ICLD Swedish International
Centre for Local Democracy

HANDBOOK

Municipal Partnerships

**How to initiate, plan, implement and follow up
ICLD municipal partnerships**

Contents

About this handbook

This handbook is for anyone interested in, or currently working with the Municipal Partnership Programme (in Sweden and partnership countries). It provides guidance for planning a new project using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and is tailored for actors in municipal partnerships. It also provides support for a few of the challenges that a partnership may encounter. However, it is beyond the scope of this handbook to answer *all* questions you may have – therefore, you should always feel welcome to reach out to us at ICLD.

The content of the manual is also discussed in greater detail during our Municipal Partnership Training that we offer to both partners, and we highly recommend that you participate in the training early on in your partnership. Please contact us to find out about dates and location.

Thank you and good luck with your partnership!

Acronyms and frequently´used terms

ICLD   Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy
LFA   Logical Framework Approach
MPP   Municipal Partnership Programme

Citizen/local citizen
In this guide, "citizen" refer to anyone that is working, living or temporarily residing in a municipality, or that in other ways are affected by the local government.

International Partner
The non-Swedish partner organisation in a municipal partnership.

References

This handbook has been informed by the following publications:

DFID (2003) *Promoting Institutional & Organizational Development (A source Book of Tools and Techniques).*
European Commission (2004) *Project Cycle Management Guidelines.*
Forum Syd (2015) *Essential guide to project planning.*
Joshi, A. & Carter, B. (2015) *Public Sector Institutional Reform: Topic guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.*
Regeringen (2016) *Policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.*

The ICLD Municipal Partnership Programme

Introduction

The fact that global challenges demand local action is highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals. Through municipal partnerships, the capacity of local governments is strengthened for combatting global challenges in a local setting. This, in turn, can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals globally.

Municipal partnerships are reciprocal, results-oriented collaborations between municipalities and regions in Sweden and local governments in ICLD's partner countries. By sharing experiences of how similar problems can be addressed in different contexts, the partners create new knowledge together, along with new methods that increase citizens' influence in local decision-making processes. The result is a sustainable change in the way organizations work

to better and more democratically meet citizens' needs. In this way, ICLD works on the local level which is accountable for ensuring that human rights are upheld. In so doing, ICLD supplements the civil society organisations that strengthen the capacity of citizens to demand these rights.

A municipal partnership represents all actors at a local level. Politicians from governing parties and from the opposition form a steering group that anchors, and quality assures, cooperation. Municipal staff from both parties who work on the issues that the project deals with form a project group. ICLD finances all costs for the partners to meet twice a year in the respective partnership countries. For the Swedish partner, the hours spent working on the project are also compensated.

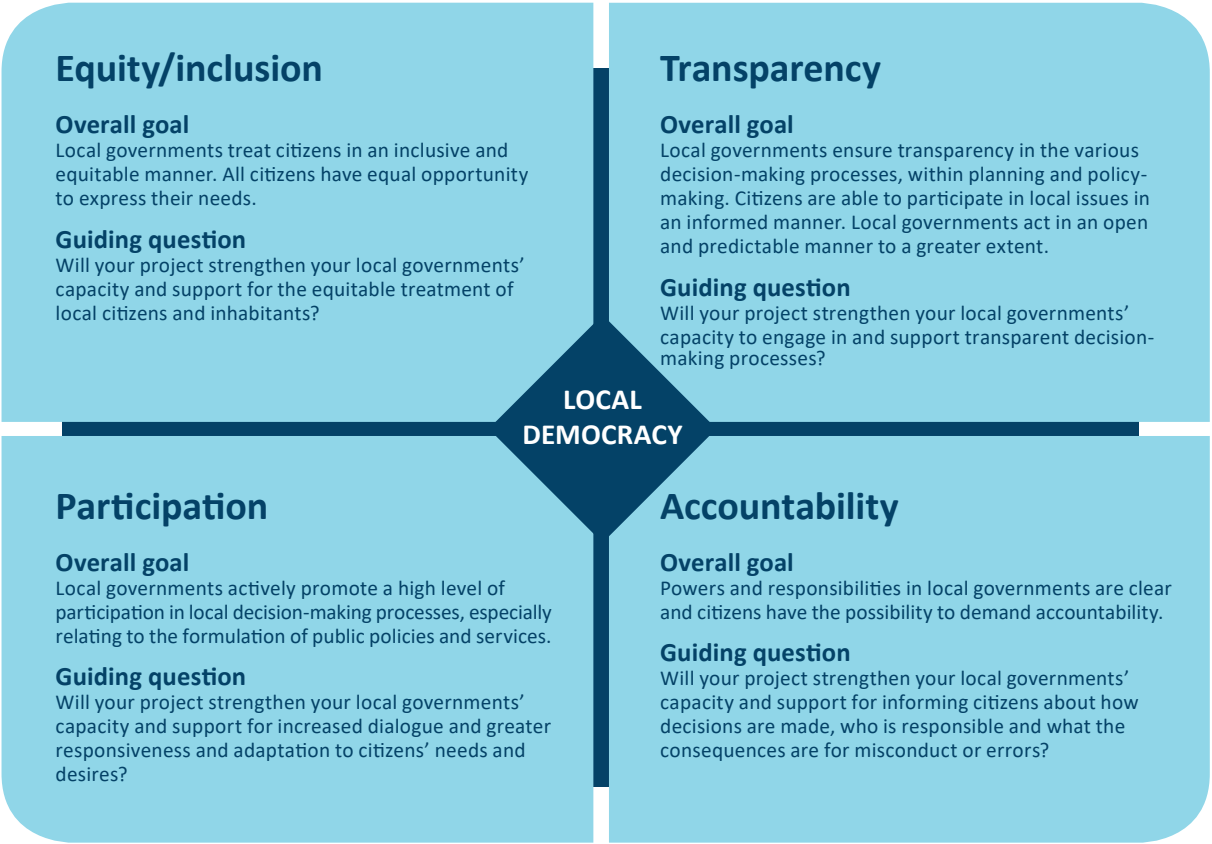## Strengthening local democracy through municipal partnerships

What results should you strive for?

The overall objective of your partnership and its project(s) should always be to increase involved partner organisation's (the local governments) **knowledge** and **capacity** to operationalize the principles of **equity/inclusion**, **participation**, **transparency** and **accountability**. These are the corner stones of democracy and human rights, and support the ultimate aim of increasing local **citizens'** **influence** at a local level.

Photo: ICLD

The following table highlights the overall goals that should be developed in your project, reflecting principles of equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability. Guiding questions are also provided to help your partnership set the right focus.

Equity/inclusion

Overall goal
Local governments treat citizens in an inclusive and equitable manner. All citizens have equal opportunity to express their needs.

Guiding question
Will your project strengthen your local governments' capacity and support for the equitable treatment of local citizens and inhabitants?

Transparency

Overall goal
Local governments ensure transparency in the various decision-making processes, within planning and policy-making. Citizens are able to participate in local issues in an informed manner. Local governments act in an open and predictable manner to a greater extent.

Guiding question
Will your project strengthen your local governments' capacity to engage in and support transparent decision-making processes?

LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Participation

Overall goal
Local governments actively promote a high level of participation in local decision-making processes, especially relating to the formulation of public policies and services.

Guiding question
Will your project strengthen your local governments' capacity and support for increased dialogue and greater responsiveness and adaptation to citizens' needs and desires?

Accountability

Overall goal
Powers and responsibilities in local governments are clear and citizens have the possibility to demand accountability.

Guiding question
Will your project strengthen your local governments' capacity and support for informing citizens about how decisions are made, who is responsible and what the consequences are for misconduct or errors?

What do we mean by capacity building?

As with all concepts, capacity building means different things to different people and has different meanings in different contexts. An open dialogue about what capacity building means to each partner is an important first step before entering a municipal partnership. To assist you in starting this dialogue, we believe that the generic model of capacity building outlined below can be helpful. This model suggests that municipal partnerships can and should contribute to capacity building that helps realize principles of **equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability:**

Photo: ICLD

Responsibility/motivation/commitment/ leadership: A group of civil servants and/or politicians accept and internalise their duty to do something about equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability;

Capability for Rational Decision-making and Learning: A group of civil servants and/or politicians can make rational decision based on evidence-based assessment and a logical analysis of the causes of a problem within equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability. Actions are based on decisions informed by the analysis;

Authority: A group of civil servants and/or politicians feel or know that they may act within equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability. Formal and informal norms and rules, tradition, and culture largely determine what is or is not permissible. Municipal partnership Steering group play a key role here;

Communication Capability: A group of civil servants and/or politicians have the capability to communicate and to access information and communication systems in their efforts to meet their duties within equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability. A group of civil servants and/or politicians are connected in functional networks able to address issues related to equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability.

## Capacity building that leads to strengthening of public governance

A Municipal partnership's capacity building should ideally contribute to improved public governance, either through institutional reforms (i.e. changes to local government's priorities, policies, rules and norms); and/or through organisational change (i.e. reform within local government's structure, human resource and systems) to ensure that local governments around the world are working towards equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability.
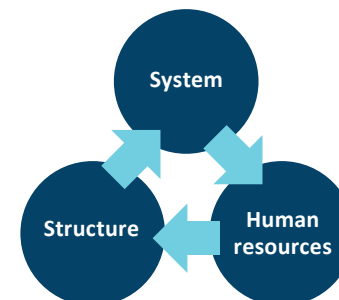
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE REFORM
Democratic improvements within your organisation's daily operations, planning and decision making

Capacity Building

Democratic institutional reform

- Policy setting
- Policy formulation
- Policy coordination
- Rules, norms
- Priorities
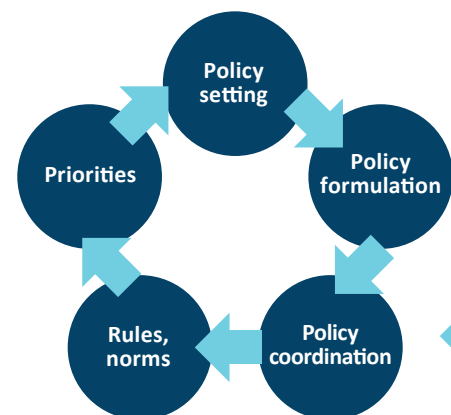
Democratic organisational change

- System
- Human resources
- Structure

How do we reach these results?

The Municipal Partnership Programme structure is intended to support you in achieving sustainable democratic results. This is described in full detail in the Municipal partnership guidelines, which you can find on our website.

During the **One-year Inception Phase**, a group of 4-5 local government officials and politicians (preferably from both ruling and opposition parties) from each partner conduct one visit to each partner. This process ensures political support for the partnerships and allows time for project planning based on broad stakeholder involvement. A **co-operation agreement/Memorandum of Understanding** is signed between the partners during this phase. It is during an Inception Phase that a **project plan** is established - and when you should strongly consult this Guide and the Programme- and Budget guidelines. Ideally, you will also participate in our annual **Municipal Partnership Training** during the Inception Phase.

The **Project group**, which is made up of key public officials and experts, then implements 1-3-year result-oriented projects. **The projects can concern any area of responsibility of the local government** but must contribute to increasing the local governments' knowledge and capacity within the areas of equity and inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability. *Please note that it is possible for three or more local governments to form a partnership!*

The **Steering group** is made up of at least one ruling and one opposition politician, as well as high-level public officials in a decision-making position and/or representative(s) of various kinds. The Steering group's role, beyond providing democratic legitimacy to the partnership, is to ensure that achieving sustainable results within equity, participation, transparency and accountability, at an organisational level, remains the partnership's priority.

Upon the completion of a project, a partnership can decide to apply for a shorter programme component called **Development/expansion** where the partners meet once in each country to draft a new project plan. This is much like the Inception phase but only last 6 months, since the partners are already acquainted with each other.

Finally, there is a **Dissemination** component where the partners can apply for funds to implement activities aiming at sharing the knowledge and experiences acquired within the programme.

From individual to organisational learning

Knowledge, insights and the experience gained by individuals that travel within municipal partnerships should be harnessed and spread within your local governments upon project completion to encourage organisational learning. Organisations that know what type of learning they are trying to facilitate in a municipal partnership will have a better chance of structuring an appropriate and effective diffusion process.

Sida's five perspectives

Swedish development cooperation takes as its starting point and is characterized by people in poverty's perspectives on development and the rights perspective. In addition to these two underlying perspectives, the policy framework adds three thematic perspectives: conflict, gender equality, and the environmental and climate perspectives. All five perspectives should be considered in the analysis, planning, implementation and follow-up of Swedish development cooperation. This means that you should take these into account when planning your project.

To ensure that your partnership reaches sustainable democratic results, you should always apply a **Rights-Based approach**, ensure you apply a **gender mainstreaming lens** and ensure that you **integrate an environmental perspective** in your municipal partnership project. The steering group's role is to ensure that these priorities remain throughout the partnership. We call these "**Thematic Priorities**" and they must be addressed in every project – regardless of the topic! The thematic priorities are complementary, not only to each other, but also with your project goals.

Perspective of people in poverty

The perspective of people in poverty on development means that the situation, needs, conditions and priorities of poor women, girls, men and boys is to be the point of departure for fighting poverty and promoting fair and sustainable development. Sustainable development refers to economic, social and environmental sustainability. For a person living in poverty, this can include the need for productive employment and decent work, access to basic social protection and education of good quality as well as a non-toxic environment. The perspective people living in poverty should permeate your entire project, reflecting upon the situation, needs, conditions and priorities of poor women, girls, men and boys in the context where you carry out your project.

For guidance: Sidas poverty toolbox

Human Rights and A Rights based approach

Applying a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) implies both what is to be achieved in your project and how it can be done. A HRBA is primarily applied through the four principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability. The main purpose of a HRBA is to empower boys, girls, men and women to claim their human rights (as rights holders) and to increase the capacity of those who are obliged to respect, promote, protect and fulfil those rights (as duty bearers).

For inspiration and more information on how local governments work with human rights: Human rights at the local and regional level at www.skr.se

Gender equality and Gender mainstreaming

To gender mainstream your project is to assess the implications for women and men in all areas and at all levels before any decisions are made and throughout the whole process. It is a strategy for ensuring that both women's and men's concerns and experiences are an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of your project so that both women and men benefit, and inequality is not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming is not a goal, but a lens for ensuring gender equality. Gender equality from a human rights perspective ensures that girls and boys, women and men, have equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities, as well as the power to shape their own lives.

For more guidance: Gender Mainstreaming Assessment Checklist at www.skr.se

Environmental sustainability and Environment and Climate Change Integration

Environmental sustainability refers to the need to protect biological and physical systems that support life. Environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting principle which needs to be integrated across all areas of decision making. Environment and climate change integration in your project requires that you enhance opportunities for a positive impact of the project on the environment/climate and avoid or reduce risks and negative impacts of the project on the environment/climate.

For guidance: The environmental lens

Conflict prevention

Peaceful and inclusive societies based on the principles of the rule of law are a prerequisite for sustainable development. The devastating effects of conflict on development lead to increased poverty in conflict-torn areas and to an increasing proportion of the world's extremely poor people living in conflict-affected and fragile states. This also means an increased risk of human rights infringements and of people being forced to flee. A conflict sensitive approach entails careful analysis, design and monitoring of the possible positive or negative impacts your project may have on existing tensions/conflicts in a given context. In designing your project, such reflection should be outlined when you consider do-no-harm.

For guidance: Sidas Peace and conflict toolbox

Source: Regeringen (2016) Policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.
Throughout the LFA project plan chapter we will provide you with some guiding questions to help you integrate the thematic priorities.

Partnership, mutuality and social learning

ICLD partnerships assume a **principle of mutuality**. The ICLD sees municipal partnerships as a joint learning and knowledge production process between the partners - where the Swedish knowledge and experience is on an equal footing to that of the international partners. Swedish and international partners are both assumed to gain from the partnerships, whether in similar or different ways - most likely a mix of the two.

Mutuality can be a challenge – and requires **time**, **respect** and **trust**. We believe it to be key to learning

and progress – and to producing the vital knowledge needed within local governance to meet today's complex challenges. We have also seen that the more mutual gains in a partnership, the more sustainable and effective it becomes.

Municipal partnerships engage in **social learning**, a process of iterative reflection that occurs when we share our experiences, ideas and environments with others. Social learning goes beyond the individual level and leads to **collective outcomes**. Social learning is essential for collaborations and works effectively through **joint problem solving** and **reflection**.

Overcoming culture biases and unequal partnerships

The exchange between local government representatives from different cultures is the heart of the municipal partnership programme. But communicating across cultures can be challenging. Many of us are not even aware of our cultural biases or how concepts translate across geographical and cultural distances. For example, knowledge and practices that are established within the partner organisation that are "Northern" can sometimes be viewed as more preferable in partnerships and act as a barrier for collective social learning in north-south partnerships. We highly recommend that you discuss mutuality early on in your partnership – unspoken power relations/cultural biases can hinder progress.

How to apply

Finding a partner

Municipal partnerships come about in their own particular way. They are often a logical continuation of a twin/sister city agreements, the result of existing relations between key individuals in two local governments, or the result of ICLD's efforts to match Swedish and international collaboration partners. Since there is a demand for partnerships from 19 eligible collaboration countries to match the supply from Sweden only, it is of course easier for a Swedish local government to find an international partner than vice versa. **Since there is a stronger demand internationally than from Sweden, we are unfortunately seldom able to assist international local governments in finding a Swedish partner.** However, we welcome both Swedish and international local governments interested in forming a municipal partnership to contact us for more information. We can then publish a declaration of interest on our website where potential new partners can find each other.

Finding the right partner

Allow the process of finding the right partner to take its time – consider what aspects you would like to have in common with your partner and in which aspects it could be more interesting to differ. Also investigate what the international travels would mean for both partners and allow for a thorough internal deliberation.

The application process

Once you have found a suitable partner and both parties have decided to proceed with their cooperation, you may apply for an Inception Phase. There are two application periods per year, which apply for all types of applications in the programme. The deadlines for application are on March 15 and October 15. You can start working on your application at any time.

The application is submitted online through the ICLD online tool My Pages. User credentials are provided to the Swedish local governments who are formally in charge of the funds for the partnerships. To achieve high mutuality and transparency in the application process we encourage sharing the user credentials among all partners in a partnership.

Photo: ICLD

Project planning

The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is a project planning and management tool. We highly recommend that you use the LFA to help you **plan, implement** and **manage** your municipal partnership project. The following is a quick guide to the LFA and how and when you can apply it in your partnership.

In new partnerships, the **project planning occurs during the 1-year Inception Phase**, which culminates in a project application. In ongoing partnerships, new projects can be planned during the **6-months Development/expansion** or continuously. The project application questions are closely linked to the LFA steps.

Before we get to the nine LFA steps however, we would like to point out a few things that are special to the planning process of a municipal partnership project.

Two partners – one project

LFA is designed to create a relevant, feasible and sustainable project plan for one problem in one setting. In a municipal partnership, there are two or more partners who address challenges in their respective organisations in one joint project. Since these challenges are never identical, the LFA logic suggests that you either need to do two separate LFA processes or look at both partners in each LFA step. Since the mission of ICLD, as part of Swedish international development cooperation, is to promote local democracy development in the ICLDs cooperation countries, the municipal partnership programme only requires a complete LFA process for the international (in this context, the non-Swedish) partner. For the Swedish partner we require an account of results expected in their organization thanks to the project. We encourage LFA processes for both partners' challenges as this increases the likelihood of reaching sustainable results. In this case, do not feel obliged to have the same problems and objectives – mutuality does not come by squeezing reality into LFA but from being clear on what the expected results are for each partner in the partnership and learning from each other's experiences and knowledge on how to achieve these results.

If you decide on conducting two separate LFA processes, we encourage you to go through them side-by-side, noting what is similar and what is different, discussing how to learn the most from one another's similarities and differences.

Online Project application

The project application questions closely follow the LFA project planning steps. While planning your project according to the LFA during your inception phase we recommend that you keep this guide as well as the project application questions at hand. This makes it easier for you to meet the requirements.

Step 1 – Context analysis

The context analysis refers to the **overall situation**, the **challenges** and **preconditions** surrounding the project area you have selected. However, the context analysis should **not be too broad**.

To help conduct a context analysis, your Inception Phase activities, visits, workshops and presentations should be focused on local governance and the ICLD core areas (equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability) and the project area you have identified.

It is also important that municipal partners are sufficiently aware of the local democratic governance context they and their partners will be working in. Partners, project and steering group members, are often new to the country they will be working with, whether it is Sweden or the international partner's country. During the Inception Phase, we highly recommend that you take your time and try to get to know and **understand your partners'** contexts as much as possible. For example, discuss your and your partners' understanding of ICLD core areas and their importance in relation to their local governing work.

ICLD can share relevant information about the partner country, including a report containing a short overview of local democracy in each country that is also available on our website. Your country's embassy in your collaboration countries may provide other useful sources of information, as well as each country's respective association of local authorities. These will also be shared by ICLD.

Example - Malmö – Lusaka´s Context Analysis

Lusaka and Malmö are two cities with a young population. Together we have identified a need to develop better strategies for youth participation to make use of the potential and perspectives that young people possess. Inclusive processes will provide us with better policies, better decisions and increase local democracy. This is especially important when dealing with climate change issues, since they require long-term political decisions that can be unpopular, but necessary.

Lusaka is developing a Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plan (SEACAP) whilst Malmö is planning for a new Action Plan for the Environment Programme. We plan to include young people in these climate change policies by increasing awareness in both cities of the importance of youth participation and knowledge of tools for youth participation. We also plan to introduce methods for quality dialogue and identify suitable platforms for youth dialogue.

What is the capacity of your organisation to act to respond to right holders claims, individually or as part of civil society, and fulfil their obligations within your identified project area?

What are the differences between and among women, men, girls and boys in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power within your identified project area?

What is the local environmental situation? Focus on environmental degradation/problems, the impact of climate change and disaster risks, and how people in the area are impacted.

Think about conducting a power analysis

A power analysis can be a useful tool for identifying potential drivers of democratic change and finding new entry points for intervention. The Powercube is helpful as a lens for context analysis, identifying entry points to support change, and for evaluation and learning. Find out more about the tool here: www.powercube.net
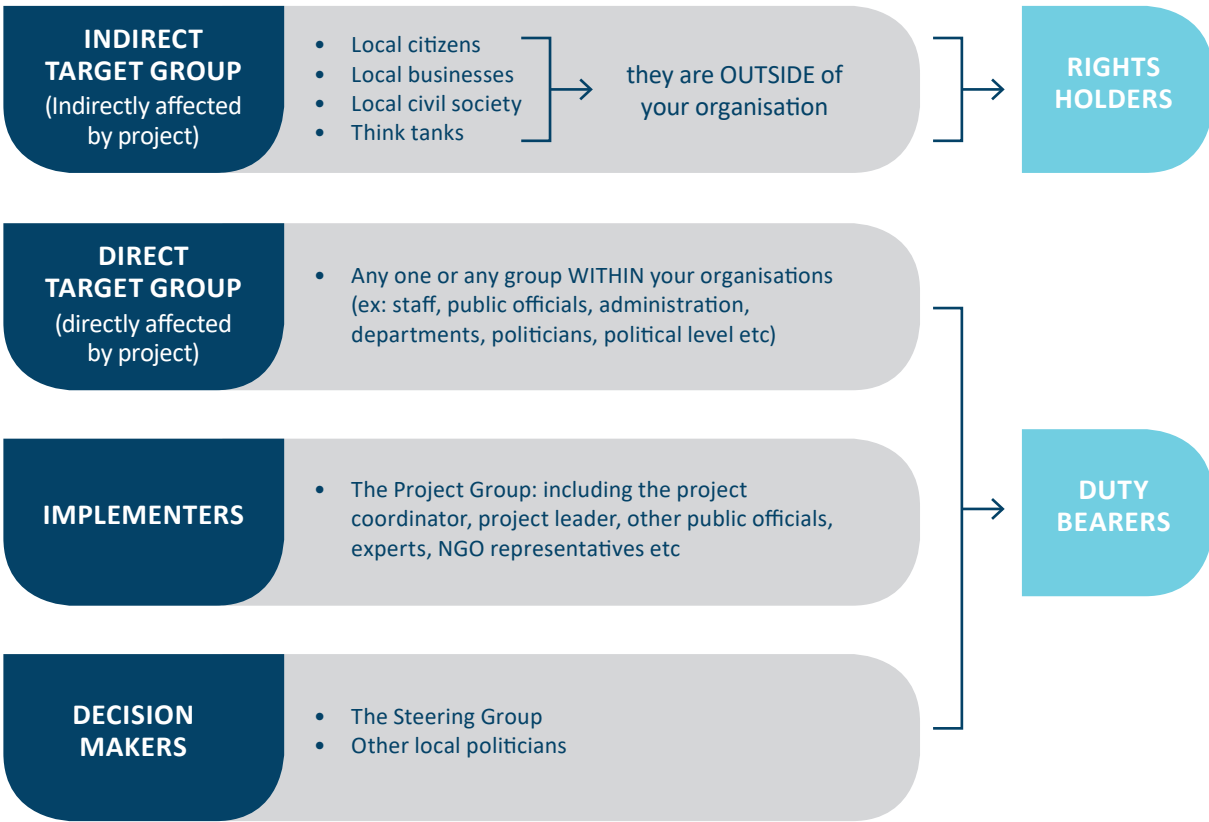
Step 2 – Stakeholder analysis

The relevant actors to include in your analysis are the groups or individuals that will **directly or indirectly affect and be affected** by the project.

Given that the aim of all ICLD municipal partnerships' projects is to strengthen democracy within local governments – to strengthen your organisation's knowledge and capacity within the themes equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and/or account-

ability - the main stakeholder groups have already been established. The direct target group of all ICLD funded activities will therefore always be *you*, the local government – the duty bearer. The indirect target group will always be local citizens along with the local governments' other target groups such as local businesses and civil society associations.

However, these groups are large and heterogenous – as such, you need to be specific and concise about who the target groups are.

When, and how, should different stakeholders participate?

The stakeholder analysis should ensure a broad, equitable participation of stakeholders. Which stakeholders are involved, how they should be involved and when, are key questions you will need to answer early on in your project planning. The stakeholders' key role at this stage of the planning process is helping to formulate the problem that your project will aim to solve.

Different stakeholders can be involved in different ways, through focus groups, surveys, meetings, interviews or workshops - to name a few. These should mainly be undertaken during an Inception Phase. However, depending on the project area you may have previously undertaken parts of the stakeholder analysis – if this is the case, please include this in your analysis.

In a municipal partnership, the main stakeholder groups are:

*Depending on your project stakeholder groups may end up overlapping.

Example - Malmö – Lusaka's Direct and Indirect Target groups

Direct target group Lusaka
Civil servants working with climate change issues; Civil servants working with youth involvement; Politicians/decision-makers; Junior Mayor and its organisation.

Indirect target group Lusaka
University of Zambia (UNZA); Young people in Lusaka, e.g. school children both from public and private institutions.

Direct target group Malmö
Civil servants working with climate change issues; Civil servants working with youth involvement; Implementers of the environment program in Malmö; Politicians/decision-makers.

Indirect target Group Malmö
Young people in Malmö e.g. Advisory Council for Youth; The City Executive Office; Civil servants in all municipal organisations; The network for youth influence in Malmö.

Before we move to Step 3 – Problem analysis, keep in mind the thematic priorities

Have you considered perspectives, experiences, knowledge and wishes of different groups/individuals that will be directly or indirectly targeted by the project? Have the various target groups participated and influenced the analysis?

Are women and men equally represented in the stakeholder analysis – have they equally participated?

Have you considered the planet as a key stakeholder? Your project will directly or indirectly impact it! And the environment may impact your project. What role does it/should it play?

The role of civil society

Around the world, the democratic space for civil society is shrinking. This is a highly worrisome trend, and we therefore encourage municipal partnerships to improve local governments responsiveness and support to civil society. Remember therefore to try to include civil society in your context, stakeholder and problem analysis.

Step 3 – Problem analysis

The problem analysis constitutes the foundation to your project. The succeeding LFA steps follows as a logical consequence of the problem analysis. Developing a problem analysis may seem time consuming. However, a thoughtful problem analysis is crucial and will assist you in implementing the project in a successful way. The most important part is to agree on a relevant and well-defined main problem which is to be solved by the end of the project phase, and to identify the causes or sources of the problem that will be dealt with during the project.

The problem analysis defines the main focus of the project, its causes and its subsequent effects. The connection between these components can be understood in the following way: By eliminating the major causes contributing to the problem through project efforts, the negative effects will in turn diminish. A helpful definition of the main problem is a non-desired state for the parties. In the following sections we shall take a closer look at these concepts.

EFFECTS
- **The negative consequences due to the main problem**
- The project contributes to addressing these in the long run
- Constructs the argument as to why the project is important
- Can be found within the organizations, or in society at large

MAIN PROBLEM
- **The main problem that the project seeks to address**
- Should be solved at the end of the project phase (1–3 years)
- Should be defined as one clearly defined problem
- Must address a problem at the organisational level
- Must be found within one of the organisation's responsibilities
- Must relate to one or more of ICLD's core areas

CAUSES
- **The various causes underlying the main problem**
- To be eliminated on an ongoing basis throughout the project
- You can only eliminate causes that exist due to lack of capacity at the organisational level
- Cluster causes that are tightly connected so that you have 3-6 clusters
- The project's interim goals and activities will aim to eliminate these causes

A problem's **causes and effects** can be rendered clearly if the relevant stakeholders draw a so-called problem tree (situation analysis). In a **problem tree,** the roots represent the causes of the main problem, which in turn is symbolized by the trunk of the tree - the main focus of the project. The problem's effects are shown as the tree's crown. The effects in the tree crown can help explain to decision-makers why the main problem is important to solve.

Effects

Main problem

Causes
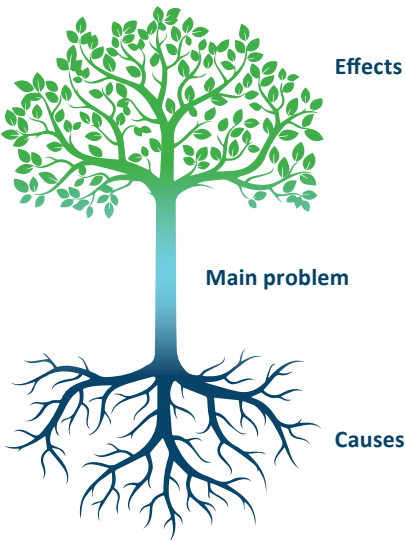
Various ways of doing a problem analysis

A problem analysis must be carried out by the appropriate stakeholders – those who understand the local situation and the subject of concern. Preferably, the analysis will be carried out in a workshop to which the different stakeholders are invited and given time to discuss and analyse together. If it is not possible to hold a workshop, the project group must gather background information by first interviewing different stakeholders and gather their responses in a problem analysis. You may need to hold several workshops with various stakeholders. The task of bringing the different perspectives in a problem analysis is the responsibility of the project group.

The problem analysis step by step.

Since the **main problem** defines what the project should focus on, the first step is to define the **main problem**. In a municipal partnership, the problem analysis commonly takes place either within the project's Inception Phase or during Development/expansion. Here, you have already formulated a proposal that identifies the key challenges a project could potentially be about. As such, you have one or several potential problems to consider. However, it is important to not have a fixed perception of what the main problem should be, as all stakeholders should be given the opportunity to take part in this first step. Keeping an open mind is important, since understanding of cause and effects may change as you investigate the causal relationships between the different parts.

A helpful method to begin this step is to have all participants write down their proposal for a main problem. These may later be discussed until you find the most relevant main problem that can also be accepted by all stakeholders. Keep in mind that the main problem should meet the criteria mentioned above.

Once you have agreed on a main problem, you proceed to the second step by defining its causes. If you utilize your problem tree, you position the main problem in the middle (on the stem of the tree).Next you need to identify the underlying causes (the roots of the tree). As with weeds, the roots must be attacked if we want to be rid of the problem. It is not enough to cut back the weeds and think the problem will solve itself. LFA reminds us to never begin a project where the responses and solutions are already provided without first having analysed the problem and its causes and effects in the prevailing social and cultural context. This must be done in close collaboration with the stakeholders concerned. You may find it useful to begin this process with a brainstorming session to ensure that a variety of causal factors are identified.

This may yield causes that are similar or interconnected. After removing any duplicates, you may proceed by clustering the causes and giving them a new name. What follows is a close examination of the clusters – are they within the scope of the parties' capacity to solve? In many municipal partnerships, lack of financial resources is a causal factor that contributes to the main problem. However, this is not a cause that a partnership can fully control. If you find that lack of financial resources, or perhaps the need for new legislation is part of the causes of the main problem, consider if this is something that the partnership has the capacity to effectively address.

Causes may, of course, be addressed in other ways than through the partnership project. For example, if you know that a rule change is underway, the LFA considers this to be a reasonable assumption to outline in the context analysis and risk analysis. However, if you find that you cannot eliminate the cause through the partnership, and cannot safely assume that it will be eliminated without the influence of the project, you should reconsider the main problem to ensure that it is something that can be solved through the project.

The next step is to identify the effects of the main problem. In this model, effects refer to the negative consequences. Here, you are not constrained to the organisational level. Consider the negative consequences that the main problem contributes to on the societal level. The more negative effects there are and the more problematic they are, the more important the project can be. However, keep in mind that you will not act or work directly against the effects of the problem, but instead target its causes.

During this step, you may find that what is cause, main problem or effect can be ambiguous. A causal factor in one project may be the main problem in another – or even the project itself in a third, depending on the scope of the project. We encourage you to re-arrange the main problem, test mapping it in different compositions, and see if you can develop a different problem analysis that makes the most sense to you.

Problem analysis foster a relevant project

The challenge you wish to take on as the main problem of your project will determine the **relevance** of your project. What constitutes a relevant project may be subjective, and this is why your project should ideally be relevant for all stakeholders. However, the opinion of some groups is more important than others. For example, if the target group finds the problem to be irrelevant – then the project becomes unnecessary. Or, if the steering group cannot see the relevance of the project, then the institutional support will be lacking. Thus, the stakeholder analysis is crucial to ensure that the stakeholders understand the relevance of the project prior to taking additional steps. Examples of the kinds of projects considered relevant by ICLD can be found in our program guidelines.
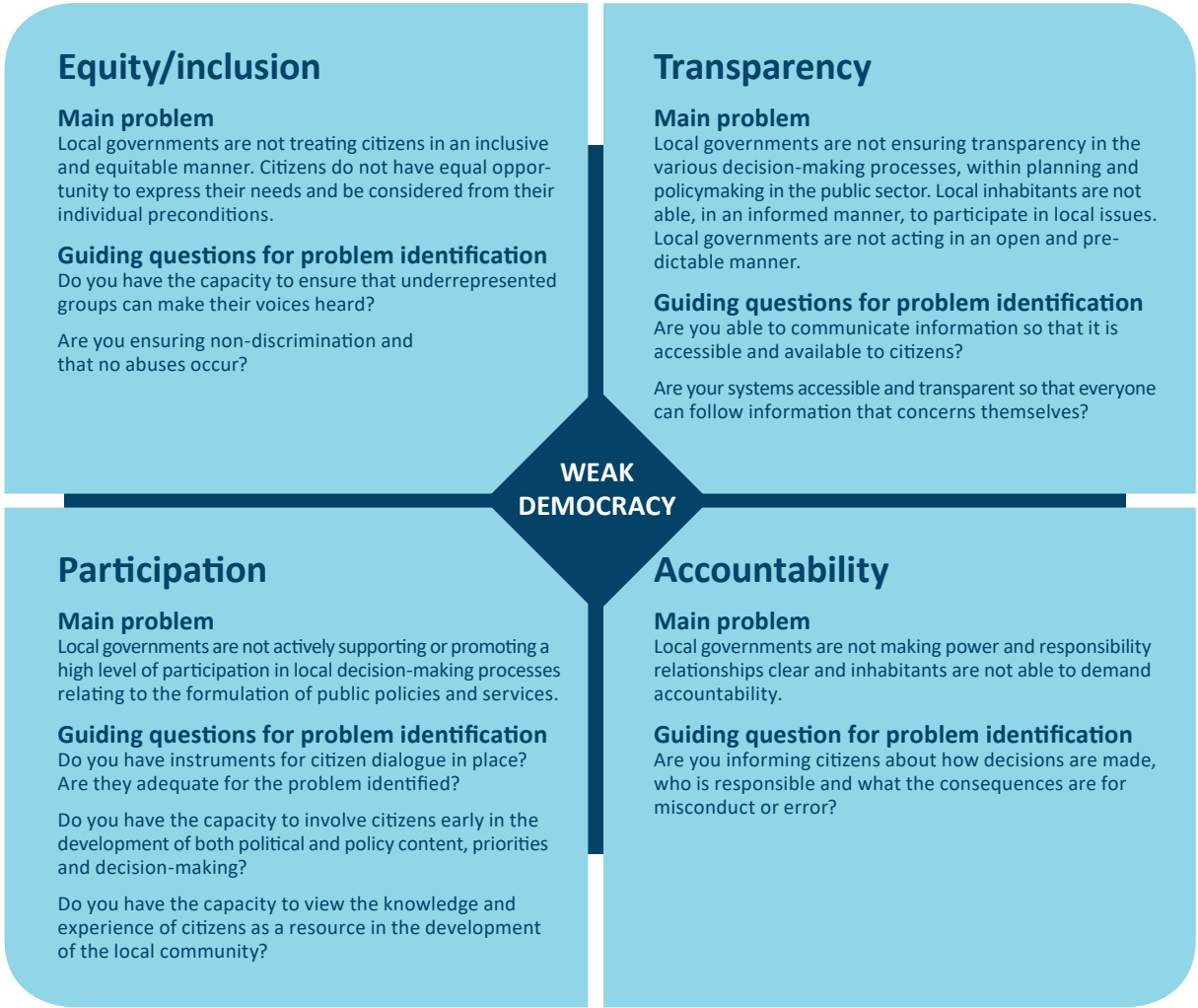
Photo: ICLD

One project – one problem analysis?

The core idea of a municipal partnership is that both parties are strengthened through the partnership. While LFA focuses on the planning of a specific problem, it is rare that such a problem manifests itself in an identical way in two different geographical locations. Since ICLD's mission is to strengthen local authorities in low- and middle-income countries, the greatest emphasis needs to be on the problem formulated in the international partnership country. As such, ICLD requires a complete LFA process -

including problem analysis – for the international partner. ICLD strongly encourage the parties to construct a complete LFA process for the Swedish partner as well. A frequently asked question is whether the main problem must be the same for the respective parties. In our experience, the more similar the problem in the respective municipalities is, the more effective the exchange of knowledge and experiences becomes. This is underpinned by the logic that a common problem area will foster discussions about how it can be handled in different contexts where new knowledge and new methods can be developed.

Equity/inclusion

Main problem
Local governments are not treating citizens in an inclusive and equitable manner. Citizens do not have equal opportunity to express their needs and be considered from their individual preconditions.

Guiding questions for problem identification
Do you have the capacity to ensure that underrepresented groups can make their voices heard?

Are you ensuring non-discrimination and that no abuses occur?

Transparency

Main problem
Local governments are not ensuring transparency in the various decision-making processes, within planning and policymaking in the public sector. Local inhabitants are not able, in an informed manner, to participate in local issues. Local governments are not acting in an open and predictable manner.

Guiding questions for problem identification
Are you able to communicate information so that it is accessible and available to citizens?

Are your systems accessible and transparent so that everyone can follow information that concerns themselves?

WEAK DEMOCRACY

Participation

Main problem
Local governments are not actively supporting or promoting a high level of participation in local decision-making processes relating to the formulation of public policies and services.

Guiding questions for problem identification
Do you have instruments for citizen dialogue in place? Are they adequate for the problem identified?

Do you have the capacity to involve citizens early in the development of both political and policy content, priorities and decision-making?

Do you have the capacity to view the knowledge and experience of citizens as a resource in the development of the local community?

Accountability

Main problem
Local governments are not making power and responsibility relationships clear and inhabitants are not able to demand accountability.

Guiding question for problem identification
Are you informing citizens about how decisions are made, who is responsible and what the consequences are for misconduct or error?

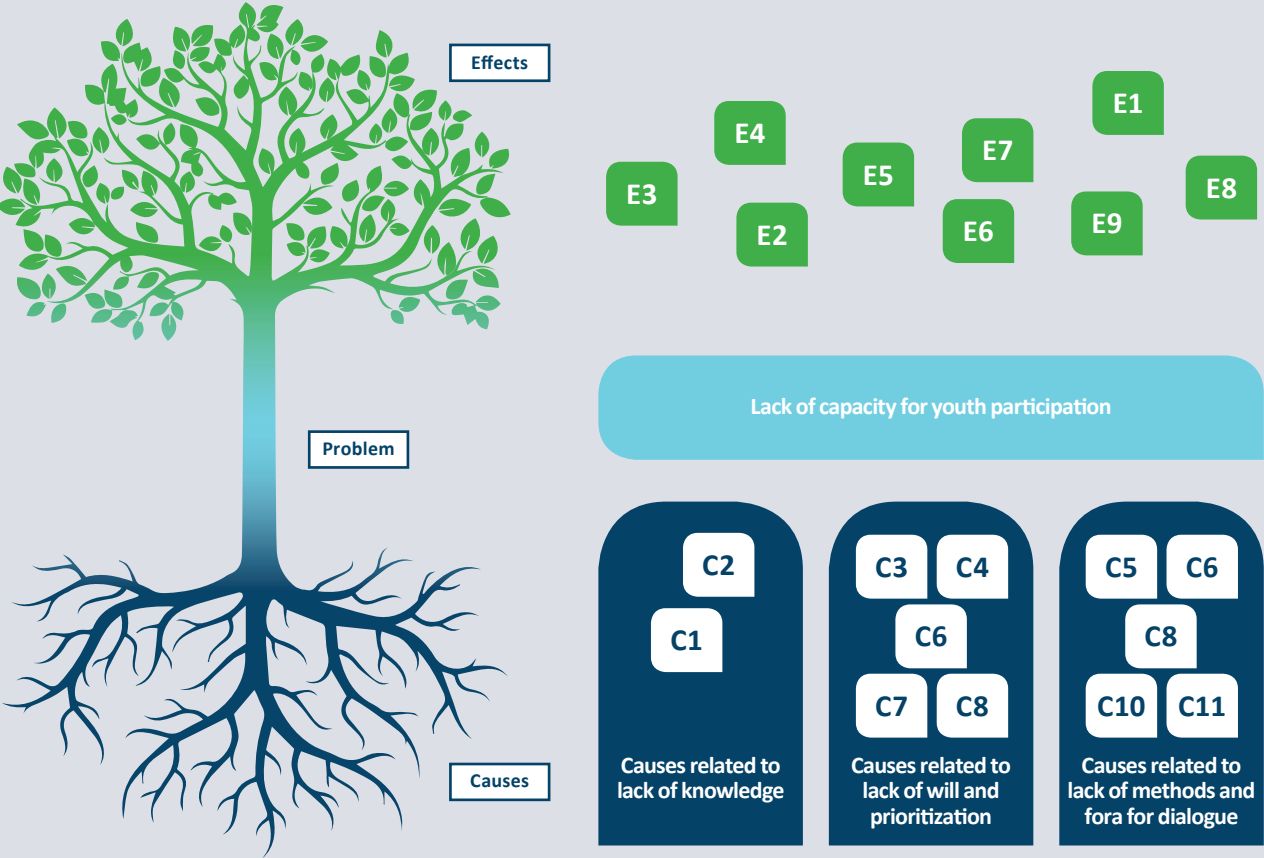## Example - Malmö – Lusaka's Problem analysis

Main problem
Malmö and Lusaka city lack capacity to include (the views and needs of) young people in their decision-making processes.

Causes

C1. Lack of knowledge among civil servants and politicians of which policies supporting youth participation that exist and how to implement them.

C2. Unclear purpose for dialogue - why should we involve young people?

C3. Lack of methods for effectively involving young people.

C4. Counterproductive methods have been used, so young people are not interested in participating.

C5. Lack of interest, due to unclear purpose, lack of resources or other.

C6. Young people are not informed about how they can participate. Lack of communication and/or clear invitation from the city.

C7. Lack of communication channels between young people and officials, e.g. networks and meeting platforms (physical, digital, etc.) for officials to have dialogue with young people.

C8. Prejudice towards young people, leading to a non-welcoming or unaccomodating posture.

C9. Lack of resources: time, money and experience.

C10. The political will is not there.

C11. Business as usual: structures, habits and norms within the municipalities make it easier to go on as usual, not inviting young people to participate.

Effects

E1. Low quality decisions that fail to fulfil young citizens' expectations.

E2. Exclusion among young people that grow up thinking their opinions do not matter.

E3. Less involved grownups and thus a lack of democracy.

E4. Inequality, failure to represent large groups of the population - such as young people.

E5. The cities do not achieve city goals for youth inclusion.

E6. The cities do not achieve city goals for climate change action.

E7. The cities miss opportunities to be innovative as it doesn't listen to ideas and perspectives of young people.

E8. Non-attractive top-down invitation of young people can cause future resistance to getting involved.

E9. Lacking climate awareness in general population will cause difficulties to reduce climate change.

Effects

E1 E2 E3 E4 E5 E6 E7 E8 E9

Problem

Lack of capacity for youth participation

Causes

C2	C3 C4	C5 C6
C1	C6	C8
	C7 C8	C10 C11
Causes related to lack of knowledge	Causes related to lack of will and prioritization	Causes related to lack of methods and fora for dialogue

Before we move to Step 3 – Problem analysis, keep in mind the thematic priorities:

Does your problem analysis consider instances where you, as a duty bearer, are not ensuring human rights?

Does your problem analysis consider gender inequalities and other forms of discrimination?

Does your problem analysis strengthen the capacity of rights holders to handle environmental problems?

Step 4 – Objective analysis

The objective analysis should be the easiest step in LFA – given that you have described the problems as a non-desired state. In this step, flip this non-desired state around – to become desired states instead! Here, the causes then become intermediate objectives, the main problem become project objectives and the (negative) effects become long-term objectives.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES
- **The positive effects the project contributes to create**
- The project contributes to achieving these in the long term (3-5 years)
- Constructs the arguments for why the project is important
- Can be found within the organizations, or in society at large

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
- **The objective the project seeks to reach**
- Shall be reached within the project phase (1-3 years)
- Reached through the completion of intermediate objectives
- Easily obtained by turning the main problem to its positive objective
- Refer to strengthened capacity at organisational level
- Can be found among one of the organisation's responsibilities
- Relate to one or more of ICLD's core areas

INTERMEDIATE OBJECTIVES
- **The intermediate objectives that will lead to achieving the project objective**
- Achieved on an ongoing basis during the duration of the project (1-3 years)
- Entails increased capacity at the organisational level
- Achieved through project activities
- If you have clustered the causes, you can form clusters of sub-goals and/or merge nearby sub-goals into a larger sub-goal

Is your project objective SMART?

Specific – Target a specific area for improvement.
Measurable – Quantify, keep in mind indicators for progress
**Assignable** – Specify who will do it.

Realistic – State what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
Time-related – Specify when results can be achieved

Objectives and results – terminology

The LFA includes intermediate objectives, project objectives and long-term objectives; results at various horizons as shown in the figure above.

There is also another level of results called outputs. Outputs are the immediate results from each project activity. The outputs will lead to achieving the intermediate objectives, which in turn will lead to achieving the project objective. Several activities might be needed to achieve the intermediate objectives.

Just as the problem analysis could be illustrated in a problem tree, the objective analysis can be illustrated in an objective tree. Using the same example as earlier, the objective tree would then look like this:
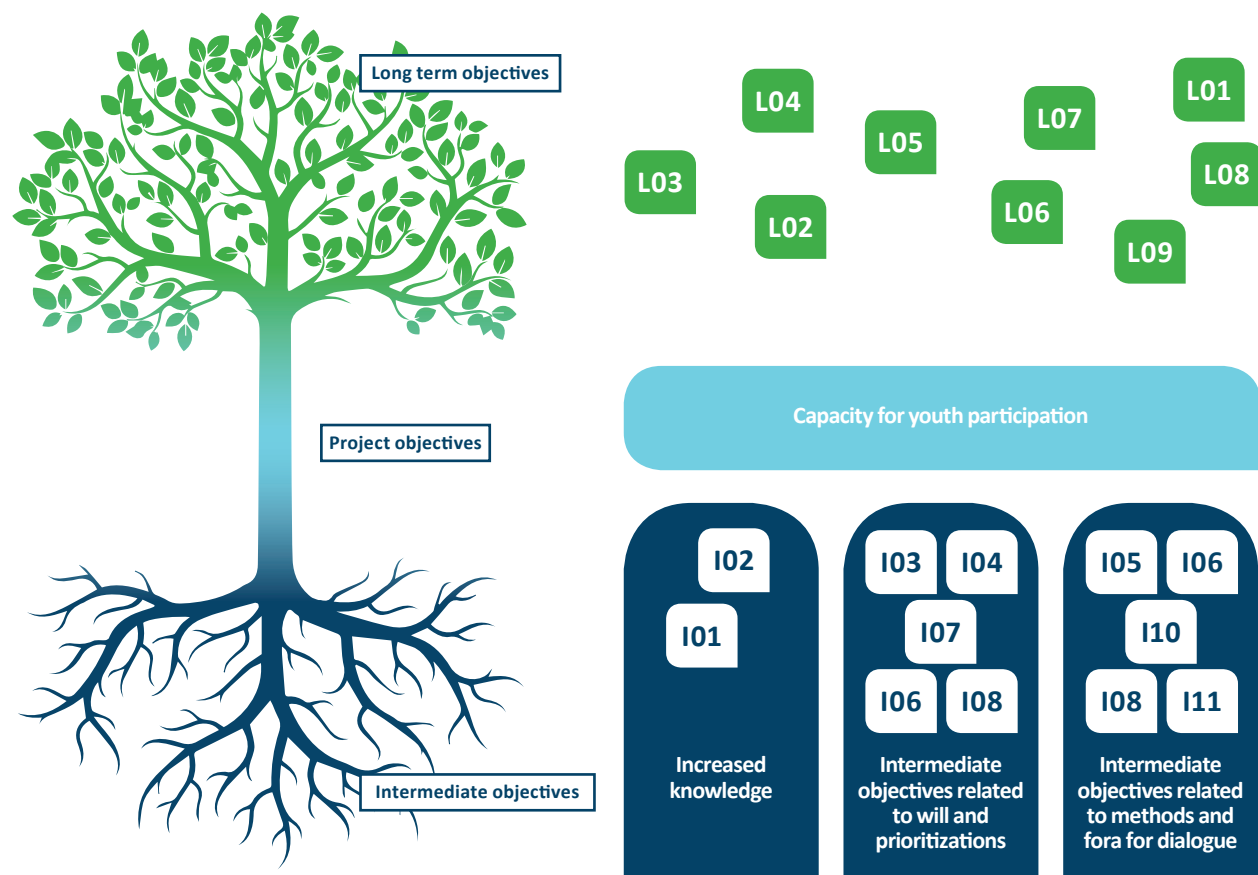
In this fig, LO = Long term objectives and IO = Intermediate objectives

Will your project strengthen your capacity as a duty bearer, to respect, promote, protect and fulfil human rights? If so, how?

Will your project contribute to reducing gender inequalities? If so, how?

Will your project reduce the causes and/ or impacts of environmental problems and strengthen the capacity of rights holders to handle environmental problems? If so, how?

Planning Steering Group and Project Group travel

Depending on the purpose of a trip you may want to schedule the Steering Group and the Project group trips at the same time, to allow for overlapping activities.

Step 5 – Activities plan

Once you have formulated clear project and intermediate goals you can start planning your activities. The project activities are what will be done in the project in order to achieve the goals.
Once all activities have been completed you should have reached your project goal.

When setting activities, consult the ICLD Budget Guidelines at ICLD´s webpage that describe which activity costs can be compensated.

Activities covered by ICLD Funding

Municipal partnerships are centered around two physical meetings a year that include both the Steering Group and the Project Group (Travel to Sweden and Travel to international partner). These meetings will require roughly 3-5 days depending on the length of travel. It is during these travels that most of your activities should take place, as these can be covered to a great extent by the ICLD funding you have allocated.

- Examples of activities that often occur during travel time: workshops, meetings, study visits, trainings, research, etc.
- Examples of activities that can occur outside of the travel time: Skype meetings, production of communications material, training materials, research, etc.

Other activities not covered by ICLD funding

Municipal partnerships projects usually act as a catalyst for other activities that will occur beyond ICLD funded activities. These additional activities represent great results of your municipal partnership and should be reported as such. However, they do not need to be part of your project planning.

Step 6 – Resources

Municipal partnerships are part of a knowledge and capacity building exchange programme centered around peer-to-peer meetings. The ICLD Budget Guidelines reflect this and mainly cover travel, Swedish staff costs, experts and consultant, rental of venue, communications and interpretation.

When planning the activities, you must consider what kinds of resources you will need.
If the costs cannot be compensated through ICLD, look at what your organisation already has available in the form of premises, equipment, staff, and what you need to budget for outside of ICLD funding.

ICLD requires you to submit yearly budgets based around two trips per year – one to Sweden and one trip to the international partner's location.

To make a budget based on travel, summarise the costs for the resources needed for each trip planned based on staff costs on the one hand, and travel, consultancy and communication costs on the other.

Step 7 – Indicators and means of verification

If your project application goes well, you will be awarded project funding from the ICLD. You will have support from your local decision makers and – to use Human Rights Based Approach lingo - as duty bearers, you will carry responsibility towards your right holders to achieve positive results. This LFA-step is designed to produce a framework for continuously evaluating how well the project is meeting its objectives. This "evidence" can be used to communicate results with your funder, decision makers and right holders, and to assess whether you need to change something in order for the project to have maximum impact.

In this step, you assign **indicators** and **means of verifications** to each intermediate objective and to the project objective but not to the long-term objectives.

Indicators are that to which you can point to confirm that an objective has been reached. They should be neutrally expressed, i.e. not presuming any specific outcome, and objectively verifiable, i.e. independent of whom is assessing the indicator. We recommend 2-3 indicators per objective.

How can you assess an indicator will become your means of verification? If you have a quantitative indicator such as the proportion of social workers who have up-to date knowledge about children's rights, the means of verification could be questionnaires or tests. If you have a qualitative indicator – for example, councilors' experiences of working with children's rights – you would probably conduct interviews. It is best to note where you or a potential auditor can find this information – places or "sources" – which are called sources of verification.

Step 8 – Risk analysis and risk management

Risks are events that could negatively impact your project. Risks may be external, such as political change and natural disasters. They may also be internal, such as corruption and high staff turnover. Either can influence the implementation of the project.

You can then classify your risks according to the probability and impact of them occurring.
Once you have identified the risks, you will need to indicate how you plan to manage them if they do occur, particularly those risks that have a high likelihood of occurring.

Potential negative impacts of the partnership and "Do no harm"

"Do no harm" is a practice for avoiding your project or partnership causing inadvertent harm. It especially means that you must consider the unintended consequences of your partnership on the relationships between groups of people in the context, and act to address those consequences.

Examples of questions you may want to ask yourself:
- What negative impact could our partnership have on our organisations?
- Could the project have a negative impact on certain groups?
- Could the partnership strengthen already strong and powerful groups?
- Could our partnership have a negative impact on the environment?

Do not be afraid to list these potential negative impacts - you should identify them so you can then work to minimise them.

Step 9 – Assumptions

Assumptions are external factors that have the potential to influence (or even determine) the success of a project. However, they lie outside your direct control.

Assumptions are usually successively identified during the context, stakeholder, problem and objective analysis which will have highlighted a number of issues (i.e. policy, institutional, technical, social and/or economic issues) that impact the project 'environment', but over which the project may have no direct control.

Photo: ICLD

Communication

Why we must put more effort into communication

It might seem obvious that communication is important, yet we still see that the municipal partnerships' internal and external communication seldom receives enough thought and attention. As resources are scarce, it is even more essential to be effective in your communication.

On one level, every stage of a partnership is both a result of communication and an instance of communication – from the first contact between the partners, to the application, implementation, reporting and post-project communication. Each stage is also an opportunity for effective communication – both internally and externally.

Internal communication

Making oneself understood is vital – as is understanding others. As if this is not hard enough in itself, a municipal partnership involves two or more partners typically from different countries with different cultures, languages and preconceptions about local government, democracy, municipal financing and much else. The earlier the stage of the partnership you are in, the more useful it is to consider this when meeting your partner. Discuss what the key components of your partnership mean to each partner in each context, perhaps starting with the ICLD Core Areas. In addition to creating a common (shared) understanding of key concepts, discuss how you want to communicate with one another - for example channels and timing. How quickly does each partner respond to emails and what are the expectations for receiving replies to emails? Beyond the partnership participants in Project- and Steering groups, the entire communication within each organisation is internal. Here you have identified the most important stakeholders.

Communication or Dissemination?

As you can imagine, the impact of a project is strongly dependent on both communication (internal communication) and dissemination (communication to the broader world/community). Effective communication and dissemination increase the impact, leading to a greater use by people, industries, partners, and scientists. The commercial impact of the project is crucial to ensure the long-term sustainability of the research & innovation activities. This is of course highly valued!

> 💡 The single biggest problem with communication is the belief that it has taken place.

Photo: ICLD

Learning in Partnership

The purpose of LFA as described earlier in this guide is planning, implementing and learning from a project. However, ICLD municipal partnerships are much larger than that. Many last for 5, 10, 20 years or longer, building capacity through a lineage of development projects. Indeed, a partnership may have several projects underway at the same time, sometimes designed to reinforce one another, sometimes addressing separate issues.

On the other hand, an ICLD municipal partnership also relies on the work of the Steering Groups that have the overarching responsibility to ensure that democratic values are kept at the heart of the cooperation. In addition to securing local support for partnerships and overseeing its various projects, the steering group can also contribute with concrete results of their own through institutionalizing change in issues of relevance to the ICLD core areas, equity, participation, transparency and accountability.

Flexibility and learning

Your project plan should not be set in stone – things change and your project should be designed to be flexible and adaptable. At the ICLD we highly encourage municipal partnerships to adapt to a changing situation when deemed appropriate. A municipal partnership is part of not only one, but at least two local governments contexts. Unforeseen delays, setbacks, and also opportunities, can and will occur during your project's lifetime. During implementation, you may also find that your project is falling short of its expected results. Don't worry. At the ICLD we highly encourage an adaptive or iterative approach to your project and partnership. Go back to your project plan and re-examine it – are there changes you should make to help the success of the project? Please note that you need to anchor

any major deviations to the project plan including budget with the ICLD beforehand. Contact us to discuss and document this kind of major changes.

Use the LFA with flexibility and with the aim to promote learning. Towards the end of your project, conduct a learning-oriented evaluation to understand what is happening in your project and why.

> 💡 **There is no such thing as failure – only learning.**
>
> Let us know in your yearly reports what has not worked as well as you had hoped in your project year – we do not see this as a failure, we see this as a possibility for you and us to learn and achieve better result the following year.

Reporting

You will need to send in a narrative and economic report after you completed your Inception Phase or Development/expansion. Reports for each year of your Steering Group and Project are also required. The reporting deadline date is one month after the expiration of each component/year and can be found in the agreement that is signed by the ICLD and the Swedish partner. All reports must be sent in online using the reporting tool on My pages, which can be accessed via the ICLD website. This is the same site where you apply for funding for your projects, hence the same user credentials are valid. Contact the ICLD if you have lost yours. Please note that some documents need to be printed, signed and uploaded in My Pages.

Once the report has been approved, funds will be disbursed to the account number you provided in the report. You will also receive feedback, which we strongly encourage you to read and share with your partner.

Additional information

Experts and consultants

Consultants and experts play an important role within municipal partnerships. When possible, we highly encourage you to use expertise available from within your organisations to strengthen your project. The use of external experts must be justified in the application. Ideally, experts should contribute directly to increasing knowledge and capacity within the key components of equity/inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability (ex: Citizen dialogue experts, direct democracy experts etc) and/or to the thematic priorities (ex: gender, environment and/or human rights experts). External experts can also be drawn from civil society. These can be representatives from various NGOs, women's groups, human rights groups, or representatives from different minorities. These experts should ideally be used by both partners.

Research

The Municipal Partnership Programme is keen to see partnerships link their projects to research by involving research, researchers and/or research centres. This can be pursued in various ways and used to different degrees. In addition to the Municipal Partnership Programme, the ICLD has a Knowledge Centre which documents, analyses and disseminates knowledge in the fields of local democracy development and decentralisation. The Knowledge Centre acts as a research hub for local governance and has a vast network of researchers and research centres in Sweden and in ICLD partner countries. Many of these research actors are looking to team up with practitioners like yourselves – so please do not hesitate to contact us. You may also involve research through your own contacts and network.

How research can help strengthen your project

The following list provides examples of ways research can be integrated in your project to help strengthen it:
- Have a relevant researcher serve as a member of the project or steering group;
- Invite a researcher as an expert guest lecturer on local democracy;
- Work with a master student;
- Collaborate with a researcher to conduct surveys, interviews and focus groups;
- Involve a researcher for your Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning;
- Conduct transdisciplinary research – help bridge the gap between the academic and practical world and create much needed knowledge for today's challenges.

Funding research in your partnership

Research cost are covered under the category of "Experts" in the Budget Guidelines;
Experts and consultants hired by Swedish municipalities for projects in Sweden and in the partner country. The maximum amount that can be paid is SEK 6 400 kr/day. The costs for experts must be no more than 15 % of the total project budget. Any consultants/experts engaged must be justified in the project application, including a description of their role and significance for implementation of the project.

In addition, funding for follow-up research on municipal partnership is available through application. Contact us to find out more.

Interpretation

A municipal partnership may require professional interpretation. Municipal partnerships are centred around two physical meetings between partners per year where continuous interpretation from meetings to social events can be needed depending on the context and/or country.

If your partnership requires interpretation or translation, please refer to our Guidelines for Interpretation at ICLD´s webpage.

Code of conduct

All parties involved in ICLD funded municipal partnership are required to sign the ICLD Code of conduct. The document can be found at ICLD´s webpage. Among other things, the code of conduct addresses abuse of position and power, sexual exploitation, harassment, discrimination, corruption, and use of alcohol and illicit drugs. We highly recommend that you have a short session with your partner early on in your partnership to discuss our code of conduct and its possible interpretations. You may also want to list a further set of rules that you want your partnership to follow. This may help avoid difficult issues that can occur later in the partnership.

Country specific contacts and networks

It is important to remember that you are probably not alone in conducting municipal partnerships in a country. Check out our website or contact us for an up-to-date list of other municipal partnerships active in the same country.

From time to time, the ICLD will organize workshops, trainings, conferences or dialogue forums that we will invite you to for the main purpose of exchanging knowledge and experiences. In Sweden, check out our map to find out which municipalities and regions are active within the programme. You may want to organise a networking and exchange day.

In addition to the ICLD, we suggest contacting your country's embassy in your collaboration country. They are usually interested to learn about your partnership and can provide useful information and assistance.

Another type of organisation that often possesses comprehensive knowledge and networks is each country's association of local authorities. We note that as of 2019, all our eligible collaboration countries have at least one association of local authorities or country-specific equivalent, listed below with their websites:

Bosnia and Hercegovina	Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina *www.sogfbih.ba* Association of Local Authorities of Republica Srpska *www.alvrs.com*	**North Macedonia**	Association of the Units of Local Self-government of Republic of Macedonia *www.zels.org.mk*
Botswana	Botswana Association of Local Authorities *www.bala.org.bw*	**Serbia**	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities *www.skgo.org*
China	China Association of mayors *www.citieschina.org*	**South Africa**	South African Local Government Association *www.salga.org.za*
Georgia	National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia *www.nala.ge*	**Tanzania**	Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania *www.alat.go.tz*
Indonesia	Indonesian Municipal Councils Association *www.adeksi.or.id*	**Turkey**	Union of Municipalities of Turkey *www.tbb.gov.tr/en*
Kenya	Council of Governors *www.cog.go.ke*	**Uganda**	Uganda Local Government Association *www.ulga.org*
Kosovo	Association of Kosovo Municipalities *www.komunat-ks.net*	**Ukraine**	Association of Small Towns of Ukraine *www.ammu.com.ua* Association of Amalgamated Territorial Communities of Ukraine *www.hromady.org* Association of Ukrainian Cities *www.auc.org.ua/en*
Moçambique	Associação Nacional dos Municípios de Moçambique *www.facebook.com/ANAMM.ORG.MZ*	**Vietnam**	Association of Cities of Vietnam *www.acvn.vn*
Moldova	Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova *www.calm.md*	**Zambia**	The Local Government Association of Zambia *www.lgazambia.org.zm*
Namibia	Association of Local Authorities Namibia *www.alan.org.na*		

International Training Programmes for project and steering group members

ICLD's training programmes are aimed at decision- makers and administrative officials in some of ICLD's municipal partnership countries. There are several different training programmes on various topics concerning local governance, all of which are provided free of charge for participants, with participants' travel costs also financed by ICLD. To find out which programmes are available in which countries, please contact us. We highly recommend that decision makers and administrative officials involved in municipal partnerships attend such training whenever possible.

Contact with the ICLD

We always strive to do our very best to provide you with all the support you need, whether before, during, or after, your municipal partnership. You are always welcome to contact us, the Municipal Partnership Programme, at **partnership@icld.se** or feel free to give us a call at **+46 (0)498 – 29 91 00**

THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

ICLD Swedish International
Centre for Local Democracy