

Latest News

Scoping and Gap-Analysis for a Replacement Program for the Closed PNG-Good Practice Scheme

A team of local government professionals, practitioners and senior government officials from the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA), the Papua New Guinea Government Department of Provincial and Local Governments Affairs (DPLGA) together with key stakeholders from PNG Local-level Governments (LLGs), recently met in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea from 18-22 November, 2013 for a series of Scoping and Gap-Analysis Workshops.



The workshops were conducted to determine the way forward and at the same time design a successor program for the now terminated PNG-Australia Good Practice Scheme (GPS). The workshops were primarily to gather and assemble relevant information and data in order to have a better understanding of the local context. This was especially in terms of stakeholders priority development needs, expectations, and constraints, as well as government's relevant policies and decisions.

In addition with the current reform program undertaken by DPLGA, the workshops were intended to analyse the gap between the GPS partners' current capacity and where DPLGA expects them to be in terms of minimum standards. The workshops also addressed the GPS partners' development capacity, especially whether they have the ability to absorb additional responsibilities to provide peer support to their surrounding rural LLGs. Stakeholders targeted were representatives from the current PNG GPS partners, non-GPS partners as well as DPLGA senior staff.

With the termination of the PNG GPS Program last June 2013, it was the overwhelming view of the beneficiary stakeholders involved to develop a successor program to continue the excellent work done by the partners over the last decade or so, especially in improving service delivery at the local level. The Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme (CLG-GPS) was launched in 1998 and is largely designed to support the implementation of focused projects, based on the exchange of good practice and skills between practitioners working in the field of local government. Primarily, the Scheme focuses on capacity building through using an innovative

partnership approach to help councils improve the efficiency of service delivery and local democracy. The goal of the Scheme is to promote effective, responsive and accountable delivery of local authority services, particularly to poor and disadvantaged communities, identifying examples of good practice for application elsewhere. Its purpose is to improve planning and management performance, and the implementation capacity of local authorities in the target countries and beyond.

The GPS Program had been operating in PNG since 2002. It is one of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's (CLGF) flagship programs, predicated on the principles of partnership, peer-to-peer learning and tangible sustainable improvement. It was managed by CLGF in partnership with Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) and the Government of PNG. CLGF is a Commonwealth Associated Organization, recognized by the Commonwealth Heads of Governments (CHOGM); and both the 2011 and 2013 CHOGMs in Perth and Colombo provided formal endorsement of its work. The Scheme supports capacity building in Urban Local Level Governments in PNG with particular emphasis on their role in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Based on formal partnerships between local governments from PNG and Australia, the programme utilises the successful mechanisms of council to council, peer to peer international support and learning, giving practical exposure to new ways of working through on-the-job training, and joint implementation of projects to help build local capacity and skills and to improve local service delivery. The programme has been operating in PNG since 2002, promoting partnerships between councils in PNG and their counterparts in Australia to improve waste management services, planning capacity, environmental services, regulatory processes, women's skills, accounting and revenue services, and communications.

Current partnerships being supported by the programme include:

- Mt Hagen and Orange City Council (NSW)
- Port Moresby (NCDC) and Townsville City Council (QLD)
- Alotau and Sunshine Coast Council (QLD)
- Kokopo and Mt Barker Council (SA)
- Madang and Adelaide, Salisbury and Campbelltown Councils (SA)
- Goroka and Hunter Group of Councils (NSW)

The PNG-Australia GPS was part and parcel of the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme (CLG-GPS) which was launched in 1998. The CLG-Good Practice Scheme is principally designed to support the implementation of focused projects, based on the exchange of good practice and skills between practitioners working in the field of local government. Primarily, the Scheme focuses on capacity building through using an innovative partnership approach to help councils improve the efficiency of service delivery and local democracy. Overall, the goal of the Scheme is to promote effective, responsive and accountable delivery of local authority services,

particularly to poor and disadvantaged communities, identifying examples of good practice for application elsewhere. Its purpose is to improve planning and management performance, and the implementation capacity of local authorities in the target countries and beyond.

The Program Independent Review Report 2012 was very clear that the partnerships should be maintained and sustained if needed but that the program management has to be realigned and integrated into a larger aid program with closer links to the Government of Papua New Guinea structures.

With the recommendations of the Independent Review and other important considerations in mind, CLGF in partnership with LGMA and the PNG Department Provincial Local Government Association (DPLGA) proceeded to explore ways of taking the program forward through a series of workshops. The initial consultations were held in Canberra in April, 2013 where key stakeholders including the Australian partners participated in the consultations. AusAID representatives and the PNG High Commissioner in Canberra also addressed the workshop participants.

The Canberra workshop resulted in a proposal being developed by CLGF and LGMA on the shape and form of the future program. A draft proposal was consequently submitted to the PNG Government through DPLGA for consideration. Subsequently, it was agreed because of the many new variables that had emerged in the interim period that the project should initially be piloted for a few years before it was put into full gear. The idea for a pilot project is attractive also in view of the several significant reform initiatives which DPLGA have put in place or in the process of implementation.

One of these important reforms relates to the minimum standards which the department will put in place next year to evaluate the performance of LLGs and at the same time rank them whether they are above or below the required minimum standards. The Port Moresby Scoping and Gap-Analysis Workshops, as follow-ups to the April Canberra Roundtables, were very successful in terms of achieving their objectives. DPLGA is very supportive and strongly committed of the proposed program and to ensure that the partnership continues. As a token of its support and commitment, DPLGA has also included a budget line for the project in its 2014 Annual Budget. This is a major step on the part of DPLGA and the PNG Government.

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