in inclusion, improving the social contract cannot stop there.

Lessons on Increasing Inclusion in Decision-Making

A) Cross-cutting

1. Raise awareness and build capacity on gender sensitivity.

2. Combat social and cultural norms that limit influence.

3. Be aware of elite capture and its implications for participation.

B) With Partners and Beneficiaries

1. Invest in local planning processes.

2. Involve women at all levels and insist on their participation.

3. Leverage civil society as a bridge to government.

4. Encourage partners and local governments to hire staff focused on inclusion.

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[6] Buell, Stephanie. (2020). *Applications of SLRC Research and Evidence.* ODI Presentation.

5. Host regular and formal engagements between communities and government.

C) With Staff

1. Hire dedicated gender and inclusivity programme staff.

2. Anonymise input into decision-making processes.
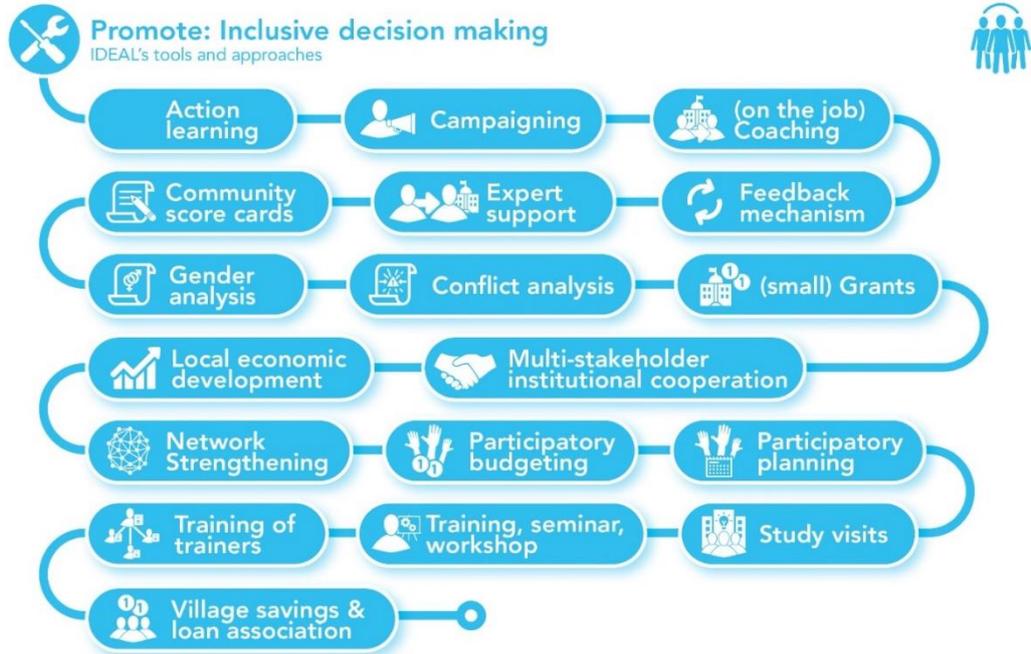
*Figure 8: IDEAL's tools and approaches in the promote the enabling environment phase of the process cycle*

3.5   **Promote Responsive Services**

Making services more responsive includes improving local government decision making processes, needs identification, resource mobilisation, and human resources. It often requires adopting, revising, and/or implementing improved policies, practises, and systems of service providers. Improving the responsiveness of services enhances the way in which local institutions are perceived by society. As health, education, electricity, water, licensing, and other core government services are better able to meet the needs of a greater percentage of the public, perceptions of favouritism and corruption decrease.
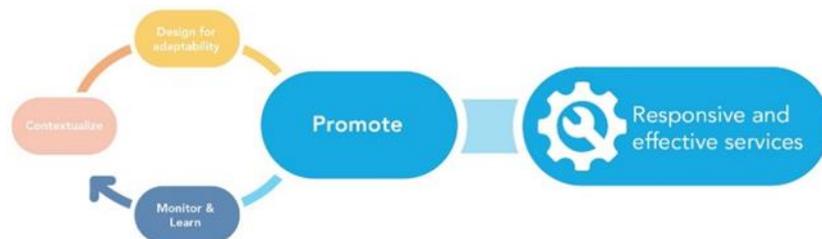
Responsive institutions reflect positively on leadership. The institutionalisation of these practises may engender a deepening sense of fairness; the legitimacy of local leaders will strengthen, and social divisiveness can progressively give way to a more cohesive society.

Lessons for Improving the Responsiveness of Services

1. Strengthen capacities of local officials and service providers.

2. Strengthen accountability mechanisms.

3. Increase public awareness on the realities of service provision.

4. Combine "soft" and "hard" interventions.

5. Put learning into practice with small grants.

6. Build long-term revenue sources.

7. Promote civic education.

8. Strengthen partnerships with non-governmental actors.

Figure 9: IDEAL's tools and approaches in the promote responsive services phase of the process cycle

3.6   **Monitor and Learn**

This section details how governance programmes can and should monitor the shifting contexts in which they operate, learn from what is working and what is not, and consider how to adapt. While it does not directly touch on the means and methods to establish and monitor metrics of success, knowing when something is working or not is the first step to determining how and whether to adapt, scale, or stop an activity.
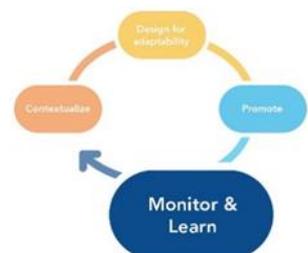
Monitoring is an ongoing process that serves multiple purposes:

- contributes to the programme's capacity to understand, foresee, and manage risks in the operating context

- generates information necessary for decision making including change in strategy, strengthening programme delivery, and enhancing internal and partner systems

- produces data necessary for advocacy and lobbying of donors, governments, and other power holders

- building and sustaining trust in the programme and implementing agencies

Lessons on Monitoring and Learning

A) Monitoring

1. Diversify quantitative and qualitative monitoring approaches.

2. Set well-understood definitions.

3. Contextualise programme targets.

4. Apply a gender lens.

5. Improve documentation of informal monitoring.

6. Consider distant monitoring in dangerous contexts.

7. Staff dedicated monitoring, evaluation, and learning positions.

B) Learning

1. Centralise responsibility for the learning agenda.

2. Mainstream and democratise learning.

3. Expand learning to partners and peers.

Figure 10: IDEAL's tools and approaches in the Monitor and learn phase of the process cycle

4 Section II. Descriptions of lessons learned

This section details the main lessons learnt in the process of executing the IDEAL programme. Lessons are summarised at the top of each chapter as presented in Section I, then described in detail below.
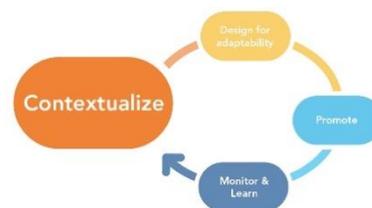
4.1 Contextualise

Lessons in Contextualisation

1. Invest in an inception period.

2. Conduct in-depth analyses of pilot areas.

3. Map relevant stakeholders and engage strategically.

4. Regularly revisit context analyses.

5. Go for 'good enough' and clarity of purpose.

6. Tailor participant selection to local contexts.

7. Select implementation sites based on what fits, not just existing presence or donor demand.

8. Focus on improving access to and participation in services most relevant to target constituencies.

9. Consider how would-be partners fit into the conflict, gender and political economy factors highlighted through assessments.

10. Involve local partners in programme design and implementation as well as research and analysis.

1. Invest in an inception period

Inception periods provide programme management, country office staff, partners, and the donor with time to figure out what will work, how, where, and with whom. It makes space for important relationship building amongst these groups as well as with national and local government stakeholders. Inception periods allow for the development of a shared understanding, the focussing of purpose, and critical space to conduct the research and analysis needed to properly situate the programme.

The optimal inception period (for programmes of three years or more) is six months, especially for programmes in FCAS. This period is an important time to build meaningful relationships and develop stronger cultural understandings, minimising risks later in the programme of cultural

miscues and insensitivities. The inception period requires collaboration between the donor, central management, country teams, and local counterparts including beneficiaries. Involving programme target groups at the beginning improves localisation and later, implementation.

Programmes typically take time to staff up, especially when implementing in new countries. Locally-embedded teams bring immense value to the programme and are a worthy investment during this period. Staff should be both technically knowledgeable and connected to the populations or groups the programme will engage. The country programme manager has a particularly important role, serving as the technical and cultural bridge between different stakeholders, translating theory into practice and practice into results. Take the time to ensure local staff are the best fit, with relevant technical and cultural knowledge.

2. Conduct in-depth analyses of pilot areas

Two assessments are especially important for contextualisation of a programme aimed at improving the social contract: political economy analysis (PEA) and gender and conflict analysis (GCA). Analyses should be carried out across governance levels (e.g., local, regional, national, etc.) and stakeholders (e.g., other donor-funded programmes, Embassies, etc.) as they should seek to establish the linkages between these levels and actors. Furthermore, the issues and dynamics at the national level may be different from those at the local level.

- Political economy analysis (PEA) considers structural dynamics, incentives, and critical social, political, and economic factors that may contribute to or hinder project results.[7] OECD defines PEA as "the interaction of political and economic processes in a society, the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time."[8]

  IDEAL localised its PEA with an emphasis on local power structures. Power structures differed among the various municipalities engaged by the programme, which affected possibilities for increasing inclusive decision making. For instance, in two municipalities in Palestine with the same formal governance structures, the PEA revealed that the mayor of one municipality had considerable influence and willingness to steer the inclusivity process whereas in the other, leadership was more dependent on established

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[7] Pact. (2014). "Applied Political Economy Analysis: A Tool for Analyzing Local Systems: A Practical Guide to Pact's Applied Political Economy Analysis Tool for Practitioners and Development Professionals." Washington, DC: Pact. Available at: https://www.pactworld.org/library/applied-political-economy-analysis-tool-analyzing-local-systems

[8] Oxfam. (2014). "How Politics and Economics Intersect: A simple guide to conducting political economy and context analysis." Oxford: Oxfam. Available at: https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/how-politics-and-economics-intersect-a-simple-guide-to-conducting-political-eco-312056/

procedural structures. This resulted in different programmatic approaches to improve inclusivity.[9]

- A gender and conflict analysis (GCA) is another analytic tool used to understand the underlying reasons for why things are the way they are, with a focus on (i) the gaps between males and females and the relevance of gender norms and power relations in a specific context; and (ii) the profile, causes, actors and dynamics of conflict.[10]

  Ideally, a GCA also goes beyond binary understandings of gender and includes a focus on other traditionally marginalised groups such as youth, persons with disabilities, minority religious or ethnic groups, and other exclusions. Indeed, from the start of the programme, integrating the inclusion of specific 'sub-groups' in a community to the core of the programme contributes to greater effectiveness.

Developing a clear understanding of the complexity of gender and power relations is crucial to 'do no harm' and for the efficacy of interventions. Mainstreaming of a gender and conflict sensitive approach in the programme design helps better apply and target interventions to promote social improvements and strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of state institutions and development partners. Not conducting a GCA poses potential risks. A gender-blind programme might inadvertently worsen the situation for women as many states systematise gender discrimination. Aligning with a local government or association without understanding whether and how they address gender discrimination can exacerbate the problem.

PEAs and GCAs should incorporate a critical social and cultural lens and be conducted at the level of the programme goals, in this case at the local / municipal level. While this will undoubtedly surface national-level dynamics, analyses should consider their application at the level the programme seeks to engage and influence. PEAs may also consider the capacities of key local governance and civil society actors including an assessment of availability, clan and religious affiliations, constituency, amongst other affiliations.

PEA and GCA not only increase understanding of the causes of a society's problems, but also consider ways in which governments, civil society, business, and others are working to overcome them. They should identify entry points and opportunities for programmes to pursue within the bounds of the programme's budget and timeline. Effective analysis should identify what has worked and what to avoid.

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[9] VNG International. (2020). "IDEAL Annual Report 2019." Den Haag: VNG International.
[10] USAID. (2016). "Gender Integration in Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Programming Toolkit." Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development. Available at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2496/Gender%20Toolkit.pdf. & UNICEF. (2016). "Guide to Conflict Analysis." Available at: https://www.unicef.org/documents/unicef-guide-conflict-analysis

Note that there are often other important analyses to conduct including needs assessments. Needs assessments measure the gaps between the current conditions and desired outcomes to appropriately identify the needs in context. They should be complemented with research aimed at understanding *why things are the way they are*. In addition, be sure to review security assessments and consider the impact of security risks.

> **Tool Spotlight: Studies / Research**
>
> IDEAL worked with specialised security firms in Somaliland and South Sudan that provided up-to-date security analysis and regular briefings for staff. In Mali and Burundi, IDEAL developed a security plan for staff and partners based on a professional security analysis.

3. Map relevant stakeholders and engage strategically

External to the direct programme team are diverse stakeholders who influence the programme in a variety of ways. Key stakeholders include the donor, Embassies (especially when the donor is a national government), other (I)NGOs, the private sector, local activists, the media, and more. A comprehensive, gender-sensitive stakeholder mapping should be done during the inception period to identify how these stakeholders can be allies or roadblocks.

Programme staff should also consider how to build multi-stakeholder partnerships or collaborations with other donor-funded programmes. At times, similar programmes may be operating in similar localities. Capitalising upon capacity development opportunities, building upon prior or ongoing interventions, scaling, or sustaining interventions, and more could all be benefits of such collaborations. Consider both ad-hoc and systemic collaborations (e.g., through advisory groups).

4. Regularly revisit context analyses

Analyses should be revisited and updated on an annual basis to allow for programme adjustments in line with changing contexts. In FCAS, frequent changes can quickly render some aspects of your analysis obsolete. Complement baseline analysis with frequent conversations with staff, partners, and participants. Consider integrating the analysis timeline with key moments in the programme – such as the inception period or annual reporting cycle. Alternatively, adopt a practice of revisiting analysis findings whenever a significant event occurs. Establishing a regular practice of contextualisation through a combination of formal investigation, informal conversation and analysis will lead to more realistic goal setting and manageable programme interventions.

Context analysis tools can be conducted separately or integrated with other assessments. Standalone assessments generally go deeper and can be easier to update. Integrating assessments can increase the complexity of the process and result in more superficial findings, but it saves time and resources and encourages conceptual linkages, for example between

gender norms and economic development. Whichever approach is adopted, it is critical that different stakeholder groups inform the studies including in the analysis of causes and consequences of problems, help identify possible entry points and validate the results. Contextual analysis should always result in recommendations that are feasible within the time, financial, and operational constraints of the programme.

5.   Go for 'good enough' and clarity of purpose

While analysis and understanding of local contexts are important to the design and probability of programme success, the timing and scope must also be considered. Aim for an early and 'good enough' analysis that gives enough detail of the incumbent opportunities and challenges. This should include an understanding of CSO capacity and priority population needs as well as a systematic analysis of fragility and conflict factors. Use this to determine whether there will be a right fit for the programme (i.e., if the programme theory of change applies). Then, plan regular context reviews and build in flexibility to adapt the programme during implementation.

Too often analyses are pursued as academic pursuits, leaving programme staff with the challenge of interpreting jargon into relatable messages for partners and participants. Invest in moving from theory to practice, establishing clear definitions of key concepts and programme objectives. Language should be commonly understood, easily translatable and regularly used to facilitate uptake and internalisation among staff and partners. Clarity of purpose will lead to shared goals and can improve the results of capacity development interventions.

IDEAL's local government and LGA partners initially found it difficult to connect the concept of social contract building to service delivery. Country teams reframed the approach by identifying and orienting the programme towards a policy area which was related to conflict amongst stakeholder groups, such as water management. This helped solidify the linkage between social contract building and service delivery for local officials and beneficiaries alike.

6.   Tailor participant selection to local contexts

Oftentimes less is more: focus on the group in society that deserves most attention, rather than trying to cover too much. The identification of target groups within society that are most likely to be underserved by local government and excluded from positions of power / decision making needs to be tailored to the local contexts (country, state, even municipality) as defined through political, gender, and conflict analyses. For example, working with marginalised clans rather than with 'youth' generally may be more important to building legitimacy and addressing drivers of instability. Over generalising the target populations at a programme level can lead to ineffective interventions. This is especially pertinent for multi-country programmes that skew generic to

weave a common story out of divergent programmes in very different places. Be specific about your focus - what it is and why it was chosen.

7. Select implementation sites based on what fits, not just existing presence or donor demand

Both donors and programme managers need to understand that locally-driven and contextually relevant programming may result in different and possibly non-compatible designs amongst regions and countries. Consider inserting proposal language that signals an intention to finalise site selection with the donor based on the programme ToC and results of context analysis instead of committing to implement in places that are not well understood, where the programme is likely to fail, or where engagement can promote conflict. Selecting sites based on the right fit will lead to greater programme coherence and increased opportunities for knowledge transfer and learning.

If this is not possible, enlist representatives from country teams to contribute during the proposal development stage to ensure greater understanding of country dynamics and more realistic target setting. Better to cut countries that do not fit and invest more heavily in those where there is a common programme thread than to try and 'make it work' when you have vastly different country needs and programme aims.

Finding the right fit also involves complementing other development initiatives and aligning with local development priorities. IDEAL built on and collaborated with various other social accountability and good governance programmes. Country teams participated heavily in relationship building with government officials, power brokers, CSO representatives and other development actors working on local governance.

8. Focus on improving access to and participation in services most relevant to target constituencies

The social contract is between the state and its citizens. It is co-constructed and can vary from one group of citizens to another. Improving the social contract therefore must consider power dynamics at different levels and identify the elements of state support which are most important to those targeted by the program. PEAs, GCAs and other baseline analyses should seek to identify priority sectors for target participants and the means of influencing the governance of these sectors.

The legitimacy of the state is based on people's experience with the state and its institutions. Improving access to services that are deemed less important to a target constituency therefore does little to improve perceptions of state legitimacy. In fact, it may exacerbate perceptions of *illegitimacy* - i.e., when a service primarily caters to one group over another. Research from the

Overseas Development Institute shows that perceptions of state legitimacy are more likely to be positively influenced by participation in decision making than overall access to services.[11] Again however, context matters considerably in access to services and inclusiveness in decision making. Promoting inclusiveness in 'exclusive' societies can undermine state legitimacy.

Programme through a gender lens when identifying the most relevant services. Ensure that women (and other marginalised) groups are adequately consulted both as part of the wider population, but also separately in a safe place where they can be open and honest. Do not make assumptions about women's needs. Often their needs are generalised to be those related to family, but in reality, their needs are complex and diverse. When needs are identified that are more uniquely raised by women, avoid categorising them as 'women's needs' because this symbolically sets them aside as issues separate from the wider community as opposed to needs that are equally important and vital to the success of the community overall.

> IDEAL teams learned quickly that a tailor-made focus per country, even per municipality, was necessary. For instance, in Somaliland, contextual analysis pinpointed the lack of economic opportunities as a crucial source of fragility and an area in which local governments play a key role. As a result, they specified IDEAL's topic of focus in the country to local economic development. In Uganda, of the seven participating municipalities, local governments worked on differing issues according to each of their needs, including: waste collection, own source revenue, urban planning, street lighting to enhance security, and the development of Municipal Development Forums.

9. Consider how would-be partners fit into the conflict, gender, and political economy factors highlighted through assessments

A programme's choice of where to work is incredibly important and should consider findings of assessment work. However, once general locations have been decided (i.e., X state or Y province), there are fewer options with respect to which local governments the programme can engage. Assessments should consider the range of potential partners to identify allies and would-be reformers.

Similarly, any programme working on strengthening community-government relationships must consider the organisations representing causes and constituencies in the implementation area. Legitimate, constituency-based CSOs and CBOs should be engaged throughout the programme. Civil society and government can be subject to elite capture in most countries. This is especially

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[11] Buell, S. (2020). "Applications of SLRC Research and Evidence." London: Overseas Development Institute.

so in more fragile contexts where positions of control and influence are often reflective of clan, ethnicity, and/or religious preferences and hence more exclusionary.

> The IDEAL programme in Burundi experienced difficulties in engaging with local civil society. To address these challenges, the programme decided to put some activities on hold while it investigated. VNG International invested in additional analysis on the constellation of local civil society organisations in order to better understand and identify potential civil society partners.

Fragile contexts are characterised by dysfunctional governance and weak public services, which equates to low levels of legitimacy for both local governments and civil society organisations alike. Picking the perfect partner may be near impossible. Instead, aim for the right mix: partners that may represent different, even competing interests as a way of balancing the programme and ensuring a fairer distribution of programme benefits.

10. Involve local partners in programme design and implementation as well as research and analysis

Across all programme aspects, build a reciprocal relationship with implementing partners to ensure equal balance of power. Local partners and country-based staff have valuable insight into the subtleties of how things work in a place, who has power and why things are the way they are. Local partners can fill in knowledge gaps, coach international staff on customs and practises, reach deeper into target communities, leverage established relationships with officials and power holders, explain what has or has not worked and why, and ensure analytical findings ring true. Local actors generally know how to operate in a more conflict sensitive manner and can guide new programme staff and international actors on their approach.

Importantly, local partners can help define capacity development approaches that have a greater probability of success. This can include formal and informal observations of local officials' skills, capabilities, practises and attitudes in working with the public; how officials seek and process community input on services, planning and decisions; how criticism is handled and means of ensuring accountability.

4.2   Design for Adaptability and Sustainability

Lessons for Adaptability and Sustainability

A) For Adaptability

1.   Develop both overarching and context-specific theories of change.

2.   Employ flexible budgeting.

3.   Consider a problem-driven, iterative approach.

4.   Meet the most relevant needs with the available capacities at the time.

B) For Sustainability

1.   Let country teams lead.

2.   Build ownership amongst partners and participants.

3.   Collaborate with existing structures where possible and practical.

4.   Invest in maintaining policy gains and formalised structures.

A)   For Adaptability

1.   Develop both overarching and context-specific theories of change

Programme design is often based on a ToC, or a description of how change is expected to occur in a given context. For multi-country programmes, the overarching ToC may be accompanied by more

specific, country-level ToCs. This flexibility allowed programme teams to adapt the IDEAL theory to fit their unique country and subnational contexts. Be careful not to let programme- and country-level ToCs stray too far from one another. In some cases, it may be useful and appropriate to develop country-level ToCs first and then consolidate themes into a programme-level ToC.

Once context assessments are complete, both programme and country-level ToCs should be revisited to incorporate new learning. Reviewing and revising ToCs regularly ensures continued adaptation based on what is learned as the programme unfolds. Consider reviewing ToCs annually – or at minimum during evaluation periods – to ensure an accurate reflection of country contexts and the continued relevance of the programme.

2.   Employ flexible budgeting

Programmes can better respond to significant contextual changes when donors and programme managers allow for flexible budgeting. This might entail the shifting of funds from one implementation area to another, to a new partner or government counterpart, or even the cessation of activities for a period of time. Flexible budgets capitalise on the expertise and experience of locally embedded staff with first-hand knowledge of the most urgent and relevant

needs. Opportunities can be seised as they arise, or challenges can be addressed urgently when budgets allow.

IDEAL programme staff felt that providing a small, flexible budget for technical support tools i.e., airtime, modems, laptops (vs. desktops) and transport are essential to ensure the smooth running of certain activities. Moving to a more online-heavy environment, these tools proved even more important. The COVID pandemic brought these needs to the forefront as IDEAL and other development programmes had to radically adapt to virtual engagement models, re-prioritise support, and maintain staff while simultaneously reducing activities. IDEAL was fortunate to have a donor that was willing to operate with a flexible budget and without detailed activity descriptions, allowing for a rapid re-prioritisation of interventions.

3.   Consider a problem-driven, iterative approach

Problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) utilises rapid cycles of short-term, problem-driven projects to promote longer-term change. Short-term projects build fundamental relationships, generate knowledge, and strengthen management capacities. Quick wins inspire subsequent actions allowing participants to build personal confidence as well as team agency. Due to its demand driven nature, PDIA can be difficult to manage, often requiring a more diverse array of partners; and projects may not always clearly align with programme objectives.

The IDEAL programme was strongly oriented towards long-term structural and systemic change. This is a crucial added value, certainly in FCAS where many other actors intervene with short-term (humanitarian) programmes. However, FCAS demand local authorities to 'prove' and recover their legitimacy towards the local population. Since the mid-term evaluation, IDEAL strengthened country-level management (rather than HQ level) to support the ability to pay more attention to solving practical day to day problems of the local partners and putting more emphasis on experimentation and the use of case-based and qualitative monitoring. While IDEAL did not structurally adopt PDIA, some country teams adopted the 'spirit' of it by looking carefully at problems, reacting, and adapting.

In Palestine, COVID-19 restrictions severely impeded the ability of government officials to secure external investments for IDEAL supported economic development projects. Regular bureaucratic functions also slowed as government offices shut down and staff fell ill. Exacerbating the continued uncertainty and restrictions impeding everyday business in the West Bank, the country team and its government counterparts began planning and implementing differently. They shifted funds around and organised shorter-term activities that would contribute to long-term goals. Activities were redesigned to reduce the need for

> stakeholder involvement, in-person presence, physical infrastructure, and co-dependent actions.

4. Support context- and content-driven adaptations

Programmes should adapt to both changes in context as well as new learning (changes in content). Context-driven adaptations, such as those based on significant events like disasters, conflict, power shifts, etc. tend to dominate.

Management should also plan for content-driven adaptations. They require programmes to learn and react. As adaptability is rooted in being able to identify and address the most pressing needs within the scope of the programme as well as the most effective interventions to meet programme objectives, both types of adaptations are needed.

> **Tool Spotlight: Adaptive Programming**
>
> Institutions in FCAS are fragile, which impacts their capacity to collaborate. The August 2020 coup in Mali affected the functioning of IDEAL's principal partner AMM and increased security risks for everyday citizens. This resulted in reduced citizen participation in decision-making and forced a programmatic adaptation towards working with CSOs and communities directly.

B) For Sustainability

1. Let country teams lead

Vast differences in country contexts require tailored responses. Embedding and empowering country teams to lead (in the design, implementation, and monitoring of activities) builds ownership at a level closer to the programme, partners, and citizens. Different geographic coverage, partnering arrangements, security situations, and customs require varied management responses. Localised management is more efficient and by leaving flexibility in management choices, country teams can adopt the most effective approach. Sustainability cannot rely on an individual, there must be organisational and/or institutional leadership to mitigate potential issues with staff turnover.

> The pandemic forced the South Sudan team to make considerable changes. They intensified on-the-job coaching using virtual sessions with local experts, modified grants to include COVID prevention activities, and expanded programming in response to demand from a neighboring county government. The South Sudan team was able to identify the need for these adjustments and act with the support of VNG International staff.

2. Build ownership amongst partners and participants

Locally-owned solutions are more likely to be sustained beyond the life of the programme. IDEAL built ownership by contextualising programme designs, localising expertise, co-designing and implementing with local government associations (LGA), aligning with local and international priorities (i.e., economic development), forming groups inside municipal departments and LGAs

to champion reforms, soliciting endorsement from senior officials, and championing reformers. It allowed local government partners to offer tailored responses to locally-determined priorities. The range of possible topics (from LED to WASH to urban planning), in combination with the small grant scheme, built ownership and provided the necessary flexibility. Lastly, IDEAL worked closely with LGAs and similar institutions that pledged to continue advancing programme objectives.

"I participated in the ToTs [training of trainers]. We (participants) can now provide basic trainings to districts. I will go back to my home city where they will benefit from what I gained here." - Administrator in Berbera, Somaliland

Municipal leadership in Palestine was inadequately supporting IDEAL-funded local economic development (LED) initiatives. They put staff members onto the project without reducing existing responsibilities. In response, VNG International tried to formalise LED units inside the municipalities. Municipal leadership pushed back, refusing to officially recognise and staff a new team within their government. In a change of tack, IDEAL and LED project leaders presented initial results to local mayors. Seeing value in the initiative, mayors began championing the projects and the government staff who led them. This resulted in a shift of attitudes amongst municipal leadership and increased support going forward.

3. Collaborate with existing structures where possible and practical

Developing what already exists is usually preferable to starting anew. Harmonisation with functioning structures and/or groups that can be rehabilitated can have a significant impact on generating ownership and increasing the effectiveness of interventions. A key component in the IDEAL approach was to strengthen the role of the LGA as support agents and influencers of policies relevant to local governments. By strengthening LGA staff knowledge and skills, enhancing relationships and improving institutional systems, structures and practices, IDEAL was able to transfer its support role to LGA partners in many contexts. LGAs were active contributors during the course of the programme as well, implementing training, engaging civic actors, lobbying government officials, monitoring performance, and managing knowledge products generated through programme activities.

Note that there may be good reasons for bypassing existing structures, for example in the case of elite capture. Context analysis should consider these dimensions in assessments of key stakeholders. IDEAL also learned that LGAs do not always pass knowledge and promote new ways of working amongst their member states. Nor do all LGAs have the power to influence central decision-making in many contexts. Therefore, it is necessary to establish processes that promote greater inter-municipal communication and increase the national influence of LGAs.

In the Palestinian Territories, IDEAL reactivated the Local Government Association (the APLA) which had been non-functional for several years with only fifteen members. Within three years of capacity strengthening and support through IDEAL, the APLA was able to demonstrate it can deliver for its members and membership swelled to 121 municipalities.

4. Invest in maintaining policy gains and formalised structures

Adopted policies and formalised structures are the best guarantor of programme sustainability. However, there is no guarantee they will be implemented correctly or consistently. Staff turnover, capacity depletion, lack of financial resources, and shifting political agendas can limit their impact. Toolkits, guidelines, and other means of sharing lessons on how to implement or operate a policy or group can help mitigate some of these risks. Ensuring financing to support implementation is another. Avoid overreliance on external sources and support local governments and LGAs with resource mobilisation. Pilot projects can also be leveraged to showcase outcomes and attract more substantial investments for reforms.

4.3   Promote an Enabling Environment

> **Lessons for Enhancing the Enabling Environment**
>
> 1. Ensure buy-in at national and state levels.
>
> 2. Intervene locally, while keeping central-level in mind.
>
> 3. Use intergovernmental cooperation to promote collaboration and good practice.
>
> 4. Build or strengthen the role of LGAs.
>
> 5. Mitigate differences in the enabling environment for female local administrators.
>
> 6. Minimise inhibitors to local governance actors to fulfil their mandated role.
>
> 7. Work on building two-way trust.

1.   Ensure buy-in at national and state levels

Promoting an enabling environment for reform occurs at all levels of government, from national on down. National-level control over resource allocation, policy influence, and priorities directly impacts whether and how
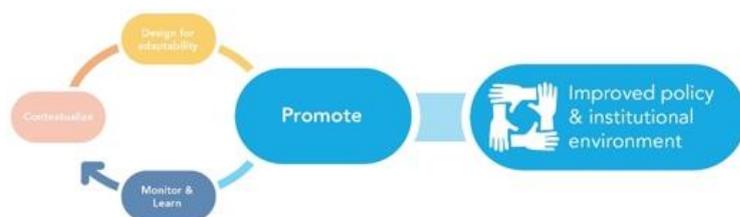
local governments and LGAs can engage with the programme. Local governments are often inhibited in FCAS contexts by incomplete, unclear, or contradictory decentralisation processes and guidelines. This may result in a mismatch of local government responsibilities, under-resourcing, or other detriments to the social contract. Therefore, buy-in from the central government in contexts of high centralisation becomes paramount. Approaches to ensuring buy-in include, but are not limited to the following:

- Clearly articulate how the programme contributes to national priorities and supports government mandates

- Obtain permissions and commitments from relevant ministries and LGA boards for the programme

- Leverage local staff and partner networks to identify and build champions for programme objectives

- Regularly engage those with power over resource allocation and priority setting of local governments / LGAs, informing them of successes that will build and reinforce support

- Demonstrate results - bring leaders to observe the impact of new actions and investments

- Invite them to speak at events

2.   Intervene locally, while keeping central level in mind

National-level policy change is a profound way to impact the enabling environment for local governments, but it is too often impossible within the span and scope of a typical development programme. Once a programme receives the go-ahead from national authorities, maintain relationships with central administrators but avoid making commitments concerning national level change. However, continue to push for national-level changes when windows of opportunities emerge. Influencing is a key role of LGAs, so leverage LGAs to influence at the national level in the interest of local governments.

Initiate programming by strengthening local government institutions (leadership, staff, systems, and practices), and then focus on enhancing services and constituency engagement. Sharing knowledge, developing skills, and encouraging new practices that enhance the relationship between local government officials and citizens will strengthen the social contract. Support local officials and government associations on advocacy and lobbying skills, network strengthening/ relationship building, research and strategic communications so that they may wage longer term efforts independent of project deadlines and constraints.

In South Sudan, the planning and budgeting of county water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services happened irregularly and non-transparently. Corruption and favouritism were common, impacting delivery. Borehole rehabilitation was often determined based on clientelism rather than need. Working with IDEAL, the local government increased consultations, and initiated a public budgeting and planning process that improved the targeting of WASH services.

3.   Use intergovernmental cooperation to promote collaboration and good practice

Connect local authorities and officials across municipalities to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to strengthen the social contract with constituents. Encourage the formation of a joint vision for how local government should engage and serve its people, focusing on their inclusion and participation in needs identification and decision-making.   Profiling   successful reforms will inspire replication in other places

Tool Spotlight: Multi-stakeholder institutional cooperation

In 2020, the mayors and general secretaries of three rural communes, (Baya, Sankarani and Tagandougou) in the southern region of Mali began collaborating on a joint vision of sustainable development. They increased consultations with and among community stakeholders at village, commune, and regional levels allowing for the exchange of ideas and expansion of services.

enabling good practice to flourish. These activities require funding and organisation. LGAs are best placed to assume this role during and after the programme period.

4. Build or strengthen the role of LGAs

LGAs are important actors in strengthening the capacity of local governments, managing knowledge for members, and advocating for greater decentralisation from the national government. LGAs are as unique as the countries and member governments they support. In some cases, they are influential at both the national and local levels, whereas in others they can be disorganised and ineffective. The first step towards engagement with an LGA is to determine the right relationship. LGAs are linked to national political forces and association can reflect negatively on your organisation in some contexts. An LGA's affiliation will often determine whether the association should be approached as a target or a partner.

In countries where the LGA is non-functional or absent, it is best to start small to make sure the LGA is fit-for-purpose, focusing on meeting the immediate needs of would-be members. Avoid the impulse to do everything too soon. Start with building or improving basic organisational systems and established LGA practices. Pay attention to creating and maintaining sufficient political support for the work of the LGA both at the local and national level, so that no one feels passed over and ownership is secured. Invest in relationship building between political and technical staff in LGAs. Putting formal and informal mechanisms in place for facilitating exchange between political and technical authorities amongst LGA members will help to sustain and scale the LGA work.

There was a considerable variety of LGAs in IDEAL. Burundi's LGA is an important partner of the national government, assisting in executing national policy and advising on issues of local governance and decentralisation. This LGA also maintains significant influence over its members. In Uganda on the other hand there are two LGAs. Both were experiencing a major period of transition, impacted by a lack of funding and in-fighting. They were less connected to national actors and struggled to exert influence. As a result, they played a minor role in support of their members.

5. Mitigate differences in the enabling environment for female local administrators

Rules, norms, and practices impact the ability of female local authorities from engaging at the same levels and ways as male peers, yet women account for an increasing percentage of the public workforce.[12] IDEAL teams in many countries found that local administrators would resist

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[12] Mukhtarova, T., Baig, F. A., and Hasnain, Z. (27 Sept 2021). "Five Facts on Gender Equity in the Public Sector." World Bank Blogs. Available at: https://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/five-facts-gender-equity-public-sector

including women in site visits, study tours, and some training sessions. Shifting norms and practises requires focused interventions.

> *"My post is not often filled by a woman. We are a conservative commune, and I am surrounded by men. I tried to change the system from within – I have started combatting the corruption in our commune, which had implications on not only my safety and security, but also that of my husband and family."*
>
> *- Administrator in Rugazi, Burundi*

Improving the enabling environment includes increasing opportunities for women government employees to gain new skills, knowledge, and experience. Programmes can support associations for elected women, offer targeted offerings for women local administrators, require a specific quota of female participants, and promote organisational policies and practices in LGAs and (through LGAs) in local governments to improve gender sensitivity.

> In Burundi, IDEAL convened female local administrators and their husbands to talk about the barriers they face. Many female administrators faced criticism from family and friends who expected them to perform more of the household and childcare duties. Administrators explained about the importance and pressures of the job. The seminar initiated a discussion amongst local administrators, their husbands and their communities about the roles of women and the importance of supporting local leaders - including female administrators. The seminar inspired further action: a member of Parliament was asked by other female administrators to repeat it for other women.

6.   Position local government to lead and thrive

Different actors including politically appointed leaders, central administrators, CSOs, and the private sector can negatively influence the ability of local government to fulfil its mandated role. This makes it difficult for local governments to build legitimacy, especially when core services are affected (e.g., when CSOs and the private sector absorb the most qualified doctors and nurses). This happens more frequently in FCAS where CSOs and others seek to fill gaps in service provision during periods of instability. As government systems develop post-conflict, they must be able to 'prove' and recover their legitimacy with the local population. Competition with externally-funded CSOs and private providers hinders the government's ability to do this.

Tool Spotlight: Training

Inclusive governance and leadership training through IDEAL to the LGA in Somaliland (ALGASL) resulted in a noticeable improvement in LGA activities. According to ALGASL staff: *"We/I found that many different trainings improved our ability to implement activities/services to the district. I have contacted local government staff to have a meeting and to collect data in the district without any support."*

Governance programmes should put local government in the driver's seat. Support them in efforts to map and coordinate service provision in the areas they control. Improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of service delivery. Strengthen tax collection and revenue generation systems. These longer-term investments can be initially supported through a rapid cycle of short-term, problem-driven projects that generate quick wins.

When engaging local governments, be mindful of the power dynamics between technical staff and the political wing (elected or appointed officials and their support staff) and consider ways to build cooperation. While the technical staff is like the engine that keeps the government going, they have little say in the direction it takes. An explicit focus on technical staff during training undercuts this vulnerability and promotes skill retention within the local government. Sustained engagement of the political wing is also necessary to ensure reforms continue in the right direction.

7.   Work on building two-way trust

Trust between government and citizens is often fragile. Citizens struggle to trust the state to be responsive, accountable, inclusive, and transparent and the state distrusts citizens to be able to meaningfully contribute to decision-making. Restoring and building trust, thus, is a two-way street. The lack of trust on either side can significantly impede interventions and diminish the social contract.

Creating spaces for interactions between the local government and the population is a precondition for building trust. Focus on ways to help each other understand the issues and challenges that each face in an inclusive, non-threatening way. Support both parties to practice soft skills such as

Tool Spotlight: Community Score Card (CSC)

The CSC enabled citizens and local authorities in Burundi to start the discussion about corruption in governance and proposing solutions to address it. One citizen participant expressed: *"In the past, we feared each other and were also disrespecting each other. With this exercise, we feel that the state takes care of lay people. Otherwise, we would not sit down with authorities who are high above us."*

communication and gender-sensitivity. Use these interactions as an opportunity to lay the groundwork for approaches to working together. The delivery of tangible outputs (e.g., through

small grants) often help to expedite trust-building. Start small; focus on specific issues or projects and garner a series of quick wins. Be careful not to create excessive red tape or bureaucracy for local government, though, or there is a risk that trust will decrease if they view inclusion exercises as obstacles to their success.

"Ebyentaro nibiza kuhwa, abataka kurwana n'abakozi ba municipality."
Loosely translated: "Wars between citizens and municipal officials are over." - LGA representative in Uganda

In Uganda, the relations between the local government and the population were hostile. IDEAL worked with local authorities to realise that it was in their power to change this for the better. Through meaningful conversations about responsibilities and accountability of the local government in regard to local tax collections, local governments were able to build up trust with citizens. They had to show that they delivered on how taxes were spent. These conversations happened in formal settings, such as budget conferences, as well as during informal encounters.

4.4   **Promote Increased Inclusion**

Lessons on Increasing Inclusion in Decision-Making

A) Cross-cutting

1.   Raise awareness and build capacity on gender sensitivity.

2.   Combat social and cultural norms that limit influence.

3.   Be aware of elite capture and its implications for participation.

B) With Partners and Beneficiaries

1.   Invest in local planning processes.

2.   Involve women at all levels and insist on their participation.

3.   Leverage civil society as a bridge to government.

4.   Encourage partners and local governments to hire staff focused on inclusion.

5.   Host regular and formal engagements between communities and government.

C) With Staff

1.   Hire dedicated gender and inclusivity programme staff.

2.   Anonymise input into decision-making processes.

A.   **Cross-cutting**

1.   **Raise awareness and build capacity on gender sensitivity**

As women and other marginalised groups are less often engaged by authorities (and programme staff) and represented in decision-making spheres, the needs of these groups tend to be minimised or even ignored. Seek input from these groups on priority needs, independently if needed. Focusing on their priorities stimulates interest in engaging in the governance process and calls authorities' attention to the full range of constituency needs (not just those of men). In doing so, additional secondary effects may occur that benefit the wider community and reinforce inclusivity in the future.

Begin by identifying barriers that limit women and other marginalised people from participating and influencing decision making in households, communities, and municipalities as well as within organisational settings. Barriers can vary from place to place and across sub-groups, so targeted gender analyses may be necessary to identify the most relevant obstacles to participation. These may include tribal affiliation, education level, and confidence. IDEAL identified that in many communities, the timing of meetings and activities can adversely affect the participation of
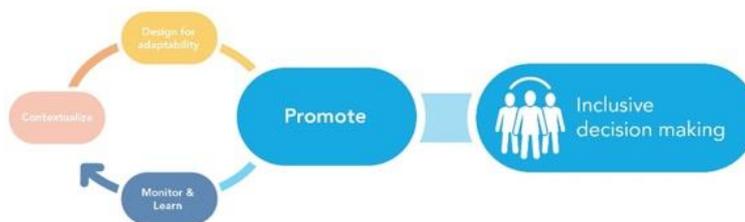
different groups. Oftentimes women would be in the fields working, collecting water, or preparing meals when meetings are traditionally held, which prevented their attendance.

Raise awareness with target populations and formal and informal power holders (including men in the community) both amongst the populace and inside of partner and local government institutions. IDEAL used several approaches including social media campaigns, role modelling, and hosting events in the community. Inform youth, women and other marginalised populations about existing laws, accountability mechanisms, and interest groups that can support their access to and participation in decision-making groups and forums.

Train and coach local government and LGA leadership, staff, and CSO partners on gender sensitivity and how to incorporate it into budgets and day-to-day workflow. When working with partners, encourage tools and approaches that promote gender equity and participatory decision-making in organisational systems, practices, and leadership. For community forums, make sure local authorities know what steps and tasks to execute, how to invite the population to meetings in an inclusive way, how to collect data, and how to organise interaction and participation during meetings.

Organisations should lead by example and apply the same good practices that they advocate with others.

"The concept of inclusivity and participatory decision making was new and abstract for the local partners. The staff had difficulty conceptualising how to implement [these ideas] initially, but with on-the-job coaching and joint planning support, these hurdles were overcome."

- IDEAL staff

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2.   Combat social and cultural norms that limit influence

Many of the barriers impeding women, youth, and other marginalised people's participation are social and cultural. This includes notions about the inferiority of women and deference to elders. Many men perpetuate these harmful norms by refusing to let their wives participate in activities, seeing it as a distraction from domestic duties. Even when traditionally marginalised groups are able to participate in different spaces, they may not be allowed to speak or influence the conversation. Be cognisant of norms that not only limit participation, but also influence. Marginalised people are just as susceptible to adhering to beliefs as those who directly gain through their application. For instance, women often carry similar prejudices as men about

women's proper roles and their capabilities. Be sure to include women in messaging on cultural norms.

> *"Before the arrival of IDEAL, water problems in our municipality were debated between men (traditional leaders, technical services and elected officials). We women were excluded from all meetings and even though we were invited to a few rare meetings, we were not allowed to speak."*
>
> *- Local authority in Tagandougou, Mali*

To combat these norms, IDEAL worked with men to promote alternative models of masculinity. For example, through a joint workshop, the Burundi programme showed the husbands of female community leaders the benefits of participation in decision-making and the influence they and their families may gain. Other programmes helped women generate independent income streams – for example, through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA), which increased independence and built the confidence of participants.

In the run-up to Burundi's next community development committee elections, IDEAL encouraged local women to elect other women for committee seats. This effort resulted in more women being elected and an increase in women's participation at forum meetings from 25% to 50% of all attendees in several programme areas.

3.　Be aware of elite capture and its implications for participation

Elite capture is "a phenomenon where resources transferred for the benefit of many are usurped by a few, usually politically and/or economically powerful groups at the expense of the less influential ones."[13] Government institutions and civil society organisations are highly susceptible to elite capture, especially in FCAS. Governments rarely proactively use approaches to identify specific marginalised groups; instead, they tend to work with known representatives and rely on proxy indicators to identify beneficiaries (e.g., single women).

Involve local leaders and community members in identifying programme participants and beneficiaries. They often have better information

Tool Spotlight: Learning Material Development

To support the PCDC (local planning) process in Burundi, a 'PCDC book' was developed that provided clear guidelines on how to formulate the PCDC through participatory methods. Previously, local administrators did not know how to fulfil the government requirements. This book made the process more effective and efficient, increased population engagement in the process, and improved the quality of the PCDC.

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[13] Duchoslav, J. (2013). 'Limiting Elite Capture in Community Driven Development: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial in Sierra Leone.' MSc Thesis, Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen. Available at: https://edepot.wur.nl/274897

about who is the most excluded (e.g., the poor, specific ethnic minorities, etc.), making them important allies in ensuring programming reaches the right people. In addition, make ToCs and monitoring mechanisms explicit about assumptions related to elite capture. Democratically elected decision-making committees can also reduce the influence of traditional leaders and the potential for elite capture.[14]

However, be cautious about overemphasising elite capture risks and delegitimising local leaders. Research has found that when existing local leaders are circumvented and decision-making and implementation of projects is devolved to community members, risks to the effectiveness of service delivery emerge. This is because community members' abilities and skills are likely not as strong as those of the local leaders, and the incentives for local leaders to strengthen their own capacities and demonstrate their commitment to the social contract by demonstrating their performance is weakened.[15]

B. With Partners and Beneficiaries

1. Invest in local planning processes

Community planning is typically conducted on a routine basis (often annually). This presents an institutionalised opportunity for citizen participation in decision-making, making services more responsive. Ensure the process includes citizen input, either directly through open public meetings or indirectly via representatives. Traditionally, local planning processes risk being politicised, centralised, and/or co-opted by elite groups. Often, local planning is little more than a trickle-down from the national level, with minimal input at the local level.

Through training, coaching, and other types of support as needed, local government – alongside citizens and civil society – contextualise national priorities to local needs. Ideally, the national agenda would be driven first by local issues, making the planning cycle led from the bottom-up. However, this possibility is very limited, especially in FCAS, and setting a realistic goal of focusing on the reality of local needs within centralised priorities can support more relevant and effective planning, budgeting, and citizen participation. IDEAL found that not only did citizens appreciate closer involvement, but local authorities also found added value. Historically, they felt unequipped to handle the formal requirements for municipal planning, but, with capacity development and coaching, they were able to develop more realistic and strategic plans.

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Alatas, V., Banerjee, A., Hanna, R., Olken, B. A., Purnamasari, R., and Wai-Poi, M. (2019). "Does Elite Capture Matter? Local Elites and Targeted Welfare programmes in Indonesia." *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 109: 334-39.

Feedback mechanisms are an effective means of monitoring government services and providing regular input to decision makers. Feedback mechanisms could include public meetings, radio programmes, or even app- and SMS-based systems that enable real-time feedback provision.

> Development committee members working with IDEAL in Burundi increased engagement with community members and government officials. They produced annual development plans that were focused, detailed, and more realistic than previous iterations. Earlier plans consisted of wish lists that raised unrealistic expectations amongst the population and frustrated politicians and officials who struggled to meet demand.

2. Involve women at all levels and insist on their participation

Getting more women involved in governance processes, in organisations and government structures, and promoting them in leadership roles will augment their voice in collective decision-making and increase the likelihood women's priorities will be addressed. Approaches to increasing women's participation and inclusion include, but are not limited to:

- Establish and meet targets for women's participation in all aspects of a programme and organisation

- Promote women to leadership roles wherever and whenever possible - whether it be the LGA board or the local water committee

- Increase emphasis with partners on aspects of gender sensitivity by more clearly defining gender outputs and indicators

- Promote gender budgeting, and insisting on women's participation in the budgeting process

- Consider incentivising the participation of women by removing practical barriers limiting their availability to participate in project activities (e.g., adjusting the times of meetings, arranging for childcare, providing for physical needs such as blankets, etc.)

- Support economic empowerment of women (e.g., through village savings and loans associations) to combat negative gender norms and increase their economic influence

> In Uganda, IDEAL promoted the participation of more women in Kalangala's town council meetings in 2019. Women participants raised the issue of insecurity along the fishing wharfs at night. Too little light left pedestrians vulnerable to attacks. With the support of a small grant from IDEAL, the town council installed new streetlights. Security quickly improved. Business owners in other parts of the city took notice and are now partnering with the city to install more streetlights around the town, allowing for extended business hours and safer streets. This

> problem would have likely continued were it not for the insistence of women community members to prioritise it.

A challenge that many municipalities face is the limited number of women perceived qualified for participation in programme activities, such as training or site visits. Young women working in the public sphere, despite their level of education, often hold lower official positions even while doing work similar to male superiors. However, one's position is often a criterion for participation in programme activities. Insist on female participation regardless and modify participation requirements to make room for these candidates if necessary. It is possible to exert substantial influence on partner behaviours, especially with those who are committed to improving inclusivity. Senior government staff, usually men, are more often selected to join study visits and programme supported gatherings if the programme fails to require women attendees. Signalling to partners about the importance of diversity in programme activities, raising awareness about the value of women's participation and the obstacles women peers face can all help shift attitudes about female involvement in learning and leadership opportunities.

3.   Leverage civil society as a bridge to government

Civil society can raise issues of community concern to local governments. When done in a non-confrontational manner, regular engagement can result in strong ties between civic actors and local administrators. CSOs typically have a deeper connection with community members and can access populations normally overlooked in government outreach. As a result, CSOs serve as a useful barometer of public opinion, communicating needs and demands of the citizenry including the most marginalised.

Tool Spotlight: Study Visits

IDEAL in Palestine conducted a guided study tour to South-Africa, a country with close ties to the Palestinian Territories and a similar LED-context. Participants saw how LED programmes can work and about pitfalls to avoid. Afterwards, three of the female study tour participants were designated LED Unit staff managers (out of a total of 5 managers).

4.   Encourage partners and local governments to hire staff focused on inclusion

Having a focal point in partner and government institutions can promote broader awareness, greater uptake, and longer-term investments in inclusivity and gender sensitivity. IDEAL supported these positions in several countries, which provided a natural counterpart to advance participation objectives. Be aware that establishing focal points can have an isolating effect - especially when the role is given to a junior staff person. Care must be made to integrate the position into management meetings, programme design decisions, and other roles that enable a

broader reach. Asking a member of the management team to assume the role in addition to their other duties is one way to embed the role at higher levels. This may need to come at the expense of some of the manager's other work, however.

Tool Spotlight: Campaigning

Every two years, RALGA, the Rwanda Housing Authority, and participating districts provide details on the city's land planning and solicit feedback from citizens. The consultation process is managed as a campaign featuring activities such as awareness-raising meetings with community members, sensitization workshops with local leaders, radio programmes, dissemination of communication material, and workshops with district representatives including youth, women and people with disabilities. The recurring nature of the consultation allows residents to see progress and follow up on suggestions that may have been overlooked.

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5.   Host regular and formal engagements between communities and government

Citizens often know little of what local governments are doing, or how to provide feedback and otherwise engage. Government outreach helps raise awareness of available services and how to provide feedback. Regularly scheduled community forums allow people to plan their participation. It helps to prepare both local officials as well as community members on basic communication skills, including presenting, active listening, and note taking.

Where possible, leverage existing spaces for dialogue. Existing decision-making bodies and discussion forums are often backed by legal frameworks and institutional structures and have a higher likelihood of sustained relevancy. These groups can be exclusive, however (i.e., composed of older, wealthier, adult males), so focus on integration and encourage the consultation of marginalised groups.

> *"Before, our local authorities did not have the culture to discuss with us,*
> *and we were surprised when [they] came here to discuss the*
> *infrastructure development of our area. In the beginning of the master plan*
> *design process, we discussed common challenges facing our settlement,*
> *we presented our views and needs to the team developing the plan and*
> *after several meetings, we decided together on the land use in each area.*
> *I am happy to see them back here today with the campaign with a master*
> *plan displaying some of our proposals."*
>
> *- Resident in Musanze District*

Alternatively, it may be necessary to set-up new spaces for dialogue or utilise informal spaces. There may be issues that are sensitive to discuss in a more formalised space, or there may be a need for specific stakeholders to hone their confidence and public speaking skills in a safer environment. For example, women may be supported by being part of a women's network where

they can more comfortably discuss issues that are of concern to them and build their confidence to raise issues. Consider going to where people already are, such as school meetings for reaching parents' groups or young mothers. Similarly, dedicated spaces may need to be created around very specific topics.

C.   With Staff

1.   Hire dedicated gender and inclusivity programme staff

A stronger involvement of women and other disenfranchised groups requires additional attention during activity implementation and follow-up. Dedicated gender and inclusivity staff can support local government and civil society actors in making governance processes and service delivery more inclusive. They can indicate priority areas for attention, highlight key challenges experienced by excluded groups, and coach stakeholders on good practices. They can also draw attention to other programme staff where more emphasis should be placed in making interventions more inclusive. Hire these personnel early. Staff with a background on gender and inclusivity are immensely helpful in programme design and initial stages of contextualisation to help ask – and answer – questions and investigate cultural, social, and political dimensions that others often overlook. These experts can also support designing inclusive, disaggregated monitoring and evaluation systems and systematise continued learning.

In IDEAL Palestine, an in-country staff person was hired whose sole focus was to support gender and inclusivity. This gender expert travelled to the municipalities and talked with men and women to discuss the added value of a diverse organisation and about potential obstacles and solutions for female involvement.

2.   Anonymise input into decision-making processes

Participation can be intimidating at first, especially for those who have never been invited to provide input. Anonymising feedback to leaders from staff, project participants, and beneficiaries can stimulate contributions. This can take the form of surveys, secret ballots, anonymous ranking exercises, and suggestion boxes. Ask directly for contributions from junior staff and other groups who tend to remain silent. Active listening and repetition of feedback validates contributions and encourages additional input.

4.5   Promote Improved Responsiveness of Services

**Lessons for Improving the Responsiveness of Services**

1.   Strengthen capacities of local officials and service providers.

2.   Strengthen accountability mechanisms.

3.   Increase public awareness on the realities of service provision.

4.   Combine "soft" and "hard" interventions.

5.   Put learning into practice with small grants.

6.   Build long-term revenue sources.

7.   Promote civic education.

8.   Strengthen partnerships with non-governmental actors.

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1.   Strengthen capacities of local officials and service providers

Strengthening local government and service provider capacity (including CSO, private sector) is foundational to improving the responsiveness of services, as well as improving the enabling environment and increasing inclusion.

IDEAL surfaced several lessons related to how capacity development can change the way local governments conduct business, including with civil society actors:

a.   Ensure that both leadership and department staff have a firm understanding of their mandates and responsibilities. Frequent elections, turnover, restructuring, and under-resourcing means that too often government officials and the staff they manage have limited understanding of basic job functions. This includes a lack of awareness of how civil society contributes to providing services within municipal boundaries.

b.   Train and coach staff on soft skills, such as active listening and communication, to shift attitudes and behaviours when interacting with community members and with one another.

c.   Enhance skills and practices related to the identification of consumer needs.

d.   Strengthen capacities on inclusive practices, such as social accountability tools (see below) to support more inclusive and transparent identification of needs.

e.   Facilitate strategy development, goal setting, and enhanced systems for the monitoring of services (including through partnerships with CSOs and international development actors).
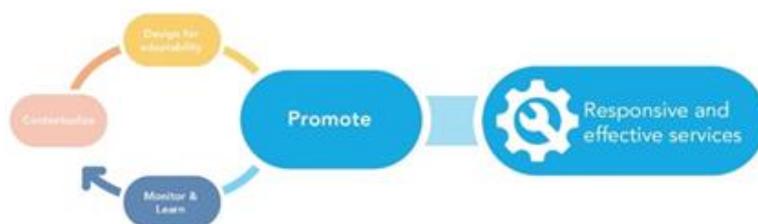
f. Support local governments to strengthen the technical skills needed to mobilise resources, improve the formulation and implementation of procedures, standards, registers, partnerships, participation, and plans for policymaking and policy implementation.

g. Engage LGAs in capacity development support to government staff; LGAs can continue training and coaching well beyond the programme period.

Water Management Committees (WMCs) trained by IDEAL in South Sudan improved water supply throughout the county. WMCs had historically depended on the county for funds and materials, without understanding (or acknowledging) their mandate regarding the management of water points. WMCs began actively collecting usage fees and repairing water infrastructure with the proceeds. WMCs are also more effectively coordinating with the county water department, improving the overall identification and delivery of WASH related needs.

"Due to the management and leadership training provided by the IDEAL programme, I am able to better coordinate and structure my team. In the end this helped us to work more effectively and in a more structured way then we would have done before." - Administrator in Kapoeta East County, South Sudan

2. Strengthen accountability mechanisms

Community Score Cards (CSC), participatory budgeting, and beneficiary feedback systems promote more accountable, transparent and responsive services. Each of these tools provides local governments with an increased supply of information on their services, enabling them to better respond. They also produce useful data for civic actors as well as government leaders who want to affect change. Citizen participation helps all stakeholders better understand the constraints faced by government officials.

For example, the CSC is an opportunity for community members to give their opinions on a specific service (or process) in a public forum in the presence of service providers, and to influence the decision-making so that it takes into account their needs. CSC target setting and improvement plans help citizens formalise expectations of government service providers, establishing minimum standards of access, efficiency, and quality. This process also allows government officials to explain the challenges in providing services and the limits of care.

"We were able to criticise openly the wrongdoings in a meeting, without reprisal [...] Persons have been killed or disappeared for having said things authorities don't want. But we said things which made big people uneasy during that meeting, and we fear no punishment."
- Community member in Burundi on the Community Score Card

"I had always wanted to involve the population in the management of the municipality, but I had never had the opportunity to let the communities speak, receive feedback from the population with my entire team in all objectivity without false evasion with a justified score."
- Administrator in Rutovu in response to the Community Score Card

3. Increase public awareness on the realities of service provision

Open budgets, plans, and regular public consultations let local governments communicate the limits of the services they can provide. Plans and consultations allow citizens the opportunity to understand decisions and provide feedback. Public awareness of material, capital, and human resource constraints affecting the delivery of services helps to manage expectations and focus on practical reforms.

Engaging the public in the realities of service provision may also expose the role that they play in malpractices, such as corruption. A community member in an IDEAL service area shared an insight: "If I continue to pay [a bribe] for a service that should be for free, then I deprive those who cannot pay from having access to this service." These are opportunities to emphasise the two-way nature of the social contract, bringing in the demand side of governance into the programme strategically.

Community members of Lira, Uganda expressed frustration that their city was not kept clean. In response to the demand, the Lira Municipal Council developed the "Keep Lira clean" concept where streets were named after individuals who would in turn be responsible for looking after them.

4. Combine "soft" and "hard" interventions

IDEAL predominantly focused on capacity development, improvement of systems and processes, and making governance more inclusive. These approaches are considered "soft" approaches as they focus on non-tangibles: things like knowledge and social norms. Development of knowledge and other capacities supports local authorities' professional ambitions to "'climb the institutional ladder". [16] Through capacity development, they build initiative and understanding, allowing them to change their approach to governance, service delivery, and citizen engagement.

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[16] Wageningen University and ACE Europe. (2022). 'Draft: Inclusive Decisions at Local Level (IDEAL) 2017-2021 VNG International.

However, local governments also require "hardware" (i.e., money, technology) to realise their ambitions. In IDEAL, government participants stressed that skills building must be balanced with some material output to demonstrate visible progress to leaders and constituents. IDEAL provided motivational incentives (e.g., trips, learning opportunities), values-based communication, direct technical support, practical tools such as guides or toolkits, and financial resources including small grants to work on concrete service delivery needs and other outputs.

> **Tool Spotlight: Local Economic Development**
>
> The view of LED expanded for Palestinian municipal authorities through support from IDEAL. For example, when streets needed to be rehabilitated, the municipality incorporated pedestrian space, space for women to sell goods, and energy-efficient lighting. Before it was seen as a technical/engineering matter but has become known as an inclusive decision-making process.

Note that programmes must be mindful that local authorities' interest in participating in the programme goes beyond financial incentives. Consider a paced roll-out of hardware interventions to mitigate this risk.

5.   Put learning into practice with small grants

Simply, small grants make available (more) funds for municipalities to implement policies and plans that might have been impossible otherwise. Small grants can kickstart service improvement processes without requiring the government to re-budget. Small grants, which can represent a sizable sum for some local governments, may be the only immediate means to deliver services in the community. The modality supports problem-driven, iterative planning, offering local governments the opportunity to solve concrete problems.

> **Tool Spotlight: (Small) Grants**
>
> The grants awarded by IDEAL to the Niena municipality in Mali gave them the opportunity to establish a convention with all relevant stakeholders on the management of the Bagoé River. The Administrator explained, *"It allows us to protect the river, and other sources of water, from exploitation. Moreover, it brings together citizens and government in one common goal."*

With small grants, programmes can both influence the direction of service responsiveness and ensure quality of the government intervention. Furthermore, small grants can promote community outreach, cross-sector collaboration, and supplemental training. The provision of small grants can help local authorities put into practice the skills, capacities, and instruments/tools that were learned through training. Skills such as proposal writing, project implementation, monitoring and reporting, and feedback cycles are vital capacities that can be strengthened through the small grant process. Programmes must be mindful of how local authorities may need coaching or support to implement and monitor adequately.

In several IDEAL countries, local governments were invited to submit a proposal for a project. This component of the project was not only appreciated, but vital in some contexts such as in South Sudan where local government budgets were so small that operationalising learnings from

training was proving impossible. However, in other contexts, some challenges arose predominantly due to the operating environment. For example, in Palestine, grants could only be distributed via a national ministry. This significantly hampered the grant process, watered down expressed needs, and reduced capacity development opportunities for local governments.

In several IDEAL countries, local governments were invited to submit grant proposals for support with things like basic infrastructure and economic development. Implementing grants helps government staff practice skills, capacities, and approaches that were learned through the IDEAL programme.

Baligubadle, a small district in Somaliland, has limited resources and a handful of entrepreneurs. Most people earn an income through their livestock or basic agricultural activities. IDEAL involved the executive secretary of Baligubadle in several activities that laid the foundation for a successful local economic development programme funded by a small grant. Since its launch, the district underwent a significant change. The Executive Secretary gained confidence in his role and began delegating responsibilities, creating new positions for social affairs, and empowering young staff. The district began improving agricultural and livestock value chains and undertaking participatory planning with community representatives.

6. Build long-term revenue sources

One of the biggest challenges for local governments (and thereby associations who rely on membership contributions for funding) is the lack of resources – both human and financial – to execute their designated roles and responsibilities. Building a foundation of taxes and other revenue (e.g., from the private sector, donors/development partners) and managing these in a transparent way, ideally through a participatory budgeting approach, is a key strategy for local governments to start investing in itself and its citizenry.

IDEAL started with drafting status quo reports, trained government staff on public finance and the benefits of increased local taxes and worked with different department leaders to improve dialogue between technical and political staff. Foundational activities such as compiling a local taxpayer registry is one example of how local governments can begin to stabilise their revenue sources. Local officials gain an appreciation for how greater tax revenue can be used to meet citizens' needs, while simultaneously reducing dependence on the national government and international donors for funding. Further, IDEAL emphasised formally including a budget for inclusion-related activities into programmes and services (or minimal percentage of the budget). As programmes and services are funded by taxes, including taxpayers in budget discussions improves trust, responsiveness, and transparency.

> Three local Ugandan councils working with the IDEAL programme took the decision to increase income raised from property taxes by updating property registers and strengthening collection efforts. Prior to this, the councils were collecting only a fraction of what was owed. They struggled to meet the basic needs of citizens. By strengthening property tax collection, the council governments were able to raise nearly 500% more revenue than the previous year. This increased the discretionary space of these governments to act in response to citizen demand and not just as an implementing arm of the national government.

7. Promote civic education

Educating people about their rights, roles, and responsibilities regarding public services and the means of influencing government advances a common understanding of the government's obligations to its people. With more information, people can better assess the state of service provision. This is a first step in generating public pressure for reform. Without this, service providers and decision makers have little incentive to improve.

8. Strengthen partnerships with non-governmental actors

In FCAS, non-governmental actors such as civil society groups or multilateral organisations often play a significant role in service provision. These actors often fill gaps left by local governments due to under-resourcing or a lack of prioritisation. A close collaboration between local government and civil society may benefit the population. Particularly in the case of under-resourcing, the work of local government can be supplemented by civil society to make services more responsive. Important to note: be mindful of the risk of delegitimising local government if civil society actors supersede government in service provision *(see Lessons for Enhancing the Enabling Environment: Position local government to lead and thrive).*

> In IDEAL, local civil society partners partnered with local government actors at different levels for direct response and indirectly through ongoing collaborations. For instance, in Uganda, a partnership with the Ministry of Health was formed to deliver home-based care in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as with the National Planning Agency on municipal planning. In other countries (Burundi, Rwanda, Mali), a collaboration with the national LGA was formed that led to indirect service provision through support of LGA services and projects.

4.6   Monitor and Learn

Lessons on Monitoring and Learning

A) Monitoring

- Diversify quantitative and qualitative monitoring approaches.

- Set well-understood definitions.

- Contextualise programme targets.

- Apply a gender lens.

- Improve documentation of informal monitoring.

- Consider distant monitoring in dangerous contexts.

- Staff dedicated monitoring, evaluation, and learning positions.

B) Learning

- Centralise responsibility for the learning agenda.

- Mainstream and democratise learning.

- Expand learning to partners and peers.

A.   Monitoring

1.   Diversify quantitative and qualitative monitoring approaches

Monitoring typically consists of tracking indicators established at the outset of the programme, many of which are required by donors. When setting targets, try to balance the need for data with the effort to obtain it. Contextualise indicators so that they reflect localised programme objectives and phrase them, so they are commonly understood by both staff and partners. Consider including perception indicators to better understand more intangible outcomes like capacity and legitimacy. Disaggregate indicators by gender and other ways necessary for tracking the trajectory of the programme.

> *"Improvement in the legitimacy of a local government is not only defined by the system's ability to respond to citizen's demands and to articulate interests and groups in society, but also by the way in which citizens perceive these changes."*
>
> *- IDEAL Inception Report*

A common set of indicators that can be used to monitor key trends across implementation sites helps tell a common story. Use a centralised monitoring system to track consistently across countries. Context relevant indicators that fit within the overall framework should also be determined so that local teams have a means of determining whether specific interventions are contributing to an outcome.

Regular programme reviews should include a review of indicator achievement and complemented with a midterm evaluation. Midterm evaluations allow a deeper dive into programme results and should be used to inform programme adaptations.

Narratives and other qualitative data give meaning to the numbers. IDEAL complemented indicator data collection with the Most Significant Change (MSC) method. Staff that felt MSC contributed to raising contextual awareness and helped communicate programme results to donors, partners, and external stakeholders.

> **Tool Spotlight: Most Significant Change (MSC)**
>
> The baseline and midterm evaluations of IDEAL focused on a technical, quantitative measurement of the social contract in each country. Programme staff, especially local partners, found the measurements incomprehensible, lacking context, and incomparable across countries. At midterm, the programme integrated MSC in order to give more meaning to the results, which was viewed as a 'changemaker'.

2. Set well-understood definitions

Orient staff on the theme and terminology underpinning complex concepts like the social contract, marginalisation, capacity development, and inclusion. Terminology should be commonly understood, easily translatable, and regularly used to facilitate uptake and internalisation among staff and partners. Common understanding enables for better tracking and reporting of project results. For instance, local government partners were unfamiliar with the term 'social contract', despite their descriptions of local changes and mechanisms being well-linked to its meaning.

> Some development jargon has assumed different meanings in different places. For example, the term *human security* is synonymous with economic resilience in Burundi, whereas in the Netherlands it is more commonly thought of as conflict prevention. This led to distinct expectations amongst the donor and programme staff that cost time and energy to resolve.

3. Contextualise programme targets

The identification of a general overall ToC at programme level provides a framework for designing country programmes. Area-specific (e.g., country-level) ToCs based on the overall framework allow for the identification of contextually relevant and realistic pathways of change, assumptions, and targets. Greater specificity lets programme teams clarify intermediate outcomes and interim results, which in turn allows for better monitoring and programme adjustment when needed. To be useful, both the programme-wide and area-based ToCs need to be clear on the conceptual linkages and detailed pathways of change between outputs and outcomes. ToCs should be revisited frequently and include reassessment of assumptions, relevancy and focus - i.e., some pathways of change may be more likely than others to bear fruit.

Carefully develop output level targets since this is the level at which contribution analysis and results interpretation begins. Including intermediate outcomes and interim progress markers can help clarify the change process, improves benchmarking, and facilitates both the analysis of assumptions and results. Focus on what is relevant to monitor, how to agree with the donor on the most appropriate reporting format, and how to document well the experiences and the process at the level of the pilot municipalities.

> *"*Not identifying the relevant intermediate steps necessary in the longer change process (or the relevant assumptions explaining the change process), impedes the identification of indicators that need to be followed."
> - IDEAL Midterm Evaluation Report

4.   Apply a gender lens

Gender is too often an afterthought. It should be considered in every aspect of programme design, implementation, and evaluation. Disaggregating results by gender is important – including the numbers of women and men participating in governance processes and structures. However, more women's participation is not necessarily conclusive of a better quality of participation. Pay attention to the roles women hold in decision-making circles, how they vote, and who they include. Complement numbers with stories indicating changing attitudes and power dynamics. IDEAL realised lessons related to gender mainstreaming, including but not limited to the following:

- Avoid diluting the meaning of gender. Many local stakeholders are prone to generalise or neutralise 'gender' as all-encompassing for any traditionally excluded group in contexts where gender is a contentious issue. While considering the issues of a wider sect of the population is vital to strengthening the social contract, programmes should beware of diluting gender inclusion goals.

- Empower women's groups. IDEAL increased efforts to support women's groups in the latter half of the programme as a means to more structurally ensure that women's voices and needs are well-represented.

- Monitor gender sensitive indicators. Simply, monitoring gender differences in general indicators is not enough: consider indicators that are most relevant to monitoring change for women such as tracking women's needs in LG plans and budgets.

IDEAL provided extensive support to Burundi's LGA (ACO-Burundi) and the association for elected women (REFECOM) to improve gender sensitivity. This yielded broad acceptance, generally, but also some specific, concrete actions including: organising sessions on the gender-based violence law (in Matana), putting mechanisms in place to monitor school dropout (in Mugamba), improving working conditions and facilities of officials stationed in the sones (in Rutovu), conducting sensitization sessions on the family law (in Songa), and supporting economic power of women (in Vyanda).

5.   Improve documentation of informal monitoring

Informal monitoring concerns the regular monitoring of context (and risks) in each country, execution of the programme, and (to a lesser extent) ensuring the link of interventions with expected outcomes. Shifts in the operating context are most often 'felt internally' before becoming official, i.e., they are talked about before they are reported (if ever reported). IDEAL staff met regularly to discuss changes in operating contexts, new risks, and programme interventions and their link to expected outcomes. Exchange occurred most frequently at the country team level, but sometimes also included Netherlands-based staff and other country teams during site visits, check-in calls, emails, and during learning events.

Information exchanged this way can be very valuable, but it is difficult to systematically collect and process. Create space to encourage information sharing among staff, partners, beneficiaries, and management. Systematise the continued processing of these discussions in a more formal space, so that important information is documented and transferred quickly and effectively. Observations need not necessarily be related to expected changes or programme indicators, but categorisation will facilitate more rapid processing and uptake. Include key observations into monthly reporting.

6.   Consider distant monitoring in dangerous contexts

As conditions in FCAS can change rapidly and complicate movement of staff and partners, distant monitoring needs to be put in practice when security is no longer guaranteed and access reduced. Distant monitoring tools measure progress and steer programmes when security issues or outbreaks like COVID-19 prohibit normal monitoring. Data can be acquired through various means from a distance, but always needs triangulation.

One method is identifying proxies (e.g., representatives able to speak on behalf of minority groups in conflict-affected areas who can take photos of project sites and/or are able to provide inside information) in order to get reliable data straight from the field. Community-led monitoring is another method. Distant monitoring as a 'plan B' should be as reliable as programming with staff on the ground. Note that distant monitoring confers both risk and responsibility to local representatives.

7.   Staff dedicated monitoring, evaluation, and learning positions

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) is vital to making evidence-based, needed programme adaptations and accurately assessing the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the programme. It is also a requirement of donors to report on how (and how effectively) funds are spent. Without

dedicated MEL staff, recording accurate data and capturing learning is less likely. Dedicated MEL staff should be hosted at the central level to ensure country-level learnings are aggregated and recorded accurately. This makes monitoring, evaluation, and learning more fit-for-purpose, efficient, professional, and systematised.

In addition, dedicated MEL staff should also be hosted at the country or regional levels. These staff would work with local partners to lead monitoring exercises, including completing reporting requirements by coordinating distant monitoring and systematically capturing informal monitoring data. The proximity of MEL support to activities on the ground enhances the monitoring programme results.

B.   Learning

1.   Centralise responsibility for the learning agenda

IDEAL staff overwhelmingly recommend centralising management of the programme's learning agenda. Centralisation allowed for systematic lesson collection and sharing across countries. A learning agenda should be based on a limited number of strategic learning goals and developed at the start of the programme then updated regularly as needed. Identify common denominators across country programmes (e.g., operating environment, intervention types) and work with staff to contextualise local learning plans. Consider creating separate learning spaces for beginning to advanced learning on specific topics.

2.   Mainstream and democratise learning

Learning stems from activities on the ground. Assign knowledge generation and learning as part of all team members' job duties, so that even finance and administrative staff are compelled to document and share lessons with one another. Ask staff to develop learning goals linked to departmental and program-wide learning agendas. Simply requiring this does not guarantee learning will occur, however. Motivate staff to participate by supporting a culture of learning, making space for dedicated learning time, and ensuring learning topics are meaningful. Solicit staff recommendations on how to best identify, document, and share information. Use soft rewards like profiling in internal communications and attendance at learning events to incentivise contributions.

Make learning available online when relevant (i.e., training on tools and approaches). Online knowledge platforms can be useful if adequately staffed and curated. Guarantee that all staff can access, use, and share programme documentation and knowledge products (i.e., proposals, presentations, reports, etc.). Knowledge management staff can facilitate this by ensuring staff are aware of and know how to access content.

3. Expand learning to partners and peers

> IDEAL created an online forum through Microsoft Teams called *'Exchange & Learn'*. The goal was to generate organic discussions amongst IDEAL staff across all countries in one unified platform. The page was created to discuss challenges, pose questions to each other, share learning materials, and host learning sessions. While the intent was for shared ownership, IDEAL learned that a central person or group needed to have dedicated responsibility for its facilitation and curation.

Host learning events for programme partners and other (I)NGOs and/or CBOs on topics related to the programme. These can be simple workshops (e.g., lunch and learn) or elaborate forums (e.g., international conferences) depending on the needs and resource availability. IDEAL found that learning was most meaningful when people were able to bond during learning events, resulting in more transparent conversations including those about mistakes and challenges. Invest the time to create a space for dialogue and prioritise mutual learning and networking and avoid back-to-back presentations. Participants are more likely to absorb new ideas and information through interactive methods.

Hosting learning events will position your organisation as a thought leader on the topic, increasing the programme profile and that of your staff in addition to contributing to better governance programming writ large. Consider profiling the learning of others alongside or even over your own to widen the opportunity for knowledge sharing.

> The IDEAL Rwanda programme and RALGA hosted annual consultations with two key stakeholder groups - one to discuss technical details and one to develop strategy and build buy-in. The technical meeting with district focal points centred around activity planning and implementation and provided staff valuable feedback on programme interventions. A broader consultation was held with district leaders, district focal points, representatives from national ministries and the Rwanda Housing Authority, the Netherlands Embassy, and development partners. Participants of these consultations gave input on the programme direction, discussed alignment with ongoing and planned initiatives, and indicated ways in which the government could further support. The meetings were held in person but shifted to being conducted virtually during the pandemic.

5

Section III. Methods and approaches for strengthening the social contract

5.1 Reference guide

The tools, methods, and approaches used most often in the IDEAL programme to strengthen the social contract are featured in this reference guide. A brief description of the tool, method, or approach is accompanied by:

i. *A measure of duration and resources*: duration and resources are estimated based on VNG International's experience with the IDEAL programme. Duration is estimated based on the average time frame of the intervention from short-term (less than six months) to long-term (three years or more). Resources are determined based on average of estimated direct costs and the staff time required to plan and execute an activity.

ii. *A table of key benefits and challenges*: benefits and challenges are derived from IDEAL documentation and staff experiences.

iii. *An example*: the example demonstrates how the tool, method, or approach can be used in context by featuring an experience from the IDEAL programme.

iv. *References*: publicly available documents sourced from VNG International and other development actors.

Note: This reference guide serves as an introduction on ways of strengthening the social contract. It is not a comprehensive list, nor does it include how-to instruction. Please reference the additional resources provided for more detail on each of the tools, methods, or approaches before implementing.

For more information on any of the tools or examples, please contact: IDEAL communication manager (Maxime Smeets, Maxime.Smeets@vng.nl) and IDEAL programme manager (Nicole Ward-Boot, Nicole.Boot@vng.nl).

5.2 Tools, approaches, and methods are identified by their primary function, then organised alphabetically

Capacity Development

1. Action Learning
2. Benchmarking
3. Blended Learning
4. Coaching / On-the-job coaching
5. Colleague-to-Colleague Exchange
6. Expert Support

5. Section III. Methods and approaches for strengthening the social contract - **Tools, approaches, and methods are identified by their primary function, then organised alphabetically**

58

7. Learning Material Development

8. (International) Municipal Cooperation

9. Network Strengthening

10. Strategy Formulation/ Strategic Planning

11. Study Visits

12. Training

13. Training of Trainers (ToT)

14. Workshops / Seminar

Social Accountability

15. Campaigning

16. Community Score Card (CSC)

17. Feedback Mechanisms

18. Participatory Budgeting

19. Participatory Planning

Knowledge Generation

20. Gender and Conflict Analysis (GCA)

21. Most Significant Change (MSC)

22. Political Economy Analysis (PEA)

23. Studies / Research

Programme Method

24. Adaptive Programming

25. (Small) Grants / Microgrants

26. Local Economic Development (LED) / LED Forums

27. Multi-Stakeholder Institutional Cooperation

28. Public Private Partnership (PPP)

29. Strategy and Planning

30. Theory of Change

31. Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.1   Action Learning

Action learning is a problem-solving approach that involves trying something out and reflecting on the results. It ensures the learning process, including training

Duration

Resources

activities, is centred around real problems and the attempt to resolve them. In action learning, doing is accompanied by learning, and learning is accompanied by adaptation.

Action learning is typically a facilitated process (assisted by a "support agent") and can be either a light touch or more comprehensive engagement. Comprehensive action learning engagements may involve preparatory sessions, multiple trainings, coaching, and a final evaluation. Action learning encourages participants to both reflect on their experiences and to translate lessons into future, real-life actions. Training cycles are linked to concrete action plans, which may be accompanied by an implementation support grant (*see the 'Small Grants' section below*).

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
- Highly practical; turns theory (from training) into practice. - Supports further monitoring and follow-up from training and coaching; keeps dialogue open. - Factors in the incumbent challenges and complexities of a given context. - Supports ownership of the problem and solution. - Improves development outcomes by putting real-life plans into action.	- Requires longer-term commitment of participants and support agents. - Problems may become something overly complex and/or beyond the abilities of participants to resolve. - Solutions may be outside the sphere of control of the support agent, leading to false expectations and frustrations. - Insufficient budget available for plan implementation.

Example

In Rwanda, IDEAL instituted an action learning approach with its local government partners who committed to ten actions. These public authorities were able to achieve a high completion rate (ninety percent) because they committed to realistic measures within their sphere of control: they were deliverable within a relatively short period of time, using existing mandates and resources. The only action they were unable to complete required coordination with different actors to establish new structures and processes.

References

Sahni, S. (2015). 'Action Learning with Impact.' *Harvard Business Publishing.* Available at: https://www.harvardbusiness.org/action-learning-with-impact/

WIAL. (2021). *What is Action Learning?* Available at: https://wial.org/action-learning/

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.2 Benchmarking

Benchmarking involves facilitated, systemised learning cycles within groups of government agencies, based on objective data collection, comparison and analysis, and leading to identification and implementation of improvement measures. The VNG International benchmarking model consists of four stages:

1. **Collect** information on the performance of participating municipalities.
2. **Compare** the results of the participating organisations.
3. **Learn** about participating organisations' achievements, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement by participating peers; focusses on why participating organisations differ through peer assessments.
4. **Improve** from within participating organisations based on learnings generated through the benchmarking exercise.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Builds a 'community of practice' to exchange experiences and insights amongst peer local governments. • Generates information on the effectiveness and efficiency of policies/measures. • Leads to practical insights in how to improve performance, producing tangible results. • Initiates momentum for change.	• Resistance by the local government and/or local authorities to share openly, especially potentially sensitive information. • Significant time investment required of participants; difficulty finding time while busy with other work. • Complicated approach requiring experienced facilitation. • Follow-up on the learned possibilities.

Example

When local authorities in Uganda participated in exchange visits to other IDEAL supported municipalities, they learnt different approaches to managing services and community engagement. Participants indicated that they gained a more in-depth understanding of these approaches and improved their performance in regard to waste management and communication strategies, own-source revenue collection, and inter-departmental relationships.

References

VNG International. (2015). *VNG International Benchmarking: Measure, compare and learn to improve Performance.* Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/benchmarking2014_English.pdf

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.3 Blended Learning

The blended learning approach involves online activity and engagement interspersed with in-person events and meetings. Blended learning provides continuity and enables participants to work at their own pace through much of the process. It is especially useful when in-person sessions are not possible, are too costly, or a dedicated time cannot be set aside.

Duration

Resources
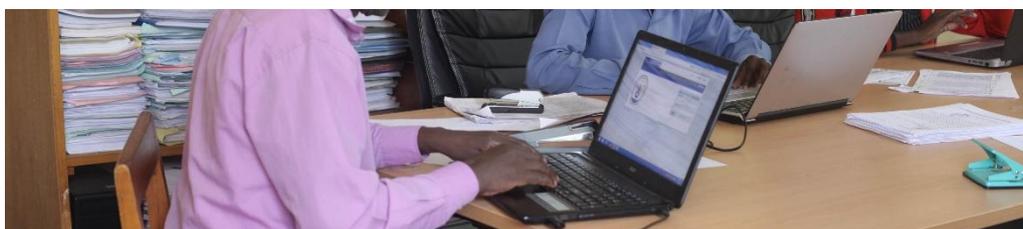
Digital tools (e.g., MS Teams, Articulate, etc.) can be used to optimise interactivity. Pre-recorded colleague-to-colleague advice and instruction can also be made available to stakeholders.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Provides an opportunity to strengthen digital literacy and skills of participants. • Enables learning to continue when in-person engagement is not possible. • Medium, format, and content can be easily adjusted to capacities and needs. • Less costly and lower carbon footprint than in-person learning events. • Allows for continued and individualised support following in-person learning events. • Asynchronous components let participants work at their own pace.	• New online learners face a steep learning curve. • Less inclusive of those lacking stable internet connections and/or necessary hardware and equipment. • Recorded online sessions are less interesting according to most participants. • Lowers the facilitator's ability to check for understanding and promote discussion. • Tracking accountability and responsiveness is more challenging. • Less opportunity for networking amongst participants.

Example

The IDEAL South Sudan programme began using blended learning to reach municipal staff in response to the worsening security situation and the COVID pandemic. Although conditions reduced opportunities for travel, poor internet connections forced participants to convene at local IDEAL hub offices (following COVID protocols when conditions required). An unexpected benefit of this unique, blended approach was that participants were able to exchange personal experiences in relation to the online tutorial content and work directly with one another in virtually hosted events.

References

Quigley, E. (2019). "What is Blended Learning?" *LearnUpon Blog.* Available at: https://www.learnupon.com/blog/what-is-blended-learning/

Tool Examples

Articulate – e-learning platform specialising in apps: https://articulate.com/

Miro & **Mural** – online whiteboard and collaboration: https://miro.com/ & https://www.mural.co/

Mentimeter – digital interactive presentation and polling: https://www.mentimeter.com/

Moodle – open-source learning platform: https://moodle.org/

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.4 Coaching / On-the-job coaching (OTJC)

Coaching refers to a more experienced person supporting a less experienced person in achieving a professional goal. On-the-job coaching (OTJC) is when a coach supports someone in the application of a new tool or skill, or simply with the delivery of his/her/their regular duties. Coaching and OTJC provide the recipient with the benefit of lived experience. Both can be conducted on-site or virtually. Coaching and OTJC are effective means of operationalising training, allowing participants to put theoretical knowledge and skills into practice. This approach supports sustainability and creates an enabling environment for improved interactions.

Duration

Resources

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Supports deeper understanding and contextualisation of learned concepts in a practical way. • Local coaches can help contextualise abstract lessons, including translating lessons into local languages. • Helpful in contexts with limited resources for extra mentoring support to staff. • Improves self-confidence of trainees in ability to deliver on skills and processes. • Customisable to individual capacities and needs.	• Costly in terms of staff time and travel costs (for in-person coaching). • Success is dependent on the availability, knowledge, and attitude of both the coach and participant. • Limitations based on the knowledge and experience of the coach. • Could become an ad-hoc 'expert advice' relationship if not committed to by coach or trainee, minimising the benefits and relationship building intended.

Example

The establishment of a feedback mechanism on WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) services helped South Sudanese local government officials become more responsive to citizen needs. IDEAL supported offices focused on gathering and dissecting WASH data through a formalised documentation and reporting system. The government would then use this information in regular dialogue sessions with CSO representatives to improve deployment of NGOs – and associated services – and their cooperation with the state.

References

Center for Creative Leadership. (2020). "What it Takes to Coach Your People." Available at: https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/what-it-takes-to-coach-your-people/

Indeed. (2021). "Job Coaching Techniques and How To Use Them." *Career Guide.* Available at: https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/job-coaching-techniques

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.5   Colleague-to-Colleague Exchange

College-to-colleague exchanges are facilitated engagements between professionals who hold similar jobs or perform similar functions in their organisation. A host team will request the support of a resource team for help on a specific business challenge (often brokered through an intermediary). College-to-colleague exchanges usually occur between members of different organisations but may also be conducted amongst peers in the same workplace. During an exchange, resource peers support the host team with knowledge and advice based on their experience tackling a shared challenge or situation. They can be one-time events or conducted over a longer period of time.

Duration

Resources

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Introduces new ideas and ways of working. • Develops peer relationships and strengthens networks. • Supports inter-organisational collaboration. • Promotes a culture of learning and mutual support. • Can break down barriers amongst groups. • Both resource and host teams can include junior as well as more senior people.	• Identifying qualified resource people. • Resource teams that are inadequately prepared or hosts that fail to share openly or that reject advice. • Time consuming, taking time away from normal daily duties. • May further ingrain exclusionary practises (e.g., male staff selected over female counterparts).

Example

The Dutch municipality of Veldhoven participated in college-to-colleague exchanges with Uganda's Koboko municipality on ways to enhance inter-municipal cooperation. Koboko's government was suffering from in-fighting between the political staff and technocrats. Each held strong misconceptions about the other, their roles and responsibilities. Veldhoven's delegation of political and technical staff helped both of Koboko's teams better understand how to organise and work together. The exchange continued, with Veldhoven supporting Koboko with communications strategy and business planning around a community-based waste management initiative.

References

VNG International. (n.d.). *The Essence of Dutch Local Governance.* Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl/learning-dutch-approach

World Bank. (2013). *The Art of Knowledge Exchange.* Washington, DC: World Bank. *See 'Peer Assist'.* Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17540.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.6   Expert Support

Local and international professionals can provide specialised support for clients and partners to fill gaps or provide external insights. Expert support is helpful for discrete, technical issues and/or assignments that require specific expertise. Typically, experts work together with staff to achieve a specific goal or produce a concrete deliverable.

Duration	
Resources	

Expert support can be provided in person and virtually, locally, or internationally. Expertise should be sourced locally when possible. Local experts are often more knowledgeable of the context and cultural sensitivities. They can mobilise local professional networks and typically have lower fees than international experts. Sourcing internationally may be necessary if an appropriate expert cannot be found locally or when there is a need for a neutral perspective. International experts expand the pool of available expertise and can help with niche requirements, ensure international standards, and standardise support across multiple countries. International experts may be contracted to work alone or in tandem with local experts.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Addresses a need by delivering vital competencies and knowledge when there is a gap. • Brings a neutral, external perspective to issues, challenges, and/or processes. • Enhances local capacities by working alongside those with specific expertise. • Frees up time for in-house staff. • Expands the network of the programme, organisation, or office.	• Potentially costly, especially international experts. • Local governments or individual authorities may have an aversion to receiving advice or input from experts, especially when sourced locally. • Lack of willingness of the local government to share information transparently. • Substitutes the development of in-house capacity.

Example

At the onset of the pandemic, there was a need by the Local Economic Development (LED) Unit in Palestine to form a COVID-19 response to LED projects using specific financial and socio-economic data. This process was accelerated by hiring a consultant with procurement and LED expertise. The consultant was able to efficiently and effectively assist municipalities in drafting

procurement requests and Terms of References for business case project activities and LED response projects in coordination with the Municipal Development and Lending Fund.

References

Varley, P. (2018). "Engaging national consultants in international development." Available at: https://varlyproject.blog/engaging-national-consultants-in-international-development/

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.7 Learning Material Development

When learning needs to be documented and made accessible for broader consumption, consider developing pamphlets, guidelines, manuals, toolkits, or online courses. Learning materials are based on the insights and experiences of those directly working on the programme. Different types of learning materials will be more or less useful depending on the needs of the target audience and the type of information being conveyed.

Duration

Resources

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Develops understanding of needs, gaps, and successes to build upon in programming and develops a framework for follow-up and evaluation. • Leaves institutional memory regardless of staff turnover and improves the likelihood of sustainability and learning beyond the initial trainee. • Ensure that municipalities continue to have support even after the training. • Triggers adaptation of programme or processes based on evidence.	• Time consuming and costly to complete. • Tendency to be too generic, not fit to context. • Content can quickly become outdated. • Can be difficult to understand for users, particularly if not developed in a widely understood language. • Risk that no new insights will be yielded, or results will be too 'generic' in nature. • No clear plan of action on how to institutionalise or utilise learning.

Example

All districts in Rwanda have the Joint Action Development Forum, a platform that brings together the local government, private sector, higher learning institutions (HLI), civil society, and other actors to contribute to local development. The IDEAL programme developed a toolkit to enhance engagement between these actors by providing practical guidance on how to mobilise and engage the private sector and HLIs. This included step-by-step guides on how to hold meetings and facilitate dialogue. The toolkit was translated into Kinyarwanda (local language) to make it more accessible for members and local leaders.

References

Botswana Training Authority. (2005). *Guidelines for Developing Learning Materials.* Gaborone: BOTA. Available at: https://www.saide.org.za/resources/Library/Bota.pdf

Vector Solutions. (2021). "Tips for Writing Instructional and Training Material." *Blog.* Available at: https://www.vectorsolutions.com/resources/blogs/tips-for-writing-instructional-and-training-material/

5.2.8 (International) Municipal Cooperation

(International) municipal cooperation involves the pairing of two organisations (i.e., municipalities) to share with and learn from each other. Ideal candidates for municipal cooperation have common mandates and structures and may even share common reporting lines. But each is separately managed and able to share learning that directly relates to the situation of the other. These organisations are often based in different countries to maximise diverse exposure and learning potential, although organisations within the same country may also benefit from municipal cooperation. (International) municipal cooperation is sometimes referred to as 'twinning', however twinning tends to involve a longer-term commitment.

Duration
Resources

VNGI supports international municipal cooperation by connecting Dutch government officials with municipal staff in other countries. Paired municipalities share knowledge, skills, and practices for effective decision-making and policy implementation.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Brings an external perspective to municipal operations. • Provides an opportunity for administrators to take on roles as coaches, mentors, and/or role models. • Encourages adoption of new approaches and competencies. • Inspires and motivates participants to make positive changes. • Expands professional networks. • Supports the development of trust and transparency among participants.	• Willingness of counterparts to share transparently. • Social and cultural differences may be misunderstood or misinterpreted; risk of imposing colonialist or western mindsets and philosophies. • Could be costly to implement, especially if international travel is required. • Difficult to identify willing parties with shared interests, but similar enough contexts. • Potential long-term commitment and/or uncertainty about when the cooperation period ends.

Example

In Uganda, local governments were highly dependent on the central government for funding, limiting their flexibility in the allocation of resources to locally determined priorities. The Dutch municipality of Gemert-Bakel, with expertise in revenue collection, supported three Ugandan

municipalities to successfully update their registers for property tax collection and produce needs-based development plans for the surplus income. As a result of strengthening property tax collection, the council governments were able to raise nearly 500% more revenue than the previous year. This increased the discretionary space of these governments to act in response to citizen demand and has improved community trust in local government.

References

Vermeer, E. (2019). A Concise Overview: How EU Member States' National and Regional Programmes Support Local Governments' Development Activities in Partner Countries. Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/VNG_001_publication_WEB_01a.pdf

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.9   Network Strengthening

A network refers to a group of individuals or organisations that connect around a shared purpose. Effective networks optimise the knowledge, skills, and

Duration

Resources

relationships of their members to tackle big problems. Networks can be used to expand relationships, transfer knowledge, build solidarity, amplify messages, improve coordination, and promote new ways of working. Networks vary in form and function, from interest-based communities of practice to professional associations that have legal registration and fee-based memberships. Strengthening networks can take many forms including relationship development, direction setting (e.g., mission, vision), and formalisation (e.g., membership requirements or establishing of a secretariat).

In governance and development, network strengthening promotes collaboration, synergy and complementarity with other development and government actors. Network strengthening supports alignment with existing initiatives of other actors.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Facilitates relationship building and the creation of broader networks. • Creates a mechanism for more regular information sharing across stakeholders and localities. • Potential to fill capacity gaps by connecting people with diverse experiences and skills. • Offers an opportunity for greater alignment between similar, but separate initiatives. • Builds an atmosphere of healthy competition and positive peer pressure.	• Requires facilitation and coordination, which necessitates having some members of the network taking responsibility and ownership. • Risk of one stakeholder (group) dominating the dialogue with the rest of the group. • Without a legal framework guiding the group, it risks not being sustainable. • Lack of funding to maintain the network and/or to make it meaningful for participants. • Risk of one stakeholder in the network replicating the work done by another without proper contextualisation.

Example

The IDEAL programme in Uganda set up a leadership network, or 'women's caucus', for recently elected women counsellors. The network helped them to build relationships with each other and discuss how to support one another as leaders. IDEAL conducted an assessment of each local government to assess the challenges faced by women, and found that each experienced many different types of key barriers: tribal, education level, confidence, etc. They received an induction training to address some of these barriers, then launched the dialogue process about their experiences and about pressing issues for women. The network resulted in the establishment of both formal and informal relationships.

References

Pact. (2018). *Network Strengthening Toolkit.* Washington, DC: Pact. Available at: https://www.pactworld.org/library/network-strengthening-toolkit-module-1

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.10 Strategy Formulation/ Strategic Planning

Strategy formulation or strategic planning is the development of clear and common agreement on the objectives an individual or group seeks to accomplish (i.e., vision and mission) as well as the way in which the individual/ group will realise its aims (i.e., the plan). Strategic planning is not an end in itself, but a tool to improve an organisation's performance. A sound strategy should clarify an individual's or group's desired future state and provide a political and operational framework for accomplishing objectives. Strategy should answer the key questions:

| Duration | |
| Resources | |

- "What do we want to accomplish and by when?"

- "What qualities, skills, and resources will be needed to achieve the envisaged goals?"

Strategic plans should incorporate insights from all levels within an organisation. Management should use the strategic plan to set a direction and guide its decisions. Strategies should not be conducted as one-time exercises but revisited regularly and updated to reflect changing circumstances.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Supports proactivity versus reactivity. • Sets a sense of direction for both internal and external stakeholders. • Improves efficiency and effectiveness of individual and group efforts • Supports the mobilisation of resources. • Forms a framework for management and monitoring, improving accountability.	• Difficult undertaking, requiring specialised capacities and expertise, which may or may not be available within an organisation. • Requires significant contributions from management and staff. • May be influenced by political agendas. • The process of developing strategies and plans may be exclusionary, formally solidifying exclusionary structures.

Example

In Somaliland, the Local Government Association (LGA) was non-functional at the start of IDEAL. Through a process of strategy developing and strategic planning, the LGA has been revitalised. The internal working procedures for the LGA were formulated, a revised constitution was

developed, and a clear strategy was put in place that reflected and supported the principles of inclusiveness. Gender was explicitly integrated into the LGA strategy in a variety of ways including as a value, as part of the vision on equity, as an objective, and as focus of LGA activities. Due to the explicit gender focus in the association's strategy, the LGA Executive Director became an avid proponent for the importance of inclusion.

References

Terstegen, C. and Willemsen, E. (2005). *Strategic Planning in a Local Government Association (LGA)*. Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Strategic_Planning_Engels.pdf

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.11 Study Visits

Study visits entail the exchange of participants from one location to another (e.g., municipality or country) to experience first-hand how something is done or was

Duration	
Resources	

developed. These visits can be a powerful means of showing that something is possible and how it can be done. Study visits also support the sharing of experiences between participants with similar professional responsibilities who come from different places.

IDEAL encouraged study visit participants not to copy what they see, but figure out why it works and how it can be applied in their own contexts. In other words: focus on the principles underlying a certain approach rather than the observed outcome.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Inspires participants to try new things. • Generates new ideas and demonstrates new ways of working. • Develops peer relationships and promotes good practice. • Increases likelihood of inter-municipal governance collaboration and coordination, building potentially sustaining networks. • Can be used as a reward for good performance as it often involves a trip.	• Can be costly and difficult to arrange. • Risks becoming a poor use of time if hosts and participants are not adequately prepared or willing to engage meaningfully. • Time consuming, taking time away from normal daily duties. • Risks of exclusivity of who gets invited to attend as a participant or a presenter; may further ingrain exclusionary practises (e.g., male staff selected over female counterparts).

Example

IDEAL arranged a guided Local Economic Development (LED) study tour to South-Africa for Palestinian authorities as South Africa is a similar, but slightly more developed LED-context. The site visit challenged participants to reflect on how they could take lessons back home for practical use. The trip supported them to become more self-assured, seeing their peers overcome similar challenges. Participants shared that they made many changes to their work, became more active in seeking out opportunities, more creative in finding ways of connecting social to economic impact, and communicated more with colleagues in their own organisations.

References

World Bank. (2013). *The Art of Knowledge Exchange.* Washington, DC: World Bank. *See 'Study Tour' (page 101) for how-to guidance.* Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17540.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.12 Training

Training is vital for strengthening the social contract. The main objective is to strengthen the skills and knowledge of local authorities and other actors to assess,

Duration	
Resources	

plan, and implement effective local governance processes. For VNG International, strengthening public authorities means working on three strongly interrelated levels, as institutions never work in a vacuum:

1. <u>Institutional</u> – the legal and policy environment, including budget allocation, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination, alignment with overarching policy, etc.

2. <u>Organisational</u> – the internal mechanisms that are crucial for sustainability of results, such as internal procedures and policies, work plans and strategies, financial management, etc.

3. <u>Individual/group</u> – the individual capacity of technical staff and politicians to lead and perform in an effective, participatory, and inclusive manner.

Key Benefits	**Key Challenges**
• Development of knowledge on content, concepts, and skills. • Ability to practice skills in a safe environment. • Creation of space for diverse stakeholders to interact and network. • Hands-on and practical. • Positions future successes in utilising inclusive governance tools and approaches by developing a foundational set of concepts and skills.	• Too theoretical or generic, or too rooted in western philosophy, to be applicable. • Lack of opportunity or resources to apply lessons learnt in the workplace. • Highly dependent on a trainer with strong conceptual and local knowledge. • Incorporating 'soft' capacities; technical approaches are typically preferred. • Keeping training up-to-date and making time for continuous and/or refresher training. • Risk of exclusivity for specific groups. • Turnover of trained staff.

Example

In Mali, the IDEAL programme made continuous efforts strengthening the capacity of elected representatives, women and youth groups, and citizens on participatory and inclusive governance. Local governments received training on inclusive, gender-sensitive governance for integrated water related management and conflict sensitivity. It provided locally elected authorities and staff with improved understanding of the causes and consequences of social exclusion and the joint role of civil society and local authorities in improving mechanisms for the distribution and control of access to water. After these trainings, the local water managers organised consultations

to solicit feedback from communities on services. Consultations were conducted when more women could participate since they bear the most water-related responsibilities.

References

VNG International. (2021). *Be an effective leader toolkit for effective leaders and changemakers in local government.* Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl/sites/default/files/2021-03/Toolkit%20Leadership%2001032021.pdf

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.13 Workshops/ Seminars

Workshops, seminars, and other types of formal learning events are a means of convening people to work or share knowledge on a common topic. These events create space for idea generation, knowledge exchange, and networking. They may last a few hours or be longer-term (held over the course of several days, weeks, or months) depending on the topic and need. Workshops and seminars are led by an individual or a small group and can be conducted in person or virtually. For workshop and seminar series, consistent and active participation is critical as it allows for the building of learning and relationships from one event to the next.

Duration

Resources

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Creates a (new) space for diverse stakeholders to interact. • Can improve the culture of inclusivity. • Can be highly contextualised and localised to needs and demands. • High level of visibility, demonstrating the actions of stakeholders involved. • Provides opportunity to discuss niche, timely topics.	• Can be time consuming and potentially costly to organise and coordinate. • Identifying the optimal participants. • Optimal participants (especially government officials and civic leaders) are regularly invited to these types of events, limiting availability. • Prone to repetition. Can be difficult to make both engaging and useful. • Follow up: identify responsible entities for actualising lessons learned and acting on commitments.

Example

IDEAL in Burundi organised a multi-day seminar for newly elected female administrators and their husbands, the association of local governance, provincial administrators, Parliamentarians, the Dutch Embassy, and civil society to discuss barriers facing female administrators. The seminar highlighted husbands' expectations of their wives' presence in the household and the difficulties the family faced in their absence. This sometimes resulted in conflict with and violence against the women, which had never before been openly discussed nor addressed. The elected women shared that if they could not fulfil their duties fully and perform well, the inclusivity and participation of women in public life would be negatively affected. As a result, men better understood what their

wives' work for the community entailed, including its hardships, and they agreed to be more supportive. Likewise, the female administrators made agreements with their husbands about household roles. The seminar concluded with an action plan for the family.

References

World Bank. (2013). *The Art of Knowledge Exchange.* Washington, DC: World Bank. *See 'Workshops,'* (page 105) *for how-to guidance.* Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17540

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

5.2.14 Campaigning

Campaigning is an organised way to mobilise public interest in and concern about a particular issue. It is typically linked to an influencing strategy with an advocacy

Duration	
Resources	

objective. Campaigning can be done online (e.g., social media, email petitions, etc.) or offline (e.g., public protests, rallies, dialogue events, etc). Oftentimes campaigns include influential voices such as celebrities to garner the attention of the public and political actors. They also often rely upon 'catchy' slogans or messages that are memorable.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Helps to spread awareness to diverse audiences through customised platforms. • Empowers communities to raise their voices and mobilise action. • Creates new and/or repurposed safe spaces for dialogue. • Creates buzz and focus on a specific topic. • Enables a wide variety of stakeholders to engage, including local activists.	• Identifying the right messaging and tactics to reach target audiences., nuanced messages, and the appropriate methodologies and platforms for reach. • Monitoring the results and impact. • Continuing the momentum after the campaign concludes with concrete actions. • Strategically linking online and offline approaches and engagements.

Example

Every two years, the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities, Rwanda Housing Authority, and the districts conduct the Umujyi Wanjye ("My City") community sensitisation campaign. Aimed at maximising community participation, the campaign provides details and solicits feedback on land planning, while simultaneously collecting citizens' views and needs. IDEAL Rwanda contributed by supporting district staff to engage citizens through cell-level meetings and radio shows to raise their concerns and offer suggestions.

References

Picard, G. (2015). *Developing a Communication Strategy for a Local Government Association (LGA).* Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl//sites/default/files/Communication%20LGA.pdf

English, R. (2020). *Influencing for Impact Guide: How to deliver effective influencing strategies.* Oxford: Oxfam. DOI 10.21201/2020.5891. Available at: https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/influencing-for-impact-guide-how-to-deliver-effective-influencing-strategies-621048/

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

5.2.15 Community Score Card(CSC)

The CSC is a participatory process where government and citizen representatives jointly assess a public service or governance process, develop an improvement plan, and monitor the results via a scoring system. Consultation meetings can be configured to mandate a certain percentage of women, youth, or other groups. The methodology is a five-step process:

Duration	
Resources	

1. Planning and preparation: mobilising the community and service providers to attend.

2. Scoring with community: assessment and scoring of priority issues by community members, typically disaggregated by group (e.g., men, women, girls, boys).

3. Scoring with administrators: administrators' assessment and scoring of priority issues.

4. Interface meeting and action planning: through dialogue, governments and citizens agree on targets and develop action plans to improve services or processes.

5. Implementation with monitoring and evaluation: feedback sessions allow for citizens, CSOs, and others to provide feedback on both the process and the results.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Promotes dialogue and improves government-citizen relationships. • Can result in better services. • Rooted in local issues and managed by local actors. • Provides insights into needs and challenges and promotes common understanding. • Improves inclusion of often-excluded groups in decision making. • Builds community ownership of public services. • Contributes to increased transparency and creates a mechanism for feedback.	• Time consuming to coordinate and requires skilled facilitators. • Real or perceived risks of retaliation for speaking up publicly with feedback, particularly criticism. • May lead to finger-pointing or conflict. • Social norms may limit the participation of certain groups from speaking freely and openly. • May create false expectations that authorities will always address community needs and communities will share their honest feedback.

Example

In Rutovu, Burundi CSC workshops were held to assess the services of the Civil Registry. Communal staff, citizens, and authorities each scored services including marriage and birth registrations. The interface meeting allowed citizens to share their experiences and for authorities and staff to explain the challenges they face. The exercise allowed government staff to see the reality of the service and plan improvements. This transparency promoted greater community trust in government. A second round of scoring one year later demonstrated significantly greater satisfaction of government services - especially for birth and marriage registrations of the Batwa - a minority indigenous group.

References

CARE. (2013). *The Community Score Card (CSC): A generic guide for implementing CARE's CSC process to improve quality of services.* Atlanta: CARE USA. Available at: https://www.care.org/news-and-stories/resources/the-community-score-card-csc-toolkit/

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

5.2.16 Feedback Mechanisms

A feedback mechanism is a set of formal procedures to solicit, document, and respond to input from people impacted by an activity or the behaviour of staff, volunteers, or programme representatives.

Duration	
Resources	

Feedback mechanisms support broader monitoring efforts by allowing the safe provision of information to decision makers that can be used to improve programming and/or stop harmful practices. Other names for feedback mechanisms include beneficiary accountability systems and complaint mechanisms.

Feedback mechanisms should be easily accessible to those most impacted by project or personnel. Language and literacy levels, location, and materials all matter. People must be made aware of the feedback mechanism, how it works, and where to access it. Feedback should be collected regularly, documented, sorted, and provided to those best positioned to respond. Serious complaints should be investigated promptly by the implementing agency and, in some cases, a neutral second party. Feedback mechanisms create a loop of communication and accountability. They encourage greater beneficiary participation in development programmes.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Provides important insights about the programme and its representatives. • Informs decision-making and can lead to programme improvements. • Informs beneficiaries and others about the programme, its objectives, priorities, and values. • Can improve the participation of excluded groups. • Contributes to increased transparency and accountability.	• Can be complex to design and manage. • Significant resources required to train staff, volunteers, partners, and communities. • Staff feel threatened that feedback will reflect negatively on their performance. • Beneficiaries and others are reluctant to provide feedback due to cultural norms or out of fear of retaliation. • Social norms may limit the participation of certain groups.

Example

According to the final IDEAL evaluation, Ugandan local government staff participating in the programme reported reduced friction in their relationships with their constituents. This was in large part due to the feedback mechanisms and process of consultation with community members. Government officials enhanced feedback on local development initiatives by creating avenues for communities to voice their needs and opinions to leadership. For many, this approach was an "eye-opener" and changed their way of thinking about governance.

References

CARE International. (2020). *Guidance for Creating and Managing Effective Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms.* Available at: https://www.careemergencytoolkit.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FAM-guidance-2020-01.pdf

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

5.2.17 Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a process by which citizens are involved in deciding how to spend all or part of the public budget. It strengthens inclusive local governance by involving those who pay taxes and use public services in the decision-making process on how financial resources should be allocated. It promotes fiscal and civic awareness of citizenry and accountability and transparency of local government.

Duration

Resources

Participatory budgeting – following the annual budgeting cycle – may include steps such as designing the participatory process, brainstorming ideas through meetings and other dialogue platforms, developing feasible proposals, and even voting on proposals by community members.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• As it is participatory by nature, it improves participation of often-excluded groups in decision-making. • Provides insights into new needs and little-known challenges. • Highly localised; rooted in local issues with local actors. • Contributes to increased transparency and creates a mechanism for feedback. • Ensures a process of social accountability over plans and budgets.	• Lack of precedent by local government to operate with a designated budget, specifically one instigated through community feedback. • Low financial literacy / capacity of authorities and community members. • Lack of legal framework to systematise and/or institutionalise the process. • Social norms may limit the participation of certain groups from speaking freely. • Time consuming to coordinate and requires skilled facilitators to implement.

Example

In Burundi, the municipalities' Annual Investment Plan occurs biannually. IDEAL Burundi facilitated a series of participatory budgeting sessions bringing together local authorities, councils, and community representatives. The community was represented by community development councils and civil society to deliver input on citizens' behalf. It was the first time that all of these stakeholders sat together to define the budget that the commune would use. As a result, the budget, which historically consisted of only salaries and administrative fees, came to include other plans and services that reflected the needs and demands of the tax base at the local level.

References

Participatory Budgeting Project. (n.d.). "What is PB?" Available at: https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/

Peppelman, E. (2021). "Participatory Budgeting improves citizen participation and fiscal citizenship." *AKVO RSR.* Available at: https://rsr.akvo.org/fr/project/5678/update/30789/

5.2.18 Participatory planning

Participatory planning is a process in which citizens are involved in determining development priorities and identifying a pathway to realise them. It allows for a greater level of input in traditional planning

Duration	
Resources	

decisions, including from frequently excluded groups. Participatory planning supports the decentralisation of decision making, resulting in a more accurate assessment of local needs and demands.

Participatory planning is often limited to community consultation, i.e., options are presented to community members who then provide feedback. Planning in which community members are encouraged to provide their own ideas and options is more inclusive. The process builds ownership in the planned project or activity and can prompt volunteerism and in-kind contributions from community members. Participatory planning should be avoided when development decisions have already been made or when a community is extremely divided.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
- Improves participation of excluded groups in decision-making. - Provides insights into new needs and little-known challenges. - Highly localised; rooted in the priorities of local actors. - Contributes to increased transparency and accountability. - Builds local capacity. - Builds trust among the community and the institution / organisation.	- More resource intensive and logistically difficult than non-participatory methods. - Participatory processes take longer. - Social norms that limit participation or contributions. - Lack of training/ facilitation can lead to unproductive or counterproductive interactions. - Sense of superiority prevents staff from seeking or accepting input. - Prone to elite capture.

Example

Historically, development planning in Koboko, Uganda was an extractive exercise consisting of the presentation of community leader wishlists. After engaging with the IDEAL programme, local officials expanded development planning to more community members. They organised participatory meetings for inputs on the annual district development plan and budget. In a

departure from earlier planning exercises, this expanded group indicated a strong need for new health centres. When informed that this would exceed the district's annual budget allocation, the community identified a solution and donated land for the project. Koboko officials went to the Ministry of Health with the offer and were able to secure supplemental funding to build the centre as a result. Community members now report greater satisfaction with the local government.

References

Rabinowitz, P. (n.d.). 'Participatory Approaches to Planning Community Interventions.' *Community Tool Box.* Available at:

https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/where-to-start/participatory-approaches/main

5.2.19 Gender and Conflict Analysis (GCA)

Gender analysis is the study of differences in the conditions, needs, participation rates, access to resources, control of assets, and decision-making powers between women/girls and men/boys in their assigned gender roles. [17] Conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict. [18]

Duration	
Resources	

A *gender and conflict analysis* (GCA) is a structured process to understand conflict and gender in a given area. GCA considers the drivers of conflict, the actors and their perspectives, and structural elements relative to how people of different genders experience and resolve conflict. GCA assesses different types of violence (physical, structural, and cultural) that disadvantage certain people because of their gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, beliefs, or other characteristics.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
- Supports shifting harmful gender norms, changes dynamics toward more female inclusion. - Develops understanding of needs, gaps, and successes to build upon in programming and develops a framework for follow-up. - Triggers adaptation of programme or process based on evidence. - Leaves institutional memory regardless of staff turnover.	- No embedded mechanism that forces organisations to work on issues identified. - Time consuming to complete. - Timeliness and continued relevance; best to be conducted first at the start of the programme and updated regularly. - Practicality of recommendations and understandability for users. - Rarely includes a plan of action on how to use or update findings.

Example

In 2017, IDEAL conducted a GCA to better understand the causes, actors, and gender

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[17]   European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). Gender Equality. Available at: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/gender-analysis
[18] Haezebrouck, N. (2017). *Conflict sensitivity guide.* Den Haag: VNG International.

consequences of conflict and options for peace and gender equality. Initially, IDEAL was to work with the local Comités Mixtes de Sécurité (CMS), which brings stakeholders together to discuss security issues. However, the GCA revealed that the Imbonerakure, the ruling party's youth wing (described as "murderous, powerful, and unaccountable") held seats in every CMS. Working with the CMS would mean strengthening and possibly legitimising the Imbonerakure. As a result, IDEAL shifted focus to local development committees and governance groups as platforms of inclusive decision-making.

References

Goetz, A. and Treiber, A. (2012). Gender and Conflict Analysis. UN Women. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/10/WPSsourcebook-04A-GenderConflictAnalysis-en.pdf

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

5.2.20 Most Significant Change (MSC)

The Most Significant Change (MSC) participatory monitoring and evaluation method is characterised by a focus on project impact as defined by the programme's key stakeholders. Impacts are determined by stories of significant change, which are reported by project beneficiaries. It is most beneficial for programmes that cannot set pre-determined indicators or measures of outcomes, when outcomes vary widely across target groups, when interventions are highly participatory, and when used in conjunction with quantitative methods. It typically involves five steps:

Duration	
Resources	

1. Define objective / outcome areas for change (i.e., domains of change)

2. Determine when and how stories will be collected

3. Collect stories of significant change

4. Choose the most significant stories

5. Validate / verify the stories

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Downward accountability. • Helps to humanise programme achievements. • Motivates and inspires programme staff and others involved with the programme. • Qualitative, nuanced reporting. • Fills in the gaps of programme outcomes left by pre-determined indicators.	• Requires clear template with detailed instructions for use across partners. • Subjectivity of results reported based on those collecting and writing the stories. • Bias towards reporting success; does not report on negative outcomes. • Dependent on good storytelling skills. • Time consuming to complete. • Difficult to verify programme causality.

Example

Example of a MSC shared by IDEAL's Somaliland Team: "In 2019, ALGASL staff in pilot districts of IDEAL in Somaliland conducted community consultations for and with citizens and CSO

representatives and provided trainings on topics of concern for political and technical staff in districts (e.g., LED). Between 2017 and 2018, trainings were provided by VNG or local/international experts with the support of ALGASL. Now, ALGASL is for the most part driving the process of consultation and trainings independently without external support."

References

Better Evaluation. (n.d.). *Most Significant Change.* Available at: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change

INTRAC. (2017). *Most Significant Change.* Available at: https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf

VNG International
Strengthening the Social Contract in Fragile and Conflict Affected States
A Toolkit for Development Practitioners Engaging Local Governments and Local Government Associations

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

5.2.21 Political Economy Analysis (PEA)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development defines political economy analysis (PEA) as "the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time." [19] A PEA assesses the incentives, relationships, and concentration of powers between and amongst different stakeholders. It highlights the capabilities and limitations of local governments to act independently from the central government.

| Duration | |
| Resources | |

A PEA can support programme design that is politically feasible and realistic, enabling more effective strategy development and interventions within the given contextual confines and programme time scale. It should also highlight potential risks for all involved participants. It should be updated regularly to remain relevant, more so in highly volatile contexts.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
- Identifies political wills and agendas that could influence programming and processes. - Develops understanding of needs, gaps, and successes to build upon in programming and develops a framework for follow-up and evaluation. - Can inform programme adaptation - Leaves institutional memory regardless of staff turnover.	- No mechanism to force action on issues identified. - Must be timed well (as the start of the programme) and updated regularly. - Potentially time consuming to complete, especially when done in-house. - Can be difficult to understand for users. - Risk that no new insights will be yielded. Rarely includes a plan of action on how to use or update findings.

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[19] Oxfam. (2014). *"How Politics and Economics Intersect: A simple guide to conducting political economy and context analysis."* Oxford: Oxfam International. Available at: https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/how-politics-and-economics-intersect-a-simple-guide-to-conducting-political-eco-312056/

Example

The IDEAL programme in Palestine uncovered through the PEA the extent to how varied power structures affected each of the participating municipalities differently, this despite having the same formal structures. The mayor of one municipality was more able and willing to steer the inclusivity process through his personal influence. The other municipality was more procedural in its approach to the topic. This influenced how the IDEAL staff approached programming in both locations, enabling better advice and coaching for elected officials and administrators.

References

Mcloughlin, C. (2014). *Political economy analysis: Topic guide.* (2nd ed.) Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. Available at: https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/political-economy-analysis/

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

5.2.22 Studies / Research

Conducting studies or research is an important tool to build deeper understanding of specific topics. Programme-level research can provide

Duration	
Resources	

evidence for the foundations of programme design, influencing adaptations, and evaluating processes and results. Studies can also be used to better understand the operating environment and inform interventions.

Research can often be too theoretical, lessening its impact on development programming. Approaches such as action research, where experimental knowledge is generated in real time, could be a means to generate relevant evidence for development and governance.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Develop deeper understanding of a niche topic or process. • Provides objective and unbiased evidence. • Triggers adaptation of programme or processes based on evidence. • Leaves institutional memory. • Makes learning inclusive with possibility for learning to spread widely amongst team members. • Produces knowledge for public good.	• May not be contextualised or localised. • Time consuming and costly to complete. • Can be difficult to understand for users, particularly if not developed in a widely understood language. • Risk that results will be too 'generic' in nature. • No clear plan of action on how to institutionalise or utilise findings.

Example

A study in Mali on the mobilisation and management of financial resources related to IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) revealed that resources were being poorly managed and seldomly mobilised by local governments. Mobilised resources were managed and used by the municipal authorities who had little knowledge of the concept and value of IWRM. The study prompted municipalities to hold feedback sessions where IWRM themes were identified and prioritised per municipality, resulting in roles and responsibilities of municipal administrators to be more clearly re-defined. The study helped IDEAL staff provide targeted advice and training for key municipal staff, who went on to better manage water resources for their constituents.

References

Valters, C., Cummings, C., and Nixon, H. (2016). *Putting learning at the centre: Adaptive development programming in practice.* London: Overseas Development Institute. Available at: https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/10401.pdf

5.2.23 Adaptive Programming

In development circumstances, especially in FCAS, the situation on the ground changes rapidly and often unpredictably. The complexity of the context may not even

Duration	
Resources	

be fully understood before programming commences. Adaptive programming enables development actors to observe, learn from, and react to changes in the environment in order to most effectively achieve programme goals and objectives. Adaptive programming can be achieved through the strengthening of country-based management, paying greater attention to solving the practical day-to-day problems of local partners, and placing more emphasis on experimentation and the use of qualitative monitoring. Data and evidence from monitoring, evaluation, and learning facilitates course correction where needed.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Supports utilisation of local knowledge and experiences. • Enables programming in response to locally identified needs and challenges as they arise. • Enables changes based on the differing capacities of local governments and/or authorities. • Creates positive relations between implementers and partners / beneficiaries by responding to needs.	• Limitations imposed through donor requirements. • Inflexibility of budgets or implementation targets. • Consistent and accurate monitoring and evaluation of changes. • Recording programme adaptations routinely for monitoring and evaluation. • Recurring need for continued contextualisation and adaptation, which is costly in terms of staff time.

Example

In Burundi, IDEAL originally planned to work on security risks through a human security lens. However, due to the tense political situation and shifting interpretation of 'human security' in the local context, IDEAL adapted towards 'softer' issues such as women's inclusion, health, and economic security. It was then aligned with the processes of communal planning (PCDC) to ensure inclusivity, particularly of women, in the local development process to reduce tensions and conflict. As a result of this key adaptation, IDEAL succeeded in translating human security issues into the PCDC and reached 50% participation of women in the PCDC committees.

References

Valters, C., Cummings, C., and Nixon, H. (2016). *Putting learning at the centre: Adaptive development programming in practice.* London: Overseas Development Institute. Available at: https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/10401.pdf

PROGRAMME METHODS

5.2.24 (Small) Grants / Microgrants

Small grants are small amounts of funding made available for municipalities (or potentially to civil society organisations or other local (economic) stakeholders) to implement short-term and ad-hoc services,

Duration	
Resources	

policies, and plans based on pressing needs that are aligned with the objectives of the programme. Small grants support flexible programming that is responsive to local needs and context. In some cases, the micro-grant facility required co-funding from the recipient.

A small grant is a capacity building intervention to promote leadership and communication skills and improve collaboration between local government and community structures. The implementation of a project through a small investment offers the beneficiary experience in how to plan, budget, implement, monitor, evaluate and report - often with the benefit of a coach or mentor from the granting agency. The availability of supplemental financial resources for applying the newly gained knowledge through training makes learning less open-ended and creates more commitment.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Supplemental funding to address community needs. • Motivating incentive for local administrators. • Practical experience with managing a small project from beginning to end. • Generates ownership and buy-in. • Tangible, practical, visible results. • Supports local governments that are often under-resourced to fulfil their mandate (vs. civil society).	• Risk of creating dependency on external funding. • Difficult to monitor longer-term impact. • Risk of in-fighting and competition amongst those vying for the grant. • Donor regulations that complicate the distribution and usage of funds (i.e. no construction). • Poor financial literacy, risking how funds are spent and tracked. • Short-term nature impedes medium-to-longer term planning.

Example

In Somaliland, four districts were invited to submit proposals for government and IDEAL co-financed micro-grants. The grants had specific requirements such as the promotion of inclusive

economic development and opportunities, more responsive and effective service delivery, environmental sustainability, inclusiveness and gender sensitivity, amongst others. One of the grants awarded was to the district of Baligubadle to conduct a value chain analysis of opportunities in the agricultural and livestock sectors. In the past, the district provided few services and people were unmotivated to act. The support provided through the microgrant helped district leadership to change its attitude and to feel empowered to take the initiative in various inclusive local governance and LED related interventions.

References

VNG International. (2019). *Linking capacity building and grants for small investments.* Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl//sites/default/files/Linking%20capacity%20building%20and%20grants%20for%20small%20investments.pdf

5.2.25 Local Economic Development (LED) / LED Forum

Local Economic Development is a collective action, led by the local government with the active participation of the private sector and other stakeholders, with the purpose of stimulating economic growth and wealth creation, generating

| Duration | |
| Resources | |

more and better jobs, and raising the income of households. LED also plays an essential role in promoting improvements in the productivity of labour and employment through education and training, and through the diffusion and promotion of technological shifts.

LED Forums are multi-stakeholder platforms formed by districts, private sector, and civil society stakeholders with the aim of facilitating collaboration in promoting economic growth, nourishing a thriving labour market and creating an attractive entrepreneurial climate. They foster a joint vision for the district's economic future and encourage local stakeholders to work together in realising this vision. The LED Forum embeds structured consultation (and transparency) between these actors to inform decision-making within the LED cycle. It gives the municipality an easier way to reach out to the community, and vice versa.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Typically produces a tangible, practical, and visible result. • Adapts to the complexity of local context. • Increases exposure for mobilising more resources and attracting further investments. • Triggers more inclusive approaches in decision-making. • Favoured by local governments and community members alike.	• Monitoring longer-term impacts of economic development. • Accountability and transparency of the use of development funds. • Identifying appropriate and capable authorities to take responsibility. • Lack of needed infrastructure in place to support local economic development. • Risk of elite capture or being co-opted by political actors for their agendas.

Example

In Somaliland, LED Forums have become embedded into governance structures with the development of LED strategies. Further, they have gained community ownership as members of

5. Section III. Methods and approaches for strengthening the social contract - Local Economic Development (LED) / LED Forum

108

the Forums pay subscription fees. A toolkit was created through IDEAL on how to create an LED Forum in order to ensure its sustainability even if political wills shift.

References

Balt, M., Crook, P., Dubbe, M., García Salaues, A., and Hassan, K. (2020). *Tools for Promoting Inclusive and Resilient Economic Development by Advancing Strong Partnerships*. Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl//sites/default/files/DEF%20LED-Brochure%20VNGi-Somaliland%2003072020.pdf

5.2.26 Multi-Stakeholder Institutional Cooperation

This entails the development of new or reworked forms of cooperation and coordination (e.g., organisational, financial) amongst different stakeholder groups (including government bodies,

Duration	
Resources	

community members, CSOs, academia, the private sector, and/or funding partners. Multi-stakeholder institutional cooperation can broaden the participation of diverse stakeholders including community members in tasks that are traditionally the sole domain of the public or private sector. Instituting this type of cooperation demands new means to engage people in local development, thereby reinforcing social cohesion and stability.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
- Facilitates relationship building and the creation of broader networks. - Can broaden participation and inclusion, promoting cooperation between diverse stakeholders. - Creates a sense of ownership over development initiatives. - Influences systemic, structural change. - Increases accountability and transparency. - Potential to fill capacity gaps by bringing together diverse expertise.	- Requires regular, dedicated facilitation and coordination to manage commitments and follow-up. - Risk of one stakeholder (group) dominating the decisions for the rest of the group. - Without a legal framework guiding the group, it risks not being sustainable. - Minimising the perception and reality of adding another layer of bureaucracy to decision-making. - Lack of funding to maintain the space.

Example

In South Sudan, IDEAL supported county-level and payam-level forums (Sudan's second-lowest administrative division). At the county-level, the dialogue focuses on how development partners can support the government's response to citizens' needs and best support partners. The platform encourages development partners and other sectors to work closer together to achieve citizen-driven and systemic change. At the payam level, the forums engage local governments and community members in dialogue about what the government is able and not able to do and why and how communities can work with the government to monitor and improve the services.

5. Section III. Methods and approaches for strengthening the social contract - Multi-Stakeholder Institutional Cooperation

110

References

Brouwer, H., Woodhill J., Hemmati, M., Verhoosel, K., and van Vugt, S. (2019). *The MSP Guide: How to Design and Facilitate Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships.* Wageningen: Wageningen University & Research. Available at: https://mspguide.org/

PROGRAMME METHODS

5.2.27 Public Private Partnership (PPP)

A Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is a form of cooperation between government and business in which they agree to work together to reach a common goal or carry

Duration	
Resources	

out a specific task.[20] PPPs may also involve non-governmental organisations, trade unions and/or knowledge institutions. Together, they jointly assume the risks and responsibilities, sharing their resources and competencies.

A PPP is a voluntary collaboration based on trusted relationships. Some PPPs may be contractually agreed, but they are not always required. Local governments can help create an enabling environment by coordinating actors and/or sustaining and scaling a partnership.

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Contextualised to local needs and opportunities with local stakeholders. • Practical and delivers tangible results. • Produces an evident economic value to the community. • Supports the building and/or strengthening of networks of diverse actors.	• Lack of precedence and know-how to conduct effective PPPs • Time consuming formation and implementation. • Supportive laws/policies may not exist. • Especially in FCAS, there are limited private sector actors with whom to form a partnership.

Example

IDEAL assisted the Muhanga District in Rwanda in delivering its first-ever PPP with the Rwanda Federation of Transport Cooperatives and the Muhanga Investment Group. The district, holding minority shares in both partnerships, was able to provide a modern city carpark and a new market to meet the needs of its growing population. IDEAL provided coaching and support to both government officials and partners in designing and implementing projects.

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[20] Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

References

VNG International. (2020). *Tools for Promoting Inclusive and Resilient Economic Development by Advancing Strong Partnerships*. Den Haag: VNG International. Available at: https://www.vng-international.nl//sites/default/files/DEF%20LED-Brochure%20VNGi-Somaliland%2003072020.pdf

5.2.28 Theory of Change (TOC)

A theory of change is a description of how change is expected to occur in a given context. It is a literal hypothesis of how change will occur and is critical in guiding programme design. A TOC should include intermediary outcomes, linkages between outcomes, concrete assumptions, and specific outputs per country. A TOC is adaptable and should be modified as the hypothesis and/or assumptions are tested and (in)validated. A TOC must accurately reflect the realm of changes possible within the areas of implementation and yet avoid being too ambitious. Be clear about what the programme can control versus merely influence. Review and revise TOCs regularly (annually) to adapt as needed based on what is learnt by the programme.

| Duration | |
| Resources | |

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Sensitive to the complexities of fragile contexts and development programming. • Holistic and integrated approach to designing adaptive programmes • Requires critical thinking around the assumptions associated with programmes. • Alternative to working with log-frames or other static programme models. • Creates a unified framework for the programme to identify pathways of change and outcomes.	• Requires flexibility on behalf of donors. • Time consuming to design and update; daunting to lay out pathways, outcomes, and assumptions before starting a programme. • Risks becoming stagnant if not updated regularly; loses its benefit of being an iterative tool. • Gaps in evidence about assumptions. • Potentially increases resources needed for more complex monitoring and evaluation.

Example

The IDEAL ToC identified better service delivery (outcome 1 – output legitimacy), inclusive and participatory policy processes (outcome 2 – input legitimacy) and an improved institutional and policy environment (outcome 3 – enabling environment) as the three main building blocks to achieve a stronger social contract. In order to achieve these outcomes, the programme strengthened three core capabilities of local governments respectively: (i) the capability to

generate development results, (ii) the capability to self-organise and act, and (iii) the capability to establish supportive relations with key stakeholders.

References

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PROGRAMME METHODS

5.2.29 Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)

Village Savings and Loan Associations are groups of 15-25 people who meet regularly to self-manage their savings. The VSLA is a secure space for members to save and provides them with the opportunity to access small loans and obtain emergency funds. VSLAs are often accompanied with financial literacy and business skills development training and support. They are usually composed entirely of women to offer a safe and supportive environment. Through the VSLA, women can grow their income, contribute to decision-making, strengthen personal agency, and improve their status in the community by demonstrating their contribution to local economic development.

Duration	
Resources	

Key Benefits	Key Challenges
• Contributes positively to local economic development. • Shifts gendered social norms. • Improves the ability of women to engage in decision-making and governance processes. • Provides a space for women to exchange news and inform each other about public meetings and events. • Increases exposure of participants to other ideas and experiences.	• Exclusionary to the most impoverished members of the community who do not have the capital to contribute. • Resistance by some community members to the role of women in local economic development. • Time consuming to start up and maintain. • Lack of financial literacy of members. • Logistical and cultural barriers for women's participation.

Example

IDEAL Burundi supported VSLAs composed entirely of women to improve inclusive governance. VSLA members earned more money and launched or grew businesses. In doing so, they built personal agency and strengthened leadership skills. Taking note of this, the husbands of VSLA members began respecting the opinions of their partners and began supporting member activities outside of the home. VSLA women became more active in their communities, increasing attendance to community meetings among other things. The improved economic status and

5. Section III. Methods and approaches for strengthening the social contract - Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)

116

increased visibility of these women in the community shifted community perceptions around women's rights and inclusion.

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