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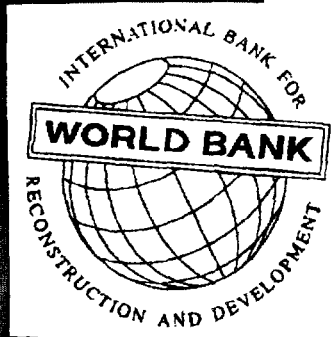
A World Free of Poverty



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Findings

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Building Capacity for Decentralization and Local Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Municipal Development Program

The emphasis put on governance and decentralization by several national governments in Sub-Saharan Africa and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank reflects the fact that effective local government is critical to improving access to social and infrastructure services and to mobilizing local resources. The pervasive weakness of local governments and the lack of capacity of municipal institutions in SSA is recognized as a major impediment to social and economic development. While there continue to be numerous initiatives, often NGO-sponsored, that seek the direct involvement of people at the local level as prime initiators, actors and beneficiaries, these tend to be heavily dependent on external funding and do not, for the most part, address the issue of local government capacity.

The **Municipal Development Program (MDP)** was launched in 1991 with the Bank as the executing agency and with the support of several donors to assist governments in precisely this regard. The Program reflects the belief that since locally-elected officials are usually more in touch with the public than their central government counterparts, there is greater likelihood that the policies chosen will reflect the concerns of the communities and also be more accountable to them. Within the Bank, responsibility for the MDP has moved very recently from the Africa Region's Technical Department to the Infrastructure and Urban Development Division of the Economic Development Institute.

The Municipal Development Program

The MDP is a facility that provides quick-disbursing grants to local executing authorities for policy development and capacity building. Support is made in the form of small grants (ranging from US\$ 5,000 to US\$ 60,000) and consultants (mainly local), using action planning workshops and assisting

in strategic planning aimed at providing management tools and adding key skills to select staff. The MDP has been able to do this because of its design which allows for flexibility and easy access to funds, and its focus -- local municipalities. It has two modules, one for East and Southern Africa (launched in 1991) and one for Western Africa (established in 1992) with regional offices in Harare and Cotonou, respectively. Each module is under the oversight of a Steering Committee made up of policymakers from the concerned regional group of countries and by representatives of donors and of development institutions. These committees have the final say in work program review, in the selection of staff members from the project units and in setting policy. They are chaired by African members.

The MDP works with partner institutions such as municipalities or local government training institutions to enable them to better define their objectives and priorities, create a solid policy framework for program and project implementation in the local government sector, and improve existing institutions, staffed with skilled and well trained personnel. The focus is on strengthening the capacity of institutions to set goals, evaluate alternative courses of action and exercise leadership. The relationship between the partner and the MDP project unit is direct and does not transit through the central government - it is the partner's responsibility to seek the necessary approvals.

Four key areas of interrelated support to the municipalities are:

- Policy studies and advocacy
- Training
- Support to municipalities
- Strengthening associations of local authorities.

Policy studies and advocacy

Comparative case studies in countries such as Zimbabwe, Uganda and Mozambique focus on the financial, fiscal, legal and political aspects of decentralization to clarify relationships between central and local governments. This helps in building an analytic capacity and a policy framework to facilitate the decentralization process. These studies are then linked to active policy debate among the key actors. A related initiative focuses on the municipal policy aspects of human resource development critical to building efficient and responsive local governments. The focus here is on the policy dimensions of civil service reform. Best practices within the region are a central theme in these activities.

Training

Training activities target three distinct, but interrelated audiences.

- Local government and authorities responsible for carrying out public functions and services at the community level
- National ministries and agencies charged with local government responsibilities
- Training institutions with the mandate to serve local government efforts.

The training initiative draws on policy studies and regional policy seminars on municipal development policies; training of trainers activities concentrating on issues such as municipal financial management, the operation and maintenance of public services and municipal planning; technical and pedagogical assistance to training institutions; and through the effective dissemination of these training materials.

Support to municipalities

This component of the MDP addresses the issues of:

- Insufficient resources for preparing action plans, public expenditure reviews, identifying priority investments, matching investments and operating costs to budgets, preparing feasibility studies and producing detailed technical/engineering studies.
- Scarcity of assistance as the central governments are usually overextended.
- Lack of knowledge as to how to procure the required technical services.

The MDP also performs a clearinghouse function here by helping to match municipal needs to assistance programs.

Strengthening associations of local authorities

Many of the municipal associations in Africa are weak and do not yet function effectively as a voice for municipal government. The MDP addresses this issue by supporting training courses in advocacy, association organization, development and management. Exchanges are facilitated between African political and administrative personnel, and models of associations in other (SSA and non-SSA) countries are explored. In addition, the MDP cooperates with the Africa section of the International Union of Local Authorities. The United Cities initiative is an active partner of the MDP's western module.

Synergy with World Bank Operations

In several instances, MDP interventions have had direct linkages with Bank operations. As the Bank and other development agencies seek to broaden their support for decentralization and local capacity building, opportunities for complementary activities with the MDP will increase.

The support provided by the MDP on specific policy and institutional aspects of the malawi Local Government Development Project (LGDP) illustrates the MDP's potential. The main objective of the project is to enhance the financial and administrative capacity of the local government system to provide and maintain municipal services. Key priorities are strengthening the ability of local authorities to provide serviced land for a growing urban population, and upgrading the skills and quality of staff in the local authorities. The MDP supported a participatory approach for the implementation of the Sites and Services component transferred to the local authorities (see Box 1).

Box 1 Lilongwe: Operationalizing Sites and Services Component:

As part of the decentralization, local authorities management of traditional housing (low income urban housing) areas was handed over to the Local Authorities from Central Government. Existing management and administrative procedures were ineffective. Lilongwe City Council (LCC) submitted a proposal to the MDP seeking assistance in developing guidelines and a procedural manual for the management of these areas detailing procedures for plot allocation and cost recovery, title registration and enforcement, plot development, squatter upgrading and community development, and organizational arrangements. The MDP and LCC jointly developed the procedures, and trained LCC staff. These procedures were then adopted by other City Councils.

The Ministry of Local Government also requested assistance from the MDP to develop a policy framework and action plan within which to operationalize its Training Strategy (see Box 2). The MDP also joined the Bank's supervision mission of the LGDP project to follow up on the training component. The advantages of involving the MDP were continuity, field presence and a focus on specific issues related to the project. That the local authorities view MDP as a direct partner is also a plus.

Box 2: Operationalizing the Training Component:

The MDP has played a catalytic role in assisting the Ministry of Local Government to bring key providers of training to the local government sector together in order to strategize and develop a comprehensive plan for the provision of training to the sector. Two workshops were held building on a needs assessment to identify priority areas of training, and develop an Implementation Strategy for Training, as well as develop an Institutional Development plan for the Staff Training College at Mpemba. Participating institutions and agencies included the Training Unit for Ministry of Local Government, as well as private sector providers such as the Malawi College of Accountancy and Malawi Institute of Management.

Some other inputs

The MDP has made several inputs into Bank sector and policy work and projects including the following.

Mozambique: The Local Government Reform workshop which focused on the World Bank sector report on Urban Local Government and the Environment gathered 98 policy makers from all levels of government to define reforms in the local government systems, reflecting the new constitution;

Kenya: The Local Government Finance Study workshop brought together stakeholders in central and local government to discuss and analyze the World Bank sector study on Local Government Finance. The conclusions led to a cabinet memorandum.

In addition the MDP has held several regional initiatives aimed at strengthening the policy environment within which Bank operations are implemented. These have included initiatives to strengthen associations of local authorities, training of practitioners in central and local government in preparing urban development plans and a Policy Research Network focusing on decentralization and central and local government relations

In its first two years of operation (1991-93), the MDP has assisted in carrying out 10 regional and 23 sub-projects. The partners have been individual municipalities such as Kwekwe and Lilongwe in Zimbabwe and Malawi respectively as well as Ministries of Local Government in countries such as Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Namibia.

Lessons

- Institutional development (ID) and capacity building should only be provided in the context of a longer range, viable strategic plan.
- Capacity building is a *process*. The MDP has provided critical assistance at strategic points through a sequence of repeater operations. "An activity" is typically a series of activities (See Box 3).

Box 3: Capacity Building is a Process:

Once the Traditional Housing Areas (THA) manual was completed (Box 1) it was clear that it should be shared with other Councils which also had to manage THAs. A follow-up activity was planned where the staff of the Lilongwe City Council trained key operational staff of the other urban Councils in Mzuzu, Blantyre and Zomba. A one day seminar was also held to train councilors who would explain procedures to their constituents -- the ultimate clients. Total cost for manual preparation and the dissemination workshop -- \$35,000.

- Partner institute (PI) *commitment* and *consensus* are crucial. The PI assumes significant responsibility for defining the objectives, building up consensus among key stakeholders regarding policies and procedures which are being reviewed. For institutional and capacity building, the *process* through which the roles, missions and goals are debated, sorted and adopted is as important and merits as much attention as the actual product.

The Process is as Important as the Product

The implementation success of the MDP can be attributed to several factors.

- The program is demand-driven. Local governments in applying to the MDP have recognized that they have a problem. Thus, there is commitment to initiate action to address the problem.
- Decisions are reached by consensus which ensures client ownership of an activity.

Partner institutions, the local authorities, always contribute human and financial resources to follow

up on the activity output.

The MDP assistance strategy through action-planning workshops allows for the qualitative assessment of the institutions and close consultation with all stakeholders (local and central government agencies, training institutions, local government associations, beneficiaries/community groups and NGOs), to reconcile divergent views and build consensus and commitment to a strategy. The consultative process is as important as the product. The interim evaluation carried out in mid-1993 has confirmed the usefulness of this program and the soundness of its key features. Phase 2 of this initiative will build on the lessons learned so far and will sharpen the focus on decentralization and effective local government. It will also engage the regional constituency of the Program in seeking options for the long-term sustainability of the MDP.

Building capacity in SSA to manage problems at various levels of government is vital to any sustainable development. The MDP is an agile and flexible instrument that is well suited to supporting capacity building efforts and creating an enabling environment for institutional development.

To supplement this article, please read:

EDI and AFT. 1989. *Strengthening Local Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa*. EDI Seminar Report Number 21. World Bank: Washington, D.C.; and World Bank. 1993. *Handbook on Technical Assistance*. Washington, D.C.

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