

# ANNUAL REPORT



**2025**

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# DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS NEED LOCAL AUTHORITIES

**Democracy and human rights are not realized through abstract principles, but through the encounter between people and the institutions that shape their everyday lives. In order for these values to reach the individual citizen, there is a need for strong, politically controlled and well-functioning local authorities – with the mandate, resources and capacity to put rights into practice.**

In this perspective, it is difficult to overestimate the important role that Swedish municipalities and regions have played through our partnership programs for the development of local democracy worldwide. With limited resources but with great competence and perseverance, they have contributed to lasting results, strengthened local institutions and spread methods and experiences far beyond the geographical limits of individual projects.

ICLD looks back with pride and gratitude on the work carried out in 2025 and throughout the organisation's operations since its inception in 2008. The need to build and institutionalize democratic capacity at the local level is greater than ever. In an era of increasing autocratisation and centralisation, local authorities have shown that they can be a decisive counterforce – close to citizens and firmly rooted in the rule of law.

At the same time, international aid is undergoing a major transformation. Renewal and streamlining are necessary, but when the transition risks weakening the support for democracy, human rights and the institutions of the rule of law, there is a serious danger in the long-term development. The decision to end the funding through ICLD for democracy assistance in municipalities and regions means that 2025 will be the last year of full-scale operations within the framework of ICLD's mission.

This annual report is therefore both an account and a final statement – a comprehensive account of the efforts that Swedish municipalities and regions have implemented to strengthen local democracy worldwide.

With our heads high and with a humble pride, we are entering our final year and, together with our committed Swedish municipalities and regions, we now take on the task of completing this important work in a responsible and dignified manner.



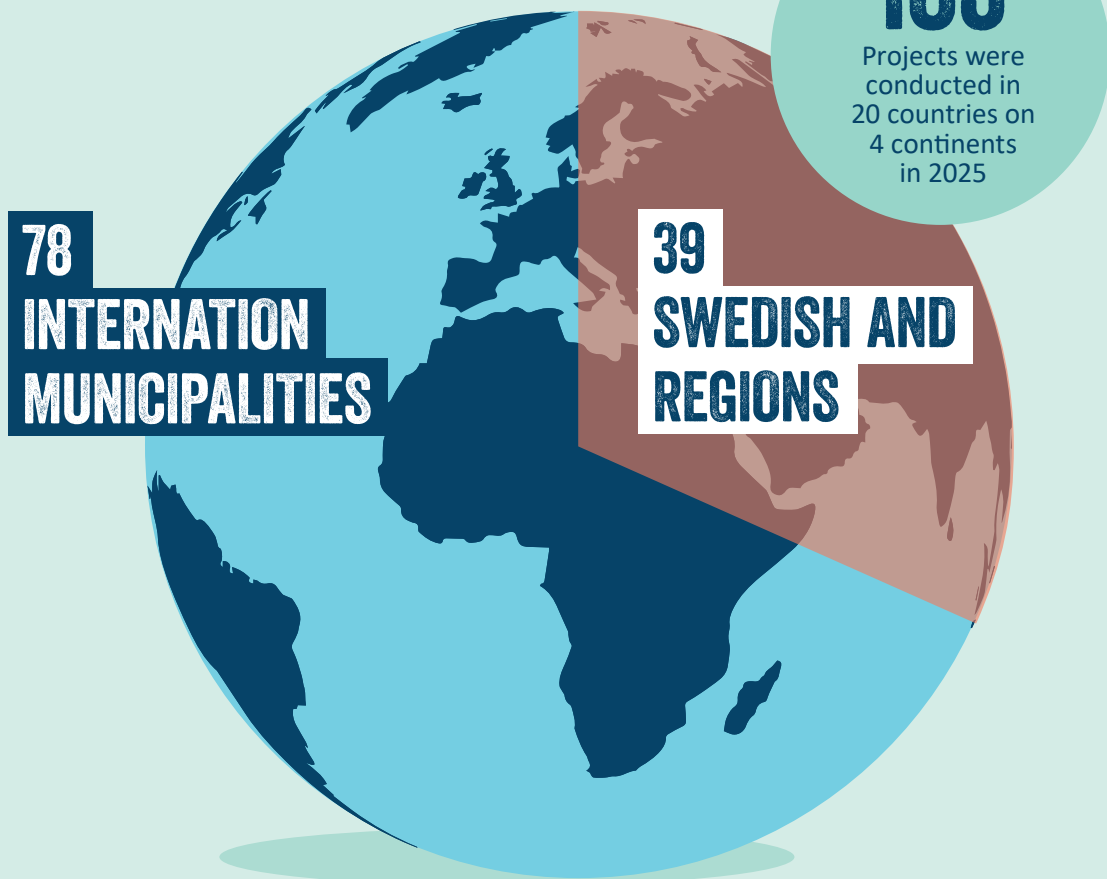
Photo: ICLD

Johan Lilja, Secretary General

Marcus Holmberg, President of the Board

# ICLD IN FIGURES 2025

IN 2025, **117 MUNICIPALITIES/REGIONS** WERE ACTIVE IN THE ICLD PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES AROUND THE WORLD.



#### Countries engaged (20 + Sweden):

**Europe:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo [1], Serbia, Ukraine.

**Africa:** Botswana, Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

**Asia:** Philippines, Vietnam.

**Latin America:** Colombia, Guatemala.



**ICLD'S INTERNATIONAL WOMEN LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME HAD 34 PARTICIPANTS AND 12 MENTORS FROM 13 COUNTRIES ON 3 CONTINENTS IN 2025.**

In 2025, ICLD had declarations of intent with **20 universities and 6 municipal associations** in Africa, Europe and Latin America.





# ICLD IN THE WORLD 2008-2025

**● IICLD'S PRIORITISED INTERVENTION COUNTRIES**  
 Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, Kosovo, Serbia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, Zambia, Zimbabwe

**📍 ÖVRIGA LÄNDER DÄR IICLD HAR HAFT VERKSAMHET**  
 Albania, Belarus, China, Philippines, Georgien, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Lithuania, Malawi, Moldova, Mozambique, Namibia, North Macedonia, Rwanda, Russia, Turkey, Vietnam

## ICLD IN SWEDEN

- 126 municipalities engaged in municipal partnerships

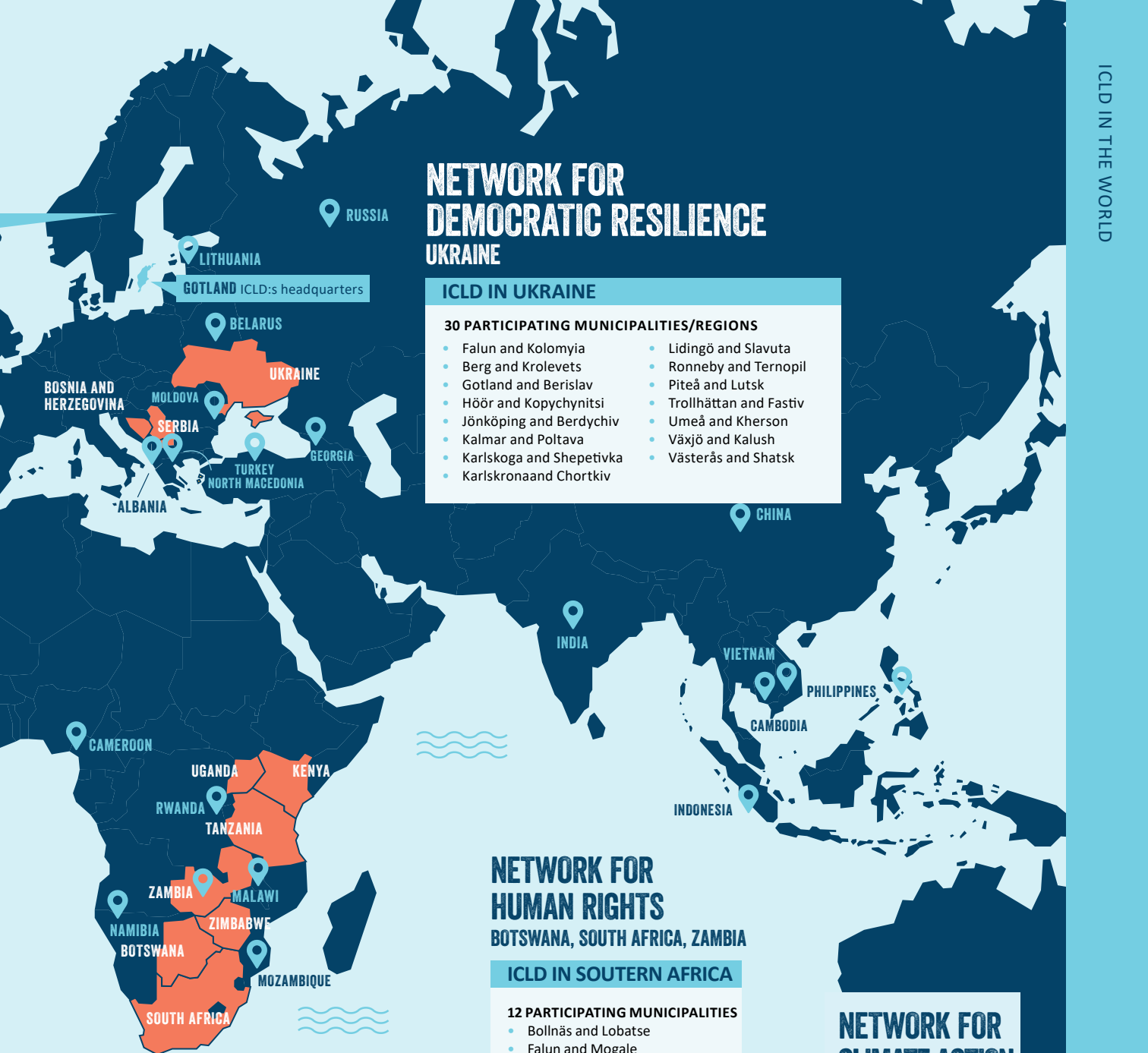
READ MORE ABOUT IICLD'S NETWORKS



## NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY COLOMBIA, GUATEMALA

### ICLD IN LATIN AMERICA

- 11 PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES/REGIONS**
- Region Västerbotten and Amazonas & Vaupes
  - Lessebo and Guatemala City
  - Umeå and Bogotá
  - Upplands-Bro and Maicao
  - Åre and Panajachel



## NETWORK FOR DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE UKRAINE

### ICLD IN UKRAINE

#### 30 PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES/REGIONS

- Falun and Kolomyia
- Berg and Krolevets
- Gotland and Berislav
- Höör and Kopychynitsi
- Jönköping and Berdychiv
- Kalmar and Poltava
- Karlskoga and Shepetivka
- Karlskrona and Chortkiv
- Lidingö and Slavuta
- Ronneby and Ternopil
- Piteå and Lutsk
- Trollhättan and Fastiv
- Umeå and Kherson
- Växjö and Kalush
- Västerås and Shatsk

## NETWORK FOR YOUTH INFLUENCE

BOTSWANA, SOUTH AFRICA, ZIMBABWE, ZAMBIA

### ICLD IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

#### 15 PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

- Bollnäs and Lobatse
- Dorotea and Livingstone & Victoria Falls
- Falkenberg and Sundays River Valley & Sarah Baartman district
- Jönköping and Stellenbosh
- Lidköping and Lusaka
- Solwezi
- Umeå and Cape Agulhas

## NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

BOTSWANA, SOUTH AFRICA, ZAMBIA

### ICLD IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

#### 12 PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

- Bollnäs and Lobatse
- Falun and Mogale
- Kungsör and Rufunsa
- Lund and Francistown
- Jönköping and Stellenbosch
- Piteå and Chinsali

## NETWORK FOR EQUITABLE HEALTH

KENYA, UGANDA

### ICLD IN EASTERN AFRICA

#### 8 PARTICIPATING REGIONS

- Region Norrbotten and Kajiado County
- Region Stockholm and Jinja City
- Region Västerbotten and Homa Bay County
- Region Östergötland and Uasin Gishu County

## NETWORK FOR CLIMATE ACTION

KENYA, SOUTH AFRICA, ZAMBIA, UGANDA

### ICLD IN SOUTHERN & EASTERN AFRICA

#### 13 PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES/REGIONS

- Karlskrona and Saldanha Bay
- Lidköping and Lusaka
- Region Västerbotten and Umeå och Kisumu
- Region Västernorrland and Mombasa
- Robertfors and Machakos
- Strängnäs and Entebbe

# DEMOCRACY, HOPE AND

ICLD's largest partnership network is the *Democratic Resilience Network*, which in 2025 brought together 30 Swedish and Ukrainian municipalities. These partnerships strengthen the democratic resilience of Ukrainian municipalities and actively support Ukraine's EU accession by promoting the implementation of EU principles at the local level. At the same time, the Swedish municipalities gain valuable experience, for example in crisis preparedness. Here we present some of the successful partnerships.

## PARTNERSHIP FOR ENHANCED CRISIS PREPAREDNESS

Kalmar cooperates with the Ukrainian city of Poltava in preparedness and civil defence. The ICLD partnership has a clear focus on rescue service, emergency preparedness and civil protection, but also covers long-term future issues such as Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU. For Kalmar, the partnership has contributed to a more robust and inclusive crisis preparedness.

A central part of the cooperation is the mutual knowledge transfer between the rescue services in Kalmar and Poltava. With the support of Kalmar, Poltava has been able to adapt parts of its rescue service to EU standards.

At the same time, Kalmar's rescue service has gained valuable insights into how rescue and preparedness work is conducted during prolonged crises, including experiences of continuity and resource prioritization and collaboration during heightened preparedness. Through study visits to Kalmar, Ukrainian firefighters have had the opportunity to share experiences and learn from good examples in rescue operations, crisis management and civil defence.

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*Through our collaboration, we show that municipalities makes a difference when the outside world is uncertain. It is both right and necessary!*

**Hanne Lindqvist**, opposition councillor (M) and Deputy Mayor of the Kalmar Municipal Council.



Ukrainian firefighters visit the rescue service in Kalmar. Photo: ICLD.

# ND RECONSTRUCTION

The collaboration has also contributed to an increased understanding within the relevant institutions for inclusive crisis management and the importance of collaboration between local authorities, rescue services and other social actors. Through the exchange of experience between the participants in the project, they have strengthened their expertise on how safety, social sustainability and inclusion can be integrated into the crisis preparedness work. The study visits have had a special focus on further developing cooperation and strengthening the resilience of local communities.

The collaboration is characterized by mutual exchange, collegial learning and a clear integration of civil society actors in the implementation of the project, which strengthens both Poltava's and Kalmar's ability to face future crises.

The ICLD partnership between Kalmar and Poltava is a very good example of how local experiences can be converted into joint learning and a strengthened preparedness on both sides, for Ukraine, Sweden and for the world!



*For Kalmar, the cooperation represents a unique opportunity to strengthen its own crisis preparedness through learning from a society that has the actual answer on how to do it.*

Erik Ciardi (C), municipal councillor in Kalmar



*Read more about Kalmar and Poltava's ICLD project*

Poltava visits its partner municipality Kalmar. Photo: ICLD.

## PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEMOCRATIC URBAN PLANNING

**The ICLD partnership between Jönköping and the Ukrainian city of Berdychiv aims at a complex challenge: How can sustainable, inclusive and democratic urban planning be developed in an ongoing war and reconstruction context?**

The starting point for the cooperation is Berdychiv's rapid population growth as a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the urgent need for housing and social infrastructure.

The background is Berdychiv's rapid population growth as a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The city has become a receiving place for internally displaced people from hard-hit regions, with an urgent need for housing and social infrastructure. At the same time, the municipality has long lacked modern planning documentation, as maps and geographical data were largely only available in paper form, which made planning and coordination difficult.

### CONTRIBUTES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL SYSTEM

A central part of the partnership is linked to Ukraine's national efforts to collect geographic data in common digital systems.

Municipalities must deliver information about addresses, streets, buildings and properties to the state platform DIA. Within the project, therefore, a GIS course has been developed that supports both the production and uploading of this data. The solutions are scalable and can eventually be used by municipalities throughout the country. The solutions are scalable and can eventually be used by municipalities throughout Ukraine.

**Jönköping University** together with counterparts in Berdychiv contributes with important expertise in urban planning, geodata/GIS, IT security in crisis and methods for inclusive citizen dialogue.



The project managers in the partnerships between Jönköping and Berdychiv. Photo: ICLD.

### CITIZENS' DIALOGUE IN NEW FORMS

The project has gradually expanded from a technical focus to the inclusion of democratic working methods and citizen dialogue. Methods such as MyPlace are used to capture the perspectives of children and young people, while digital surveys and e-dialogue are developed for adults. The goal is to create inclusive channels for participation and to integrate citizens' views into actual planning and decision-making processes.

### MUTUAL LEARNING

For Jönköping, the partnership leads to learnings with ripple effects on other development projects. At the same time, the collaboration provides valuable insights into crisis preparedness, such as the importance of having well-planned safety points, says Ann-Marie Hedlund, chairman of the City Planning Board, Jönköping Municipality.

The partnership between Jönköping and Berdychiv shows how technological development, democratic renewal and international cooperation can go hand in hand. In a time of crisis and reconstruction, this lays the foundation for more sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities, both in Ukraine and in Sweden.



*The group from Berdychiv gave us valuable feedback when visiting the municipality's first test of a safe spot. In addition, about planning under extreme conditions – knowledge that is very relevant in Sweden today. The work has given us insight about the importance of keeping confidential various information, e.g. on map material and databases linked to the GIS.*

Ann-Marie Hedlund (L), Chairman of the City Planning Board, Jönköping Municipality

#### FACTS

The ICLD partnership network **Democratic Resilience** currently includes 30 Ukrainian and Swedish municipalities/regions.



## A RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE FOR ALL

**As Ukraine prepares for post-war reconstruction, accessibility and inclusion become key issues. The war has led to more people living with disabilities, including war veterans and civilians with physical and mental trauma. For municipalities, this means a responsibility to integrate accessibility early in on planning and implementation.**

### UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR THE CITIES OF THE FUTURE

**BUILDSUP** is an educational initiative for Ukrainian municipalities that strengthens local capacity in inclusive community planning. The project is implemented by ICLD together with Malmö University and the organisation Poruch. It is based on the principles of universal design – an approach where buildings and environments are designed to function for as many people as possible, regardless of functional ability.

Kyrilo is from the city of **Kherson**, located at the front and subjected to uninterrupted attacks, and preparing for **total renovation when the war is over**. They will need to restore almost every building, street, and public space.

He describes how municipal employees become targets because they maintain important services and enable the lives of those who have not yet moved.

### FROM KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

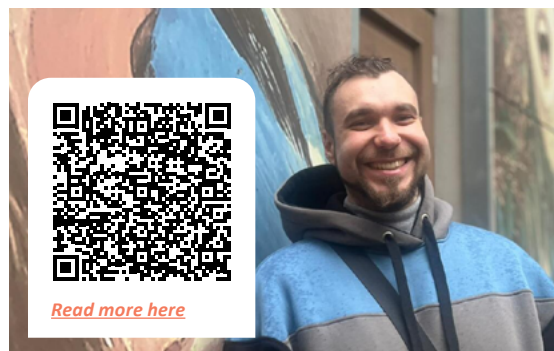
Within BUILDSUP, theory is combined with practical exercises that help participants understand how the built environment affects people with different abilities. The project also includes comparisons between the municipal administration in Ukraine and Sweden, as well as discussions on how inclusive policies can be put into practice.

BUILDSUP is funded by the Swedish Institute and is part of a broader international cooperation to strengthen local, democratic and inclusive governance in Ukraine.



*After the war we will have many war veterans and people with disabilities, so we need solutions to rebuild the city in an inclusive way so that we can welcome them back.*

Kyrilo, Kherson.



Kyrilo from Kherson. Photo: ICLD.

# EQUAL HEALTH – A

Four Swedish regions cooperate with partner districts in Kenya or Uganda within ICLD's network for equal health. Together, they work in joint projects to make healthcare more equal through democratic ways of working in their respective communities. Here are some of their great project results.

## FOR EQUAL CANCER CARE - REGION ÖSTERGÖTLAND AND USAIN GISHU

How can institutional cooperation contribute to better and more equal cancer care? Within the partnership between Region Östergötland and Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, education, locally adapted methods and citizen dialogue have contributed to concrete improvements in screening and early detection of cancer.

## ABOUT THE COOPERATION

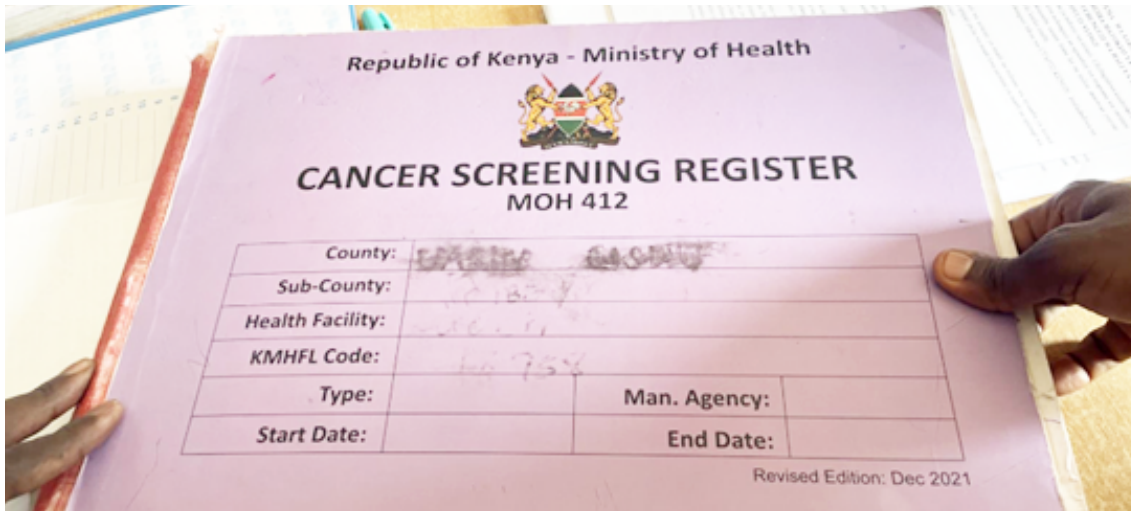
The partnership, which started in 2021, has aimed to strengthen capacity in cancer-related healthcare. The goal has been to reduce inequalities in care by strengthening institutional capacity, identifying deficiencies in care systems and developing common solutions that can be adapted and applied in both organisations.

The work has included skills development for healthcare professionals, the development of policies and guidelines and strengthened forms of dialogue between healthcare and residents. [Community Report Card \(CRC\)](#) has also been used to capture the needs of residents and create a more data-driven and needs-driven approach.



Visit to hospital in Uasin Gishu. Photo: ICLD.

# DEMOCRATIC RIGHT



Registry for cancer screening in Kenya. Photo: ICLD.

## RESULTS AND EFFECTS

The project has led to clear improvements on several levels – from individual and organisation to society. In healthcare, competence has been strengthened, especially when it comes to early diagnosis of cervical cancer.

The work on communication and prevention has also been developed. Information efforts have been implemented via social media, posters and the information tool 1127Cancer, which has increased awareness of the importance of early detection.

At the organisational level, the project has contributed to a more coherent and long-term management of cancer care in Uasin Gishu County. New guidelines for early detection and management of cervical and breast cancer have been developed and implemented, and policymakers have been strengthened in evidence-based policy development. This has led to a more strategic use of resources and a better coordination between different levels of care.

*A particular focus has been placed on equality in access to care.* Through targeted efforts, minorities and socioeconomically vulnerable groups have been reached to a greater extent than before. HPV vaccination has expanded in areas with low coverage, mobile care teams have been sent to rural areas and information efforts have been adapted linguistically and culturally. Overall, this has led to more women participating in screening programs and to a better confidence in the health care system.

### CITIZENS' DIALOGUE AND HEALTH

ICLD has funded a research project on the importance of citizen dialogue and health in Kenya by researcher Michael Touchton, at the University of Miami.





Dorothy Akongo, public health specialist Busoga Health Forum and Brenda Ockuru, nurse at the hospital in Jinja. Photo: ICLD.

## CHILD RIGHTS AMBASSADORS

**Training staff to become Child Rights Ambassadors is an effective way to strengthen the protection of children's rights. Through the ICLD partnership between Jinja City in Uganda and Region Stockholm/the Astrid Lindgren Hospital, a concrete tool has been developed: a step-by-step guide to educating Child Rights Ambassadors! With the help of the tool, about a hundred Child Rights Ambassadors have already been trained in Jinja.**

Two of the participants in the partnership are Dorothy Akongo, who works as a public health specialist at the organisation Busoga Health Forum, and Brenda Ockuru, who is a nurse at the hospital in Jinja. Both are trained Child

Rights Ambassadors and are now in turn training new ambassadors. Together, they have trained more than 80 employees at, among other things, health facilities in the area.



*When you are a trained Child Rights you should be an advocated for children's rights. This applies not only to healthcare, but You also need to make sure the kids know their rights.*

**Brenda Ockuru**, Nurse at Jinja Hospital

One of those trained by Brenda and Dorothy is Otai Albert Julius, who works as a psychiatric nurse. In his work, he meets children and young people living with mental illness on a daily basis and he has seen how many of them carry both silence and fear. For him, the education became an important tool for breaking these barriers.

Otai Albert Julius chose to train to be a Child Rights Ambassador after being inspired by a colleague who had already taken the course. When he saw what a difference it made for the children in the children’s department, he wanted to be a part of the change.

Through the education, he has learned more about children’s rights, relevant legislation, children’s participation and how mental health and rights are related. He describes a particularly strong experience: when children with chronic illnesses performed a poem and a song in front of the hospital management, asking for a special department for long-term illnesses and for greater understanding from the staff. It was a strong reminder of why children need a voice.



*Children should not be afraid of health care. They should feel safe, be listened to and be treated with respect.*

Otai Albert Julius, psychiatric nurse

### THEORY BECOMES REALITY

Today, there are more than 80 trained Child Rights Ambassadors in Jinja. They use the same toolbox, the same methodology and share the same goal: to move children’s rights from theory to reality.

Their work has already led to several changes, such as more child-friendly health care environments where more children have the courage to seek care and tell about their situation. At the same time, both children and their parents have gained increased knowledge and greater participation in the decisions that affect them. There is great interest in becoming a Child Rights Ambassador, and the hope is to spread this way of working to hospitals as well as other institutions, so that children’s rights become a matter of course.

#### ICLD NETWORK FOR EQUITABLE HEALTH

The Network for Equitable Health includes: Region Stockholm & Jinja City, Region Norrbotten & Kajado County, Region Östergötland & Uasin Gishu County and Region Västerbotten & Homa Bay County



Otai Albert Julius, psychiatric nurse and children’s rights ambassador. Photo: ICLD.

# A SOCIETY THAT WO

## BORĀS AND VRAČAR – INCREASING INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

**The Serbian municipality of Vračar has taken important steps towards the inclusion of people with disabilities. Through its municipal partnership with Borås Municipality that started in 2021, with the goal of increasing the influence and participation of people with disabilities, organisational structures have been built, and concrete changes have been implemented.**

A key result is the establishment of a Handicap Council in Vračar, chaired by the municipality Deputy Mayor, and with representatives from national authorities, the health and education sectors, as well as a number of disability and NPIs.

Within the council, an accessibility team has also been established, whose task is to collaborate with the city authorities to review construction projects, follow up the application of accessibility standards and propose improvements.



Project team Vracar Photo: ICLD.

# WORKS FOR EVERYONE



”

*The guidelines have clear instructions for implementation in the daily work of the municipalities.*

Ljupka Mihailovska, The Sebian Alliance for Accessibility

## GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN PRACTICE

Another important and concrete result are the four accessibility standard guidelines that have been developed. They include communication, public spaces, administrative services and events and have been further developed through joint workshops during partnership visits. It's not just theory – every part can be translated into daily work. They are based on current regulations, experiences of people with disabilities and their recommendations as well as advices from experts.

“Above all, the guidelines are there to help people identify obstacles and understand how to properly plan and provide services,” says Irena Lakobrija Delić, project manager in Vračar.

These guidelines now form the basis for the dissemination of knowledge and experience to other municipalities with the goal of involving all 17 municipalities in Belgrade. And the work has been successful.



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*When we started spreading our guidelines, we knew we had a very good base, but probably did not quite understand how ready people were for this change. Today, we can proudly say that there is no return to the time before this work started.*

Irena Lakobrija Delić, Project Manager in Vračar

What started with ramps is today a real change in several parts of the municipality's operations.

Swedish municipalities and regions have a lot of good knowledge and experience to promote participation and influence for citizens. We need to share this with other to help strengthen local democracy development in the world.

# METHODS AND KNOWLEDGE PUT INTO PRACTICE

## MATERIALS FOR DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

In order for good results as well as methods and knowledge to be disseminated from our partnerships and programs, we develop targeted products. They are spread, among other things, through our municipalities, municipal associations and our participants.



John Gitonga, ICLD's Alumni Coordinator

## ICLD ALUMNI ARE SPREADING KNOWLEDGE AND METHODS

ICLD has a strong and committed global network of several hundred alumni and partners who spread ICLD's knowledge and methods worldwide.



EDUCATION FILMS

TALK VIDEOS

INTERVIEWS



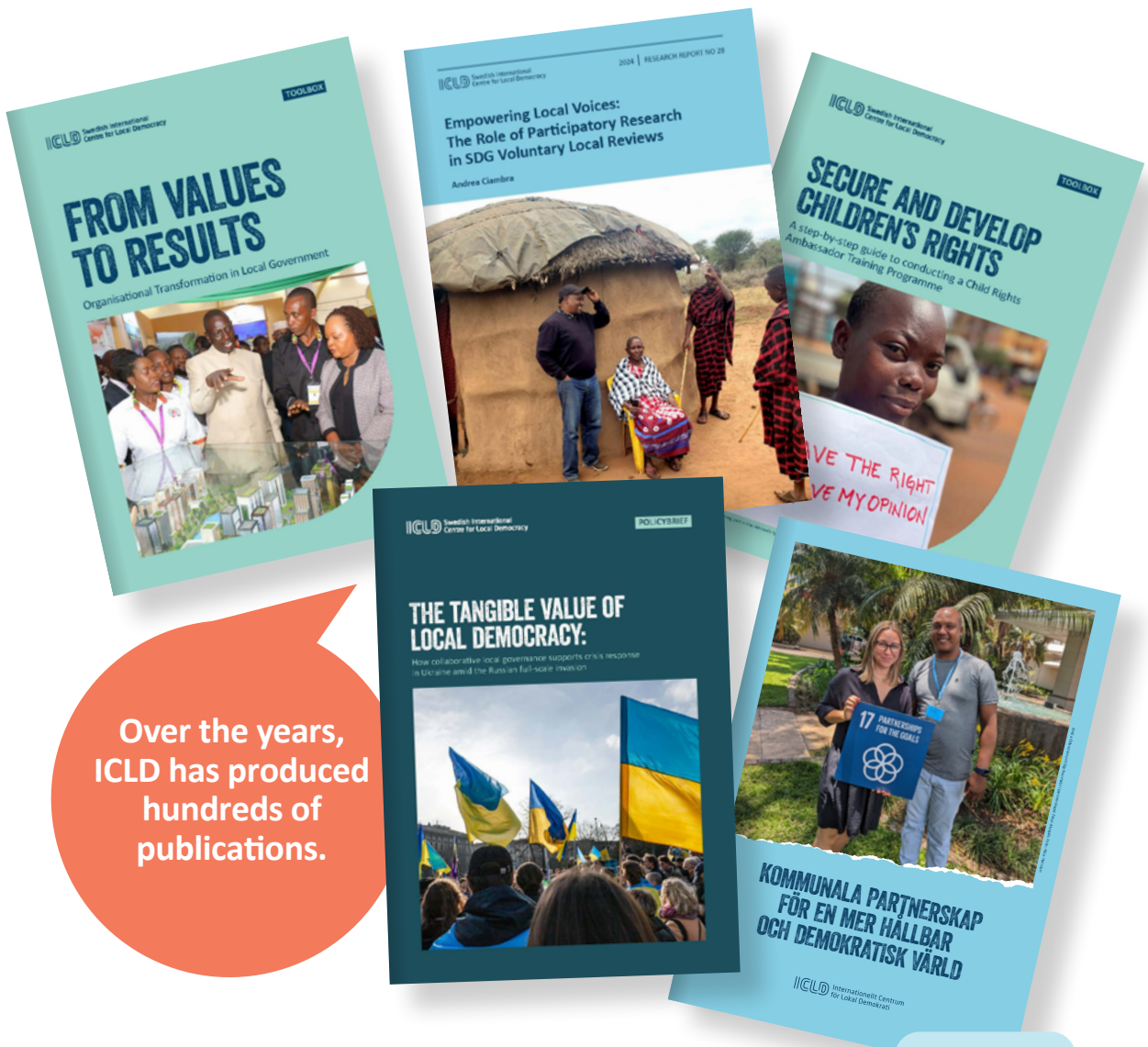
WATCH  
AND  
LEARN

DISCOVER OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL

[youtube.com/@icldsweden](https://youtube.com/@icldsweden)



Many of the ICLD-funded research projects are reported through research reports, working papers and policy briefs. To make these results available to a wider audience, we produce materials such as guidelines, step-by-step guides, and videos. We also produce manuals, dilemma exercises and other products that can be valuable to our target groups.



RESEARCH REPORT: 32

LEARNING CASES: 16

WORKING PAPER: 24

TOOLBOX: 16

POLICYBRIEF: 36



# LOCAL DEMOCRACY ESSENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY

**Solving global challenges requires robust democratic institutions at the local level that ensure citizens' right to influence on issues that affect their everyday lives.**

**B**y increasing participation and equality and promoting transparent local management systems that enable accountability, we create conditions for tackling global challenges.

Strong politically controlled local authorities, where citizens have the right to influence, enables us to tackle global challenges around poverty, the environment and climate in a long-term manner.

Swedish municipalities and regions play an important role in strengthening democracy and contributing to the implementation of the global goals in Sweden as well as internationally.

ICLD has several important thematic networks tasked with collaborating and partnering to solve common challenges linked to the global goals. The focus is on strengthening politically controlled local authorities to ensure citizens' rights and influence such as youth influence, gender equality, health, environment and climate issues.

Participants in these networks will have access to relevant knowledge and support to drive change projects effectively. ICLD's customized education programs and research are important tools for municipalities to achieve strong and sustainable results.

## OUR MISSION

ICLD will work to institutionalise democracy, human rights and the rule of law through knowledge exchanges between Swedish municipalities and regions and its international counterparts within ICLD's countries of intervention in Africa, Europe and Latin America. In these partnerships, knowledge exchanges, needs-adapted educational efforts and research are carried out.

ICLD is based on a rights perspective with the goal of creating better living conditions for people in poverty. By strengthening politically controlled local authorities, we give citizens the opportunity to influence their own lives and communities, which is a fundamental component of sustainable growth and development.

The reciprocity of the projects and programmes are key to long-term results. Democratic and economic development is favoured when equal parties

shares experiences and learns from each other with steering groups consisting of both majority and opposition for sustainable results.



In order to maximise results and achieve a greater impact, interventions are made within a number of different thematic networks consisting of several Swedish as well as international local authorities. The broad competency base contributes to an impact beyond the individual partnerships, ensuring a global effect through local results.

The interventions are based both on research and practical experience with a strong local anchorage. Sustainable development socially, economically and environmentally requires a strong democratically governed local authority in order to implement global and national policies. ICLD's programs and collaborations contribute to the realization of international policies such as the global goals by strengthening the capacity of local authorities regarding equality, participation, transparency and accountability.

# ICLD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ICLD is a government-funded organisation. The association’s members, as well as the board, are representatives from Sweden’s municipalities and regions, Region Gotland and Lund University. ICLD’s operations are financed by Sida. Operations are regulated by national and international policy documents and agreements between ICLD and Sida.



**MARCUS HOLMBERG**  
PRESIDENT

Head, EU and International Section, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions



**KRISTINA JÖNSSON**  
BOARD MEMBER

Associate Professor, Lund University



**MEIT FOHLIN**  
BOARD MEMBER

Mayor of the Regional Executive Board, Gotland Region



**ULRIKA STÖÖK**  
BOARD MEMBER

Development Manager, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions



LUNDS UNIVERSITET



## ICLD CORE VALUES

The foundations of democracy are based on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, universal and equal suffrage, equality before the law and the principle of non-discrimination. ICLD’s core values are based on the foundations of a good local democracy and are expressed in the following headings: equality, participation, transparency and accountability.



# MANAGEMENT REPORT 2025

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE OPERATIONS

**The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD), 802441-7480, is a state-funded association based in Visby. The association's members are the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR), Lund University and Region Gotland. SKR has a special mandate regulated in the association's statutes.**

ICLD's activities shall contribute to enabling municipalities and regions in selected partner countries internationally to provide all citizens with opportunities for influence over the design of public activities. This is done by strengthening democratic local and regional politically controlled bodies. The work is mainly conducted in around fifteen countries in Africa, Latin America and Europe, as well as with remaining individual municipalities with which we are cooperating in Asia. ICLD operates through three branches of activity; Municipal Partnerships, International Education Programmes and Research.

The year 2025 constituted the third and penultimate intervention year within the framework of ICLD's agreement with Sida for the strategy period 2023-2026, as well as the last year for the agreement with Sida that extends over the years 2016-2025.

### PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANISATION

ICLD is an actor within the Swedish development cooperation, with a special task of conveying Sida funding to Swedish municipalities and regions in order to conduct professional international democracy work towards local authorities. ICLD's purpose is to contribute through municipal partnerships to a fair and sustainable global development

that creates conditions for people in multidimensional poverty to improve their living conditions.

ICLD's goal for the 2023-2026 strategy period is to increase citizen empowerment by strengthening local and regional politically driven organisations to provide increased opportunities for citizens to have influence in the decision-making that affects them.

ICLD's efforts will contribute to a measurable increase in influence for marginalised groups and youth, a significant and measurable increase of women in decision-making bodies, and that these organisms conduct their activities in an open and clear manner, with the possibility of accountability.

In order to meet ICLD's goals, politicians and officials at the local level in the partner countries must have increased their knowledge on how to promote local democratic development and must have the opportunity to institutionalise this knowledge in their organisations. ICLD's efforts should contribute to ensuring that the organisations in the partner countries give all citizens equal opportunities to influence the design of public activities.

This is well described in ICLD's theory of change, which is based on a positive democratic development through efforts that strengthen the knowledge and capacity of individual officials and politicians to work for democratic core values within their organisation. Because ICLD promotes the ability of these individuals to influence their organisation's values, policies and work methods, democratic core values can be permanently institutionalised. When the organisation acts in line with these core values towards citizens, their ability to exercise their democratic rights increases. If citizens can exercise their rights and influence issues related to their everyday lives, they also have the potential to improve their own living conditions directly linked to local development and growth.

## BRANCHES OF ACTIVITY

ICLD's organisation sees an increasing collaboration between the different branches of activity through thematic networks. Within these networks, ICLD supports the municipal partnerships in their mutual exchange of experience through educational efforts, research and tools for collegial learning. The branches of activity support the Swedish municipalities and regions in their partnership with their counterparts in the partner countries.

The Programme Department (PA) enables structured exchanges and mutual learning between decision makers and officials within the partnerships. The municipalities that are admitted to the programmes receive monetary support for their project efforts (Sida funding) as well as a quality-assured project design.

In addition, PA offers customized training programs for the politicians and officials participating in the thematic networks. All thematic networks are supported by qualified mentors who play a crucial role in the implementation of the projects. The programme department also includes a leadership programme for female mayors in the entire OECD-DAC area, the Women's Political Leadership Programme (WPL).

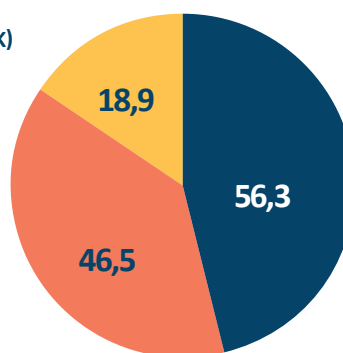
The Knowledge Centre (KC) supports, gathers and disseminates research in the area of local democracy, with a particular focus on providing lessons learned from research and research support to the municipal partnerships, and contributes to the dissemination of knowledge and results from project work to more municipalities through alumni meetings and close dialogue with municipal associations in the partner countries.

## OPERATIONS IN FIGURES

Multi Year Review	2025	2024	2023
<b>Programme Department</b>			
Payouts (msek)	56,3	46,5	18,9
Processed applications	29	66	17
Granted applications	25	58	13
Ongoing partnerships	53	51	38
Countries	20*	17	17

### PAYOUTS (MILLION SEK)

- 2025
- 2024
- 2023



Multi Year Review	2025	2024	2023
<b>Knowledge Center</b>			
Publications	11	6	21
Number of inhabitants consulted by ICLD on local democracy	1737	1796	2368
Number of MoUs with universities	20	20	19
Number of MoUs with municipal associations	6	5	3
Number of participants in the ICLD alumina network	188	147	184

*\*of which 14 are countries with municipal partnerships and previous years are only international education programs*

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**ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025**
**SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS AND IMPORTANT EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

ICLD is financed through a core support agreement with Sida. ICLD was established in 2008 based on a government assignment in April 2006 to Sida. Since then, ICLD has been an important and central part of Swedish democracy assistance and operates in line with Sida's global strategy for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as adopted country strategies and special focus areas. Through the agreement with Sida, ICLD has the opportunity to grant funding for democracy efforts undertaken by Swedish municipalities and regions.

The most important players in ICLD's development efforts are the 39 Swedish municipalities and regions with whom we cooperate within the municipal partnership programme.

ICLD cooperates closely with SKR, which holds the chairmanship of the board, and with SALAR International. They participate as members of the ICLD Partnership Council to handle applications and also contribute to the ICLD training programme for women politicians. During SKR's International Day 2025, ICLD held a well-received session.

Through close cooperation with Lund University, ICLD has developed a wider network with several important actors.

In order to broaden ICLD's research network and strengthen the link between researchers and practitioners, ICLD collaborates with universities in the partner countries. In 2025, ICLD had declarations of intent with 20 partner universities.

Municipal associations in the partner countries have been identified as a particularly important actor in order to contribute to ICLD's information gathering and contact network and to enable the dissemination of useful results from the programme activities to more municipalities. During the year, ICLD has had declarations of intent with 6 municipal associations and also cooperates with several other associations.

ICLD is an active member of the international DeLog and UCLG CIB networks and is a recurring co-organiser of certain events. In addition to knowledge and valuable contacts, important platforms are offered for the exchange of experiences and collaborations internationally.

ICLD has developed several thematic networks where a number of important partner organisations have been linked closer to our work. These help to support the partnerships with thematic expertise, including ICLEI, UNCDF and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI).

The Swedish embassies in the partner countries are consulted in connection with the implementation of new projects within the municipal partnerships programme and cooperate in certain joint efforts, such as co-organising trade promotion days and "*Local Democracy Talks*".

ICLD has been part of a Vinnova-funded project together with Läkarmissionen and We Effect to create an AI-driven language tool. The purpose is for the model to be able to streamline the processing and analysis of qualitative data such as reports and applications. The project resulted in increased organisational knowledge about how AI can be used for analysis, programme development and performance reporting, and the experiences were presented at industry seminars during the fall.

In close collaboration with Malmö University, ICLD is part of a research project funded by the Swedish Institute (SI) on inclusion issues in Ukraine. The project is titled "*Builds-Up*".

In 2024, ICLD signed a letter of intent with the Ukrainian equivalent of the Swedish Almedalen Week, Carpathian Sea Democracy Week. During 2025, cooperation intensified, and through various efforts in both Ukraine and Sweden, ICLD has collaborated on a number of different projects to promote increased collaboration and dialogue between Ukrainian and Swedish municipalities.

## 2. SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND RESULTS DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR

### WORLD EVENTS

The global environment was characterised by continued high uncertainty in 2025. Russia's invasion war against Ukraine and conflicts in the Middle East contributed to increased geopolitical instability and increased tensions between major powers. At the same time, political changes in Europe and the United States affected the conditions for democracy, multilateral cooperation and international development cooperation, while populist and authoritarian movements were strengthened in several countries.

Effective poverty reduction requires stable and transparent democratic institutions, where local authorities have a central role in providing basic services and promoting social inclusion. Municipal partnerships between municipalities, civil society, academia and municipal associations are important tools for strengthening institutional capacity and citizens' rights, especially in contexts with limited democratic space.

The rapid digital development and an increased use of AI created new opportunities for more effective management and follow-up, but also posed risks linked to digital exclusion, disinformation and cyber threats.

This increased the demands on local authorities to ensure legal certainty, inclusion and protection of human rights.

The government's reform agenda for Swedish development assistance continued to affect the conditions for operations, as Sida decided in May to end core support funding to ICLD as of December 31, 2026. At the same time, the focus on democracy, results and local institutional development was in line with ICLD's core mission, which enabled continued relevance in a changing global context.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE OPERATIONS

ICLD has carried out activities according to the work plan approved by Sida for 2025 and its associated budget. The work has been conducted within seven networks: Youth Influence in Southern Africa, Human Rights in Southern Africa, Equal Health in Eastern Africa, Climate in Eastern Africa, Sustainable Future in Eastern Africa, Gender Equality in Latin America and Democratic Resilience in Europe. Training has been provided through the Women's Political Leadership Programme during the year, and extensive research and alumni activities have taken place.

### THE PROGRAMME DEPARTMENT

In 2025, 69 partnership projects were ongoing in 14 countries. The projects involved 55 international municipalities. Through municipal partnerships, 39 Swedish municipalities and regions were engaged in 57 unique collaborations with international counterparts, of which 53 were full-scale partnerships

with one or more projects and 4 were preparations for new projects, dissemination of results from completed projects or collaborations where international municipalities lacked their own Swedish partner municipality.

To strengthen the capacity of the partnerships to achieve sustainable results in the area of local democracy, ICLD applies the integrated working model ICLD Approach, mainly through support to municipal partnerships organised in thematic networks. In 2025, there were 7 active networks, comprising a total of 46 collaborations, while another 11 collaborations took place outside the network structure.

Within the framework of the networks, joint networking meetings were conducted that served as central training and learning platforms where methodological support, exchange of experience and thematically in-depth knowledge of local democracy development were combined. Through interactive working methods and collegial learning, a common understanding, collaboration and ability to translate project results into long-term working methods were strengthened within the partnerships.

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**ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

During the year, three networks were concluded, while the others carried out experience exchanges, partnership visits and targeted training efforts. The network for Democratic Resilience conducted two network meetings focusing on threats to local democracy, inclusion, digital solutions and an approach to the EU. The network for Equitable Health combined a digital preparation with a physical meeting in Nairobi and deepened the work on rights-based care, participation and long-term structural impact in the health sector. Equitable Health ended its programme period but has continued as a network with broadening.

The network for Youth Influence conducted a networking meeting in Gothenburg with a focus on rights-based working methods, youth participation and institutionalised youth influence. The network for Climate Action brought together the entire network in Zambia for follow-up, learning and method development linked to inclusive climate work.

The network for Gender Equality conducted two network meetings focusing on implementation, learning and institutionalisation of gender equality work, including intersectional perspectives and collaboration with civil society and international actors. The network for Sustainable Futures, Human Rights and Climate Action were concluded in 2025 after the programme period.

In 2025, all cases financed through one of ICLD's core support agreements 3 (intervention 61070063) were concluded and closed, including older projects affected by the pandemic and implemented according to previous working methods. The conclusions marks a clear transition towards a more network-based implementation of partnerships.

During the strategy period 2023-2026, ICLD has continued to strengthen performance frameworks, follow-up and training methodology. In 2025, a joint performance journal was introduced in which performance data from projects, reports and training efforts are collected. Within the *Women's Political Leadership* (WPL) training program, a simplified version of the project planning tool POPS was also developed, which

has strengthened ICLD's ability overall for systematic performance monitoring.

In 2025, ICLD continued to work with Agenda 2030 as the overall framework for the Partnership Programme and WPL, with a particular focus on Goals 5, 10, 11, 16 and 17. Through networks, training and mentorship, the global goals were linked to local reform work. To further strengthen the implementation capacity of the partnerships, a digital training module on the operationalisation of Agenda 2030 was developed in 2025 and implemented in 2026.

During the year, ICLD also developed a special training material on internal governance and control with a focus on transparency, risk management, ethical leadership and accountability as key components of local democracy. Through practical exercises and reflection, the ability of elected officials and civil servants to work with legal certainty, transparency and sustainability is strengthened.

Following a dialogue with participating municipalities, ICLD decided to maintain the network for Democratic Resilience as a joint group despite its size, instead of dividing it into two networks. The decision was motivated by the high value of collegial learning between the different municipalities.

In 2025, previously completed partnerships were followed up, including in Elgeyo Marakwet and Nelson Mandela Bay. The follow-ups show lasting effects on the individual, organisational and societal level, such as strengthened skills, institutionalised ways of working, improved collaboration and increased political commitment. The experience confirms the long-term contribution of the partnership model to sustainable local democracy development.

### **KNOWLEDGE CENTRE**

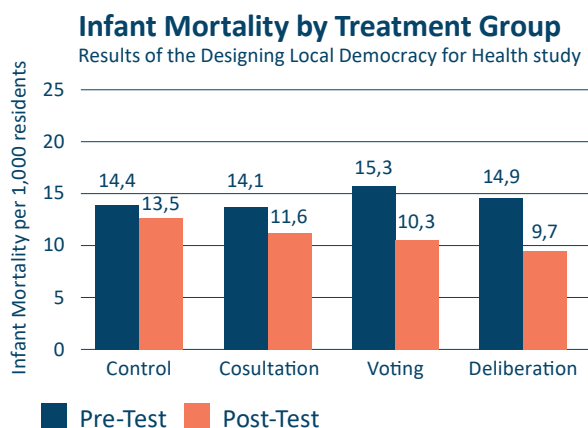
In 2025, the Knowledge Centre continued to strengthen the link between research, practice and policy in local democracy. Through targeted research efforts, knowledge dissemination and alumni activities, the Knowledge Center served as a platform for exchange and dialogue between municipalities and regions, academia and other relevant societal actors.

ICLD’s research project actively contributed to the content of the networks’ training courses. Researcher Michael Touchton of the University of Miami presented the results of the study named *Designing Local Democracy for Health: Evidence from an RCT of Public Participation in Kenya*, which shows a clear link between local democracy and equitable health. The study is based on data from more than 2,000 villages in Elgeyo-Marakwet, of which 200 completed health projects with different types of participation processes. The results show a strong link between increased participation and reduced child mortality. The research was presented to eight municipalities at a networking conference in Nairobi.

developed, which strengthened the conditions for marginalised groups to demand responsibility for issues that affect their life situation.

During the year, ICLD-funded research was also conducted on decentralisation and societal resilience in Ukraine. The research project was conducted in collaboration with the Kyiv School of Economics and included analysis, workshops and dialogue within the network for Democratic Resilience. The project was presented, among other things, at the Ukraine Recovery Conference.

Alumni activities continued during the year as part of ICLD’s long-term work on learning and dissemination. In 2025, the alumni network consisted of 188 active members and was primarily active in East Africa, Southern Africa and Europe. A regional alumni conference on youth inclusion was organised in Lusaka in October 2025, supplemented by Alumni Talks during the year. Peer-learning-activities were initiated between alumni from several countries. Alumni also participated in national and regional arenas through municipal associations in Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar and Uganda. Alumni from Ukraine participated in the BUILDS-UP training in collaboration with Malmö University.



During the year, ICLD was contracted by the UN institution FAO to develop a knowledge product and organise a panel discussion at the *World Food Forum* in Rome. The assignment was based on ICLD’s work in Livingstone and Lusaka, Zambia, where municipal partnerships strengthen youth councils and the role of young people in local food systems in line with FAO’s priorities. In collaboration with researcher Gilbert Siame at the University of Zambia, the report *Transforming Urban Agrifood Systems through Youth-led Governance Mechanisms* was delivered in December.

**PROGRAMME RESULTS**

The programme results are followed up within the three result areas defined by ICLD’s theory of change and result matrix: the participant level, the organisational level and the societal level. Based on these levels, ICLD follows up results achieved within four democratic core values: equality, participation, transparency and accountability. Within each of the three areas, there are performance indicators for results in the short and medium term and intervention indicators for results from ICLD’s programme.

In 2025, an ICLD-funded research project was also carried out on inclusive plastic handling in Kenya. The project brought together actors from academia, government and civil society to a conference in Mombasa. Within the frame-work of the project, new methods for inclusion and dialogue between local authorities and civil society were

Results are obtained through analysis of quantitative data, narrative reports from the municipalities, participant surveys and reports from employees and mentors after meetings with the municipalities.

Each level has a main follow-up method that is used to follow results and provide lessons for programme development.

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**PARTICIPANT LEVEL**

ICLD follows results at the participant level to capture how well ICLD’s interventions increase the knowledge of individuals, improve attitudes and strengthen local democratic processes. The follow-up contributes to learning, quality assurance and an increased understanding of how change takes place in practice.

In ICLD’s operations, a self-developed survey called the KAP-survey (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) is used as a tool to monitor the development of the participants’ knowledge, attitudes and practical application of the democratic core values of transparency, participation, accountability and equality. KAP thus contributes to evidence-based governance, learning and follow-up of participants during the programme period. The answers in the KAP survey are graded and weighted. Each network is given an average score based on the results of the participants.

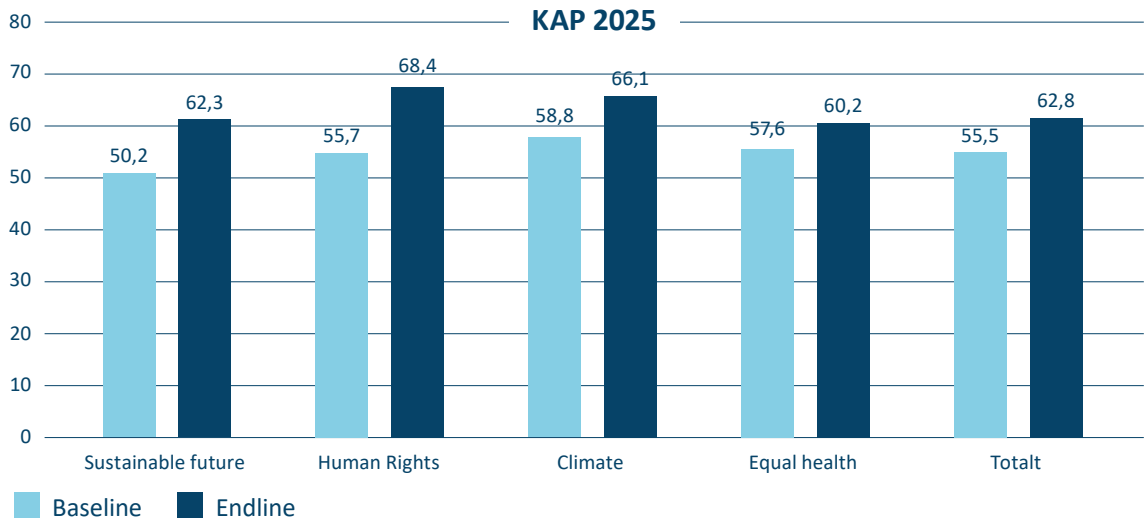
Figure 1 below shows the difference in KAP points between the start and end of the programme for all networks that performed an endline in 2025. For the human rights network, a baseline was implemented with a pilot version of the KAP questionnaire, which means that the results are not completely comparable to the others. Overall, the results show that participants in all networks have increased their knowledge, changed their attitudes and improved their ways of working. The total KAP score has increased by 13 percent in all networks.

Examples of results at the participant level include the collaboration between Umeå Municipality and Kherson in Ukraine, which has created new forms of civic participation in a crisis and war context. Through a GIS-based dialogue map, residents, including internally displaced people elsewhere in Ukraine, have been able to contribute with their views on the city’s reconstruction. The work has focused on gathering knowledge about needs, priorities and risks, as well as strengthening officials’ ability to use digital tools to collect and consider citizen input in planning processes. This creates the conditions for a more data-driven and transparent urban planning.

Through study visits, seminars and workshops, the partnership between Ronneby Municipality and Ternopil in Ukraine has worked on solutions for walking, cycling and public transport with a focus on accessibility, equality and climate adaptation. The work has strengthened the participants’ role as change actors and led to ideas about green mobility being tested locally in Ternopil and discussed in Ronneby.

In the collaboration between Region Norrbotten and Kajiado County in Kenya, the strengthening of the participants’ competence has contributed to increased knowledge and capacity in maternal and mental health. This has been done through a joint fieldwork and focus group interviews at 5 health care facilities, where 39 health care employees and 51 pregnant or newly delivered women participated.

**Figure 1:** Results from the KAP survey



The work provided practical training in qualitative methods, ethics and conversations about mental health, as well as in-depth understanding of how social and economic factors affect women’s health and healthcare seekers.

In a survey sent to ICLD’s research network, the researchers’ own stories show that ICLD’s research programme has strengthened the ability of individuals to translate research into dialogue, collaboration and policy-relevant processes. Participation in activities such as the *Local Democracy Academy* has contributed to both academic results and a better ability to reach practitioners and decision makers. Several survey responses also show that ICLD has contributed to promoting more equitable forms of knowledge exchange between the global north and south and strengthened the understanding of democratically rooted research.

**ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL**

Results at the organisational level within the municipal partnership programme are obtained primarily from the 122 reports received from the partnerships. Results at the organisational level are evaluated based on whether the organisation has strengthened its ability to address the democratic societal problem that the project is based on. This is done with a common framework called *organisational readiness* where 9 areas within the organisations are defined. Results are obtained

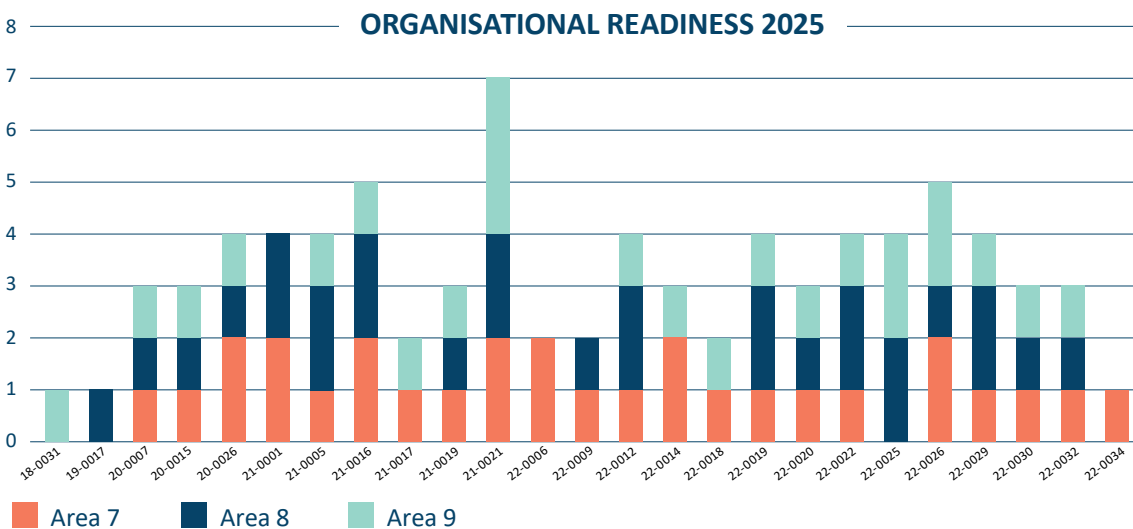
partly by participants reporting on whether and how their projects have strengthened the organisation in any of the 9 areas, partly through other reporting sources, which are then reviewed and validated by ICLD.

Of the 9 areas within the *organisational readiness* framework, the greatest focus of the results analysis is placed on the last three ones, as these are centered around the organisation’s operations in relation to its residents. Area 7 is about how well the organisation involves citizens in decision-making processes, area 8 defines how well marginalised groups are included, and area 9 deals with how well information about the municipality’s activities is available to residents.

In 2025, 30 projects within the municipal partnership programme submitted their final report and 29 projects submitted a partial report. A total of 44 unique projects submitted reports. Of the 30 projects that submitted final reports in 2025, three reported under an old template and were therefore not subject to assessment within the new *organisational readiness* framework. Another 2 out of 30 projects have been cancelled prematurely. The figure below shows

the assessment on how the remaining 25 projects that submitted final reports in 2025 have developed within areas 7, 8 and 9 during the programme period.

Figure 2: Organisational readiness



## ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Each project is rated on a scale from 0 to 3, where 0 is no result, 1 is a moderate result, 2 is a significant result, and the highest score of 3 means that the partnership has achieved a transformative result.

One example is the partnership between Borås and Vračar in Serbia (2021–0021), where the work on accessibility adaptation has demonstrated very good results in all areas. Among other things, they have established a disability council with representatives from the municipality, disability organisations and civil society, and developed information sharing through campaigns on the web and in social media. Vračar has moved from one-off initiatives to a coherent system where accessibility is a guiding principle with a clear societal impact.

Two other partnerships with very strong organisational results are the collaboration between Falun and Mogale City in South Africa (2021–0016) and the collaboration between Jönköping and Stellenbosch in South Africa (2022–0026). During the project, Mogale City has taken great steps forward in the work of initiating and establishing a youth council, which is now an integrated part of the municipality's governance. In Stellenbosch, work has been done on norm criticism and prevention of gender-based violence. Thanks to these efforts, the NormStorm working method – developed in Jönköping and further developed for the South African school context – has now been integrated and institutionalised in the regular education system.

Another example is the partnership between Region Västernorrland and Mombasa in Kenya (2020–0007) which has achieved moderate results in all three areas. The collaboration has contributed to organisational changes

In Mombasa County. Lessons learned from Region Västernorrland have increased knowledge about waste management in complex environments and strengthened understanding of the connection between technical systems and residents' behaviours. The project has also contributed to improved coordination between administrations, through increased information sharing, joint planning and a clearer division of responsibilities.

In Kiambu County, Kenya, environmental and climate work has been deepened with a focus on equality and locally rooted preparedness as a result of previous participation in training programmes. All 12 municipalities in Kiambu County now have flood action plans that prioritize marginalised groups. The working method has changed so that data is collected together with residents at an early stage, which has enabled faster and more accurate interventions during the floods of 2024. In 2025, the lessons learned from Kiambu were compiled into a toolbox, that is, a publication with methods and concrete tools based on lessons learned from the effort.

Within the WPL programme, the participating mayors and deputy mayors run their own local projects, so-called processes of change. The programme provides participants with tools and support from ICLD and a Swedish mentor to drive local change in their municipality, often linked to women's and girls' rights and representation. Of the 19 change processes for which a final report was submitted in 2025, 17 have achieved results at the organisational level. Most of the results are connected to a strengthened protection of rights or opportunities for women and girls to participate in political processes.

An example within the programme is change project Enhancing women's economic empowerment, led by Deputy Governor Lucy Mulili in Makueni County. She has focused on strengthening women's rights and agency through improved local governance. A central element has been to integrate a gender equality perspective into the annual budget process, especially in healthcare. The work has contributed to increased female influence in public decision-making processes and to the adoption of several governing policy documents, which has strengthened the institutional framework for gender equality. The work has been recognised nationally through a Gender Justice Change Makers Award and is now being further developed through a regional gender equality strategy for three other counties.

### SOCIETAL LEVEL

At the societal level, ICLD measures progress towards the organisation's short-term goal of reaching a critical mass of municipalities in priority countries of intervention with strong and sustainable democratic results. In the medium term (3–5 years), ICLD monitors whether results or effects can be observed in the local communities reached by the municipalities' efforts, for example in the form of increased citizen participation, increased influence for marginalised groups, and whether there is a change in the proportion of women in decision-making bodies.

Medium- and long-term effects at the societal level are monitored through narrative reports from the partnerships and broad data collection from citizens through surveys in partner municipalities. In the short term, the follow-up contributes to learning for the participants and enables further development of their projects. At the end of the strategy period, it can also contribute to an overall evaluation of the impact of the projects.

During the year, four Citizen Report Cards (CRC) surveys were conducted in Livingstone, Solwezi, Lusaka and Maicao. In addition, a qualitative follow-up of a previous CRC survey was conducted in the Sundays River Valley. The CRC method is a structured tool for citizen dialogue where the residents' responses form the basis for an index that reflects their experiences of the partnership project and their access to the four democratic core values. A total of 1,737 survey responses were collected during the year.

Within the programmes, there are many examples of how project results have strengthened citizens' access to influence and services. One example is the partnership between Norrköping and Bihać in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The collaboration has contributed to clear effects in Bihać, where waste management now covers all households, including Roma villages, which strengthens equal service. Children and young people are included through environmental activities, dialogue with decision-makers, and public events.

The trust in municipal services has also increased through improved transparency and citizen dialogue.

An example from the WPL is the change project driven by Olga Ditsie, Mayor of Jwaneng Town in Botswana, which has strengthened the inclusion of women and underrepresented groups in local decision-making, including through increased female representation in the municipal council and new forms of participation in public meetings. The project has also contributed to an increased economic agency through support for women's entrepreneurship. A new local organisation for people with disabilities has also been formed and the collaboration on efforts against gender-based violence has been strengthened.

To create a greater impact for democratic change work and strengthen the regional, national and global added value of local projects, ICLD works systematically to spread useful democratic methods. An example is the partnership between Uasin Gishu in Kenya and Arvika and Norrköping, which in May 2025 conducted a dissemination workshop in

Norrköping, Karlstad and Arvika with delegates from seven Kenyan regions. The focus was on Swedish working methods for waste, stormwater and disaster risk reduction, as well as for water services. The workshop also included an exchange of experiences on gender equality and inclusive political leadership

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A further example is the partnership between Region Västerbotten and Homa Bay County in Kenya. A learning case has been developed to disseminate experiences from the partnership, focusing on the coordination model that has contributed to increased coverage, better coordination and strengthened citizen participation in the health sector. The material was presented at a conference in Nairobi in 2025 with other regions as well as national actors from both Kenya and Uganda.

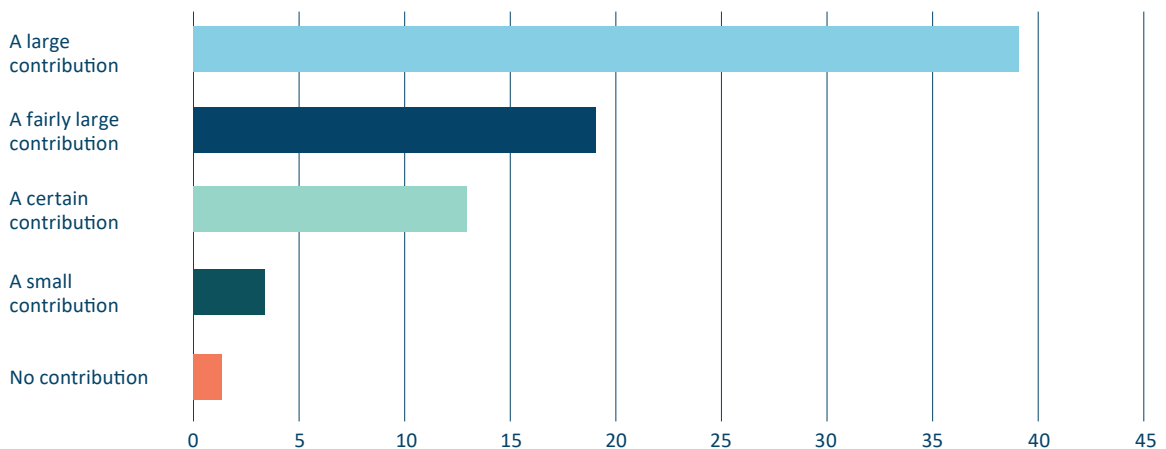
To measure long-term results, a survey was sent out to ICLD's alumni network with questions about how their participation in an ICLD programme has affected them and the municipality or region in which they operate. Figure 3 below shows that 39 of the 75 respondents in the survey feel that their involvement in ICLD has clearly contributed to giving residents greater opportunity to influence issues that affect them.

In-depth interviews with some of the participants in the survey revealed, among other things, that a municipal partnership in Kapiri Mposhi, Zambia, in 2017-2018 has contributed to clear results at the community level by shifting the view of people with disabilities from being recipients of support to being active participants in society. By making inclusion mandatory in planning processes and ensuring compliance of accessibility requirements, such as ramps in buildings and quotas for employment, accessibility has improved in the municipality. The experiences also contributed to the adoption of a national policy for disability inclusion in 2025, which has led to the institutionalisation of the work.

During the year, ICLD has produced 11 publications, of which 3 are learning cases, 4 are toolboxes, 1 is a policy brief and 3 are research reports. Of these, six are based on results from successful partnership projects where new methods and important lessons are compiled to enable dissemination to other municipalities and regions that can use the methods and learn from previous examples.

### To what extent has your involvement in ICLD contributed to residents having a greater opportunity to influence issues that affect them?

Figure 3: From survey to ICLD's alumni network



SDG Clubs is an example of a publication that shows how a local partnership result has been disseminated through the alumni activities. The method for student-led SDG Clubs, developed in the partnership between Kibaha Town Council and Region Gotland and concretised in a toolbox, has been disseminated during the year through two regional training courses in Kibaha and in Kiambu. A total of 68 persons from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda participated, with participants from 16 municipalities, two municipal associations and 17 Kenyan regions. The participants adopted a joint declaration about establishing SDG clubs. As a result, 29 municipalities have initiated a work towards this goal. Implementation has begun in several of them, and the local associations ALAT and ZALGA are actively advocating the method.

#### SYSTEMATIC AND LONG-TERM LEARNING

ICLD has a results-based management system, with a focus on learning and continuous improvement based on analyses of produced results. In operational planning and monitoring, the conceptual framework of Results-Based Management (RBM) is used, where short term is defined as one to three years and medium term as three to five years. The contribution to results in the longer term, beyond what ICLD can measure, is called impacts and the long-term societal change that ICLD aims to contribute to is called long-term effects.

The results matrix 2023–2026 is based on ICLD's theory of change. A separate appendix with an in-depth analysis of ICLD's programme results and the indicators of the result matrix is sent annually to Sida as supplementary material for the annual report. ICLD uses three methods for monitoring and evaluation adapted to the organisation's theory of change. Monitoring and analysis of the results of the operations takes place continuously within the organisation and is an important part of ICLD's systematic development and improvement work.

ICLD is an evidence-based and a learning organisation. The results monitoring enables a greater systematic and long-term learning the more data that is collected over time.

During the third year of the strategy period, there have been more results demonstrating the impact of the projects at the organisational level for the municipal partnerships than in any previous year. This is mainly due to ICLD's structured system for ongoing results monitoring and the enhanced support provided to the change projects of the partnerships through educational initiatives, more structured peer exchange and closer research support.

Through training efforts, the link between the technical work area and the integration of democratic core values is emphasized. At the same time, the collegial exchange has been systematised more clearly around learning goals and tools. This clarifies the democratic objectives to steering and project groups and strengthens their ability to achieve results in the projects.

The KAP survey is a clear example of how ICLD's results framework is used for organisational learning. At the beginning of each programme, participants are asked to complete such a survey. The results that are then given at group level are discussed at the next workshop where the participants can review and discuss the strengths and weaknesses that were shown in the survey responses. Figure 1 shows that the training effort has an effect, with a clear improvement in knowledge, attitudes and practical application of the democratic core values for all completed networks.

Through follow-up according to *organisational readiness*, it becomes clearer in which organisational areas the partnerships are making progress. In previous years, more projects have achieved results in strengthening participation processes compared to, for example, transparency, where development has been more limited. ICLD has therefore implemented training on transparency issues such as internal governance and control. In Figure 2, for example, we can see that 20 out of 25 finalised projects have achieved results in area 9 that deals with transparency, which indicates that the efforts have had an effect.

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The municipal partnerships programme is based on collegial learning and knowledge transfer between municipalities. It is therefore positive that the participants state, to a large extent, that they have received useful ideas and feedback from other municipalities within the partnership and the network. Through the use of learning objectives for the exchange, as well as tools and exchange methods, ICLD has systematised and clarified the collective learning, which has strengthened the constructiveness of the partnerships. At the same time, the potential for performance contributions from the partnership steering groups has been identified. Therefore, new training efforts through a so-called mandatory steering group introduction, have been implemented in 2025.

At the community level, the results of the Citizen Report Cards (CRC) surveys have been used to provide project participants with useful lessons for their projects. The creation of comparable indices and the use of regression analysis have been able to identify vulnerable groups in the municipalities, enabling further conclusions based on data. The results have been communicated to the municipalities through presentations, the production of reports and summary "Local Democracy Report Cards" to facilitate the dissemination of lessons learned to politicians and officials.

One example is the CRC survey in Livingstone, which provides a picture of young residents'

experiences of local democracy, participation and service delivery.

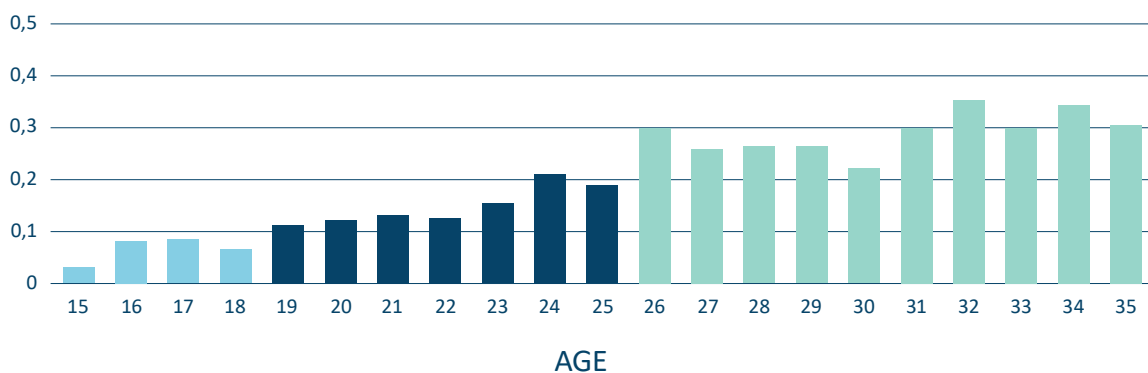
The results show, for example, that the older the respondents are, the more satisfied they are with their ability to participate in the municipality's decision-making processes. This shows the importance of setting up youth councils to increase the participation of young people in the municipality. In Figure 4 below, it can be seen that the participation index in Livingstone is increasing in older age groups.

There is significant potential to strengthen the impact of programme activities by systematising and financing dissemination efforts around results-based tools and by utilising ICLD's alumni network. Efforts to disseminate good results can also leave ripples on the water long after the effort itself.

A clear example of this is the partnership between Region Stockholm and Jinja in Uganda, which has developed a toolbox based on lessons learned from the partnership. The toolbox aims to support other local authorities and healthcare facilities in systematically integrating children's rights into health care. The material is based, among other things, on lessons learned from a CRC survey, and provides methods to train health care professionals to become child rights ambassadors and integrate children's voices. The toolbox has been shared with several interested municipalities and regions and shows that methods developed in partnerships can benefit many more.

Figure 4: Livingstone Participation Index

### PARTICIPANT INDEX



### KEY CHANGES IN THE BUSINESS

In 2025, Sida decided not to grant ICLD a new core support agreement after completion of the operations on 31 December 2026. As a result, the organisation has had to set up a process for winding down operations. ICLD has therefore laid off all staff and notified the staff that their last working day is 31 December 2026. As usual, this has been done through negotiation and dialogue with the trade unions to which the employees are affiliated.

ICLD's management team has set up a special preparedness group tasked with agile and adaptable management of redundancies and necessary operational changes for 2026.

SKR has established a so-called task force during the year to continuously support the operational management and ICLD's chairman.

ICLD's organisational structure has changed. Previously, the business was organised into three units, but as of January 1, 2025, the business is conducted in two units. The Programs Department constitutes a merged department of Municipal Partnerships and International Training Programs. As a result of the organisational change that took effect on January 1, 2025, when Municipal Partnerships and International education programs were merged, the comparative figures for 2024 have been recalculated. To enable a fair comparison, the 2024 outcome for these units, SEK 71,357,395 and SEK 15,095,105 respectively, are reported under the Programme Department, see note 3.

### DEVIATION BETWEEN OUTCOME AND BUDGET

The budget for operations in 2025 amounts to SEK 105,424,000 and is financed through two core support agreements with Sida. The budget for core support agreement 3 (operation 61070063) comprises SEK 41,217,000 and refers to funds forwarded to Swedish municipalities and regions to support aid work within municipal partnerships. The budget for core support agreement 4 (operation 15562) amounts to SEK 64,207 thousand and includes both forwarded

funds to Swedish municipalities and regions as well as costs for the operations.

The outcome for core support agreement 3 (operation 61070063) amounts to SEK 30,694 thousand and the outcome for core support agreement 4 (operation 15562) after deduction of income on personnel and interest amounts to SEK 64,282 thousand. This is without incurring accruals from signed agreements that have constituted and constitute debt.

The total deviation between the budget and the outcome is positive with 10,069 thousand SEK, where 10,666 thousand SEK derives from lower disbursed funds in core support agreement 3 and a negative deviation of SEK 597 thousand from increased disbursed funds and reduced costs in core support agreement 4, see note for budget.

Overall, the organisation has implemented planned activities within its cost framework while working to reduce fixed costs and achieve a long-term sustainable economy.

The financial outcome for 2025 has been implemented within a given financial framework, which gives the organisation the opportunity to continue to conduct local democracy work through thematic partnership networks in international development cooperation in the last year of the agreement and the strategy period.

### YEAR'S OPERATING PROFIT IN RELATION TO ICLD'S LONG-TERM GOALS

The 2025 fiscal year is the third year of the 2023-2026 strategy period. Based on the performance reports and the ongoing performance reporting, it can be concluded that the development of the efforts takes place according to plan, but the information about the future of the business has caused concern among both employees and the Swedish municipalities.

The lower financial budget for financing municipal-led democracy projects means that ICLD cannot meet the demand for state funds for municipal partnerships.

## ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025

When it comes to recruitment for democratic resilience and collaboration with a municipality in Ukraine, this is still in demand and in 2025, the network consists in of fifteen Swedish and fifteen Ukrainian municipalities. ICLD has announced that these partnerships may need to be closed prematurely.

It is noteworthy that the activity has produced a large number of result products during the year, which create increasingly better conditions for spreading good results to municipalities within the partnership's neighbouring local authorities, but also to municipalities in countries far beyond the implementation of the operation.

ICLD assesses that the goals in the 2023-2026 strategy can possibly be achieved in the operational plan for 2026. As the majority of employees have been informed that their last working day is on the last of December 2026, there is a potential risk that planned interventions will not be possible to implement and that some of the goals will not be achieved in the long term. The implementation of the strategy is supported by the fact that a large number of municipal partnerships are financed by funds from agreement 3, which was completed in August 2025.

The ambition to achieve results in a number of thematic networks can only be achieved with a monetary volume that exists in the combined volume of funds forwarded. In 2025, ICLD has been able to see, in all partnerships, a number of positive results at the local level in line with the long-term goals for the operations described in the statutes and in the strategy for 2023–2026.

The transformation of the operations with the formation of thematic networks is developing according to plan, where the organisational adaptation carried out in 2024 had its real impact in 2025. The municipal partnership units and international departments have been merged into a joint programme department. All international training programs, with the exception of WPL,

have been integrated within the thematic networks and are now actively supporting implementing partners' steering groups and project teams.

The demand from Swedish municipalities to enter into municipal partnerships is higher than in many years, mainly due to a desire to participate with support for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

The organisation is monitored based on how well ICLD's four core values have had an impact on three levels. ICLD is now more clearly directed towards the set result goals and more quickly identifies the results achieved and in what way these can be disseminated further. The packaging of the year's results into disseminable tools has been an important task in 2025.

Research reports and democracy measurements show that the general democratic development at the national level in several of ICLD's partner countries is negative. Even in countries where democracy measurements as a whole show negative trends, the ICLD, through its support for municipal partnerships over time, has been able to implement efforts that give positive results for the development of local democracy. The fact that democratic results can be achieved at the local level in increasingly challenging national contexts is a strong argument for continuing efforts to strengthen local democratic institutions.

## RESULT AND POSITION

Operating expenses before depreciation for 2025 amounted to SEK 53,380 thousand, and the year's result has been balanced at SEK 0 thousand. The organisation is budget-driven, and the income consists primarily of operating grants from Sida. The funding mainly consists of core support from Sida.

The assets of the organisation consist of office furnishings and technical equipment; the balance sheet is dominated by receivables and accrued grant debt items.

Multi-year overview	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Revenue	53 244	102 347	56 626	61 086	63 132
Balance sheet total	35 855	85 152	70 575	28 386	37 112
Average number of employees	19	19	21	22	24

### 3. OTHER FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The work is implemented without equity. The International Centre for Local Democracy was established on the basis of a regional policy government decision in 2006, which stated that the financing of the activities would be done through core support from Sida. The organisation is mainly grant-funded, and the grants are subject to conditions regarding future performance.

### 4. SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFTER THE END OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR

On 22 January 2026, the Swedish government announced that the assignment to finance ICLD, which was given to Sida on 20 April 2006 (UD2005/31444/GU), will end on 31 December 2026.

The consequence of the decision is that some of the planned activities either need to be implemented earlier, during this year, or ended prematurely. The decision means that the capacity and expertise that the business has accumulated over time will be dismantled during the year.

The organisation will also not be able to meet any contractual requirements that Sida has placed on the operations after 31 December 2026. During the financial year, ICLD will terminate all binding agreements and procure a liquidator who will be tasked with legally terminating the operations on the basis of legal requirements. The organisation's statutes state that the Swedish Council of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR) are the recipients of the organisation's assets.

### 5. EXPECTED FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

ICLD is a fully state-funded activity, and its future development is based on the priorities that govern Swedish aid. Based on its original mission, ICLD is a direct consequence of the Swedish government's priorities and operates on the basis of that mandate.

ICLD believes that democracy support and human rights efforts continue to have a great need for strong local change agents who can reach out to citizens. ICLD's work is ultimately founded on political decisions based on Swedish aid priorities, where the current government has announced that they do not see the need for efforts for democratic development and increased decentralisation, where individual citizens can exercise their democratic rights.

The Swedish resource base of Swedish municipalities and regions has a capacity and a competence that could have been a crucial resource in Swedish aid to create sustainable development socially, economically and ecologically.

### 6. SUSTAINABILITY INFORMATION

ICLD wants to be a workplace where the employees thrive and feel that they can develop. The programme of the organisation is based on four core values: equality, participation, transparency and accountability. These are reflected in the work with the organisation's core values that define the desired work climate that ICLD strives for: a place for community, participation, commitment and trust.

ICLD has collective agreements between Sobona and Akademikerförbundet and there is an active local trade club at the workplace. In order to create a good working environment, ICLD has agreed, in agreement with a local trade club, to conduct six workplace meetings where employees have a large

influence over the design of the workplace. During these occasions, recurring questions about the work environment, values and gender equality and diversity work are raised. In a process with all the co-workers, an activity plan for gender equality and diversity work has been developed.

To ensure that early action is taken and that management takes care of preventing stress or other negative health issues, there is an ongoing follow-up of the organisational and social work environment (OSA) as well as monthly heart rate measurements.

## ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025

A large number of skills-enhancing activities are carried out, such as inviting external lecturers and researchers who teach on issues that are relevant to the business, as well as offering courses and training to employees. The health and well-being of the staff is of the utmost importance for ICLD. Staff are encouraged to take the contracted wellness hour, as well as to use the wellness allowance to which each employee is entitled. In 2025, employees were offered the opportunity to create a special health week (which can practically be a dedicated full day) in the spring and autumn, where special focus will be placed on health and well-being.

As an established practice, ICLD has annually recurring internal training and workplace meetings where issues are raised about corruption, values issues, and discrimination issues. ICLD has an established crisis management system for dealing with issues related to irregularities, corruption and violations of the organisational code of conduct. There is also a whistleblower function. ICLD has a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Should such an incident occur, ICLD has a developed protocol to follow with a requirement that it must be reported to the police.

Issues relating to the environment and climate are actively raised in all of the operations' programmes. The business values both theoretical knowledge and practical experience as essential for development. ICLD uses knowledge exchange between different countries and municipalities which is carried out in the form of sharing of best practices, change projects, study visits, lectures and workshops.

In the annual salary survey, no deviations based on gender can be inferred. ICLD uses the "lönelys" software as a tool for making a professional pay chart. The salary survey is carried out jointly between the local union club and the employer. The salary survey is then forwarded to the Academic Union, which is the union with which ICLD has signed a collective agreement.

## 7. MANAGEMENT

ICLD is a state-funded organisation. The organisation has three members, and according to the organisation's statutes, the Swedish Association

of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR) have the casting vote and the chairmanship. The other two members are Lund University (LU) and Region Gotland (RG). The board has four members, where two representatives are appointed by SKR and the other two are from respective members LU and RG. Four board meetings including the inaugural meeting and two other member meetings with all members' board representatives and appointed member representatives were held during 2025.

In connection with the association meeting in April 2025, a new board was elected. Marcus Holmberg (SKR) was re-elected as Chairman of the Board and Ulrika Stöök (SKR) was re-elected as a member. There was also a re-election of Kristina Jönsson (LU), but Stefaan De Mackaer was thanked and replaced by Meit Fohlin (RG). The members of the Board of Directors attended this year's four Board meetings. The Board instructs the Secretary General to lead the operational activities. In 2025, Johan Lilja was the organisation's Secretary General.

The Nomination Committee for the Board comes from the member organisations. Fredrik Holst (SKR) is convening, and the other two are Björn Badersten (LU) and Stefan Hollmark (RG). The Association meeting elected Grant Thornton with the Authorized Public Accountant Per Gardelin as auditor in charge and authorized the auditor Martina Ronquist as deputy auditor.

### OPERATIONS 2026

The annual report has been prepared in accordance with the assumption of continued operation. The association's current financing conditions mean that operations are planned to be conducted until 31 December 2026. As of the date of the preparation of the annual report, no formal decision on liquidation has yet been taken by the ICLD's member meeting.

The Board believes that the organisation has the prerequisites to complete the business plan for the foreseeable future and that assets and liabilities should therefore be valued according to continued operation. The Board of Directors continuously monitors the development and will take the necessary measures during the year based on the conditions for financing.

## ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025

## INCOME STATEMENT

Amount in SEK	Note	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
<i>Operating income</i>			
Grants	5	52 946 414	102 086 753
Other income		298 082	260 138
<b>Total operating income</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>53 244 496</b>	<b>102 346 891</b>
<i>Operating expenditure</i>			
Depreciation and amortisation of tangible and intangible assets		-87 428	-120 441
Staff costs	6	-17 795 774	-19 817 585
Operating expenses		-17 055 643	-61 114 703
Other external costs		-18 528 975	-21 614 284
<b>Operating expenses</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-53 467 820</b>	<b>-102 667 013</b>
<b>Profit or (-) loss for the year</b>			
<i>Financial notes</i>			
Interest income and similar items	4	223 324	320 122
<b>Profit/loss after financial items</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Profit or (-) loss for the year</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## BALANCE SHEET

Amount in SEK	Note	31.12.2025	31.12.2024
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
<i>Tangible Assets</i>			
Equipment, tools and installations	7	120 425	162 685
Total tangible fixed assets		120 425	162 685
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		<b>120 425</b>	<b>162 685</b>
<b>Current assets</b>			
<i>Short-term receivables</i>			
Other receivables		18 930 589	61 440 944
Prepaid expenses and accrued income		2 539 944	2 435 305
<b>Total short-term receivables</b>		<b>21 470 533</b>	<b>63 876 249</b>
<i>Cash and bank balances</i>			
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>35 734 398</b>	<b>84 989 539</b>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>35 854 823</b>	<b>85 152 224</b>
<b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Equity Current liabilities</b>			
Trade creditors		1 810 222	3 888 980
Other short-term liabilities		1 996 439	1 783 918
Accrued expenses and deferred income	8,9	32 048 162	79 479 326
Total short-term liabilities		35 854 823	85 152 224
<b>Total Equity and Liabilities</b>		<b>35 854 823</b>	<b>85 152 224</b>

## NOTES

### NOTE 1 ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES

#### GENERAL ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES

The annual report has been prepared in accordance with the Annual Accounts Act (ÅRL) and the Accounting Board's general advice BFNAR 2012:1 (K3). All amounts are reported in Swedish kronor.

From 2023 onwards, costs for forwarded grants are reported when signing agreements with partner organisations. Only the part of the contributions that is expected to be forwarded within the financial year or the following year is reported as expense. This change also affected the accounting of the association's grant income, which from then on is reported in connection with their use. The accounting principles remain unchanged from the previous year.

#### RECEIVABLES, LIABILITIES & PROVISIONS

Receivables have been valued at the lowest of cost and the amount by which they are expected to be settled. Other assets, liabilities and provisions have been valued at acquisition values unless otherwise stated.

#### FOREIGN CURRENCY ITEMS

Receivables and liabilities in foreign currencies are converted at the closing rate. Exchange gains and losses on operating receivables and operating liabilities are recognised in operating income while exchange gains and losses on financial receivables and liabilities are recognised as financial items.

#### RECEIVED GRANTS

Revenue from government grants that are not linked to future performance requirements is recognised as revenue when the conditions for receiving the contribution and the financial benefits associated with the transaction are likely to accrue to ICLD and income can be calculated as reliable.

Revenue from government grants associated with future performance requirements is recognised as revenue when performance is performed and the economic benefits associated with the transaction are likely to accrue to ICLD and the income can be calculated as reliable. Contributions received before the conditions for reporting that income have been met are reported as liabilities.

#### RECEIVED GRANTS CORE SUPPORT AGREEMENT 3 AND 4

The grants from Sida are conditional and are intended to fund the association's activities and forwarded grants to Swedish municipalities and regions. During the financial year, grants have been received under two different core support agreements, core support agreements 3 and 4. Grants received are recognised as income in the period in which they are utilised, in accordance with applicable accounting principles.

#### TIME OF RECEIPT OF UTILISED GRANTS

#### COSTS OF OPERATIONS

These costs include all joint costs for the activities and the organisation. Expenses are recognised when they arise.

#### FORWARDING OF PROJECT GRANTS PURSUANT TO NUCLEAR SUPPORT AGREEMENTS 3 AND 4

Expenses for forwarded grants are reported when an agreement is signed with a partner organisation to grant grants. However, the costs are only reported to the extent that forwarding is expected to take place within the financial year or subsequent financial year. Granted funds that are expected to be paid out later than the following financial year are recorded as contingent liability.

#### Accounting for reimbursement from a cooperation organisation regarding unused forwarded grants in accordance with core support agreements 4

Repayment of project funds paid in advance for municipal partnerships reduces costs for forwarded grants. The association's reported grant income regarding agreement 4 is reduced by the same amount as reported costs.

#### VALUATION PRINCIPLES

Assets, provisions and liabilities are valued at acquisition value unless stated otherwise below.

#### TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

Tangible fixed assets are recognised at acquisition cost less accumulated depreciation and any impairment losses. The acquisition value includes, in addition to the purchase price, also expenses directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset.

Depreciation is made on a straight-line basis over the asset's estimated useful life, which reflects the asset's consumption of future economic values. The following depreciation periods are applied:

Incremental expenditure that meets the asset criterion is included in the carrying amount of the asset. Expenses for ongoing maintenance and repairs are reported as costs in the event of occurrence.

#### Depreciation

Useful life	Useful life
Furniture	5-10 years
IT equipment	3 years

## NOTE 2 UTILISED GRANTS AND OTHER OPERATING INCOME

The note reports the grants and other income that have been used during the financial year and which thus affect the year's result. Utilised grants refer to conditional grant funds from Sida and the EU that have been recognised as income as costs have arisen in the business, in accordance with the accounting principles set out in Note 1. Other revenues primarily relate to compensation for research assignments carried out together with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Contributions and other income	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
Sida Core Support Agreement 3 - Intervention 61070063	-12 123 077	30 860 137
Sida Core Support Agreement 4 - Intervention 15562	64 841 651	71 053 885
Trans lighthouses EU project	227 840	172 731
<b>Total utilised contributions:</b>	<b>52 946 414</b>	<b>102 086 753</b>
<b>Other contributions</b>		
Wage contribution	79 446	215 096
Other income	218 636	45 042
<b>Total grants and other income:</b>	<b>298 082</b>	<b>260 138</b>

## NOTE 3 OPERATING EXPENSES

As of 01.01.2025, ICLD's organisational structure has changed. Previously, the organisation was organised into three units, but as of January 1, 2025, the business is conducted in two units. The Programme Department constitutes a merged department of Municipal Partnerships and International Training Programs. In order to improve comparability, the comparative figures for 2024 have been recalculated by merging the outcomes for Municipal Partnerships and International Training Programmes and are reported together under the Programme Department. The reclassification of the comparative figures for 2024 refers only to the presentation of costs between organisational units. The total sum of the operating expenses for the financial year 2024 is unchanged compared to the adopted annual report.

Operating expenses	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
Programme Department	34 482 006	86 452 500
Knowledge Center	8 187 920	5 496 068
Registry - Administration	10 482 626	10 425 273
Trans lighthouses EU project	227 840	172 731
Depreciation	87 428	120 441
<b>Total costs:</b>	<b>53 467 820</b>	<b>102 667 013</b>

## ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025

## NOTE 4 FINANCIAL EXPENSES AND INCOME

Operating costs	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
Interest income	223 324	320 122
<b>Total financial expenses/income:</b>	<b>223 324</b>	<b>320 122</b>

## NOTE 5 REQUESTED GRANTS RECEIVED

The association's income is not reported according to the cash principle as shown in note 2. Note 5 presents the contributions received in 2025.

Action grants	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
Sida Core Support Agreement 3 - Intervention 61070063	23 145 096	32 160 000
Sida Core Support Agreement 4 - Intervention 15562	68 285 700	54 320 000
Trans lighthouse EU project	255 997	172 731
Food and Agriculture Organisation	201 661	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>91 888 454</b>	<b>86 652 731</b>

## NOTE 6 EMPLOYEES AND STAFF EXPENSES

Number of Employees	2025	2024
Number of women	14	14
Number of men	5	5
<b>Total number:</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>

Salaries and other remunerations and social costs, including pension costs	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
Board of Directors	0	0
General Secretary	1 123 924	1 072 852
Other employees	10 934 687	10 817 370
<b>Total salaries:</b>	<b>12 058 611</b>	<b>11 890 222</b>
Social costs	5 231 703	7 435 645
(Of which pension costs Secretary General)	243 458	321 950
(Of which pension costs other staff)	927 457	2 611 356

Other staff costs	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
Education, vaccination and wellness	173 042	146 321

Gender distribution among senior executives	
Number of women in the board	3
Number of men on the board	1

**NOTE 7 EQUIPMENTS, TOOLS AND INSTALLATIONS**

	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
<i>Accumulated cost</i>		
Opening accumulated acquisition values	3 993 657	3 931 457
Adjustment from previous years	0	23 360
New acquisitions	45 168	38 840
Divestments/End-of-life treatment	0	0
<b>Total Accumulated depreciation</b>	<b>4 038 825</b>	<b>3 993 657</b>
<i>Accumulated depreciation</i>		
Opening accumulated depreciation according to plan	-3 830 972	-3 687 171
Adjustment from previous years	0	-23 360
Depreciation for the year according to plan	-87 428	-120 441
Divestments/End-of-life treatment	0	0
<b>Total Accumulated depreciation</b>	<b>-3 918 400</b>	<b>-3 830 972</b>
<b>Carrying amount at year-end</b>	<b>120 425</b>	<b>162 685</b>

**NOTE 8 ACCRUED EXPENSES AND DEFERRED INCOME**

	01.01.2025- 31.12.2025	01.01.2024- 31.12.2024
Sida Core Support Agreement 3 - Intervention 61070063	4 408 045	11 956 587
Sida Core Support Agreement 4 - Intervention 15562	8 924 447	4 921 157
Accrued debt municipalities and regions agreement 3	0	42 816 715
Accrued debt municipalities and regions agreement 4	16 907 983	16 869 000
Accrued debt research funds agreement 4	839 202	318 943
Trans lighthouse EU project	288 401	260 243
Accrued pension costs	253 000	263 580
Accrued statutory social security contributions	47 380	60 948
Accrued holiday pay	150 796	193 978
Other accrued expenditure	228 907	1 818 175
<b>Total accrued expenses and prepaid income:</b>	<b>32 048 161</b>	<b>79 479 326</b>

**NOTE 9 DEBT RELATING TO REPAYMENT OF RECEIVED GRANTS**

As of the balance sheet date, the debt to Sida amounts to 4,408,045 SEK and relates to unused grant funds within one of the association's core support agreements that has ended 251231. According to the terms of the agreement, unused funds must be refunded to the contributor. Refunds are made after Sida has sent the payment request, which is expected to be received in 2026. The liability is reported as current. The repayment does not affect the association's results but involves a settlement of previously received, unused grant funds.

Sida Core Support Agreement 3 - Intervention 61070063	Amount
Unused funds	4 408 045

## ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025

### NOTE 10 PLEDGED ASSETS

#### *Pledged assets*

There are no pledged assets.

### NOTE 11 CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

Eventualförpliktelse	32.12.2025	31.12.2024
Remaining volume agreement 3	0	0
Remaining volume agreement 4	0	16 307 456
<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16 307 456</b>

### NOTE 12 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFTER THE END OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR

After the end of the financial year, operations have been conducted in accordance with the established work plan and budget. The association's current funding ceases as announced by the Government and by Sida at the end of 2026. As of the date of the preparation of the annual report, no formal decision on liquidation has yet been taken by the association meeting. The Board continuously monitors the development of financing conditions and commitments and prepares operations for various possible future scenarios in accordance with applicable regulations.

The annual report was decided on date 24.03.2026

### SIGNATURES



**Marcus Holmberg**  
President of the Board,  
Sweden's Municipalities and Regions



**Ulrika Stöök**  
Board member,  
Sweden's Municipalities and Regions



**Kristina Jönsson**  
Board member, Lund University



**Meit Fohlin**  
Board member, Region Gotland



**Johan Lilja**  
Secretary General Swedish International  
Centre for Local Democracy

Our audit report has been submitted on the date stated in the electronic signature  
**Grant Thornton Sweden AB**

Visby, the day shown by the electronic signature on the original.



**Per Gardelin**  
Authorised Public Accountant

# AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the general meeting of the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy  
Org. no. 802441 - 7480

## REPORT ON THE ANNUAL REPORT

### STATEMENTS

We have carried out an audit of the annual report of the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy for the year 2025.

The company's annual report is included on pages 22-44 of this document.

In our opinion, the annual report has been prepared in accordance with the Annual Accounts Act and gives a true and fair view in all material respects of the financial position of the International Centre for Local Democracy as of 31 December 2025 and of its financial results for the year in accordance with the Annual Accounts Act. The Management Report is consistent with the other parts of the annual accounts.

We therefore recommend that the general meeting adopts the income statement and balance sheet for the association.

### BASIS FOR STATEMENTS

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISA) and generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden. Our responsibility under those standards is described in more detail in the section The auditor's responsibility. We are independent of the association according to generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden and have otherwise fulfilled our ethical responsibilities under these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our statements.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We would like to draw attention to the management report in the annual report, which under

the heading Operations 2026 and World Events, states that the organisation has got funding until 2026-12-31. After this time, there is currently no continued funding of the association from SIDA.

### INFORMATION OTHER THAN THE ANNUAL REPORT

This document also contains other information than the annual report and can be found on pages 1-21. The Board is responsible for this other information.

Our statement regarding the annual report does not include this information and we do not make a statement confirming this other information.

In connection with our audit of the annual accounts, it is our responsibility to read the information identified above and consider whether the information is materially inconsistent with the annual accounts. In this review, we also consider the knowledge we otherwise obtained during the audit and assess whether the information otherwise appears to contain material misstatements.

If, based on the work performed on this information, we conclude that the other information contains a material misstatement, we are required to report this. We have nothing to report in that regard.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL

It is the Board of Directors which is responsible for ensuring that the annual report is prepared and that it provides a fair view in accordance with the Annual Accounts Act. In addition, the Board of Directors is responsible for the internal checks that they deem necessary in order to prepare an annual report that does not contain any significant inaccuracies, whether due to irregularities or errors.

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**ICLD ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

In preparing the annual report, the Board is responsible for assessing the organisation's ability to continue operations. They inform, when applicable, of conditions that may affect their ability to continue operations and to use the assumption of continued operation. However, the assumption of continued operation is not applied if the board intends to liquidate the company, cease operations or has no realistic alternative to doing either of these.

**AUDITOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

Our goal is to obtain a reasonable degree of certainty as to whether the annual report as a whole does not contain any significant inaccuracies, whether due to irregularities or errors, and to provide an audit report containing our statements. Reasonable certainty is a high degree of certainty, but there is no guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISA and good auditing practice applicable in Sweden will always detect a material error when such exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and be considered material if they, individually or together, can reasonably be expected to influence the financial decisions taken by the user on the basis of the annual report.

As part of an audit under ISA, I use professional judgment and have a professionally sceptical attitude throughout the audit.

In addition:

- we identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the annual report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures based on, among other things, these risks and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to form a basis for our opinions. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to irregularities is higher than for a material misstatement due to errors, as irregularities may include collusion, counterfeiting, deliberate omissions, misinformation, or breach of internal control.
- we acquire an understanding of the part of the organisation's internal control that is relevant to our audit in order to design audit measures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not to express an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control.
- we evaluate the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the reasonableness of the Board's accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- we draw a conclusion about the appropriateness of the Board using the assumption of continued operation in the preparation of the annual report. We also draw a conclusion, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists relating to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organisation's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that there is a material uncertainty factor, we must use the audit report to draw attention to the information included in the Annual Report on the material uncertainty factor or, if such information is insufficient, modify the statement relating to the Annual Report. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of the audit report. However, future events or circumstances may result in an organisation being unable to continue operations.
- we evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the Annual Report, including the disclosures, and assess whether the Annual Report represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that gives a fair picture.

We must inform the Board of Directors about, among other things, the planned scope and focus of the audit, as well as its timing. We must also communicate significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify.

## REPORT ON OTHER LEGAL AND REGULATORY AGREEMENTS

### STATEMENTS

In addition to our audit of the annual report, we have also carried out an audit of the Board and the General Secretary's administration for the International Centre for Local Democracy for the year 2025.

We recommend that the general meeting grants the members of the board and the Secretary General discharge from liability for the financial year.

### BASIS FOR STATEMENTS

We conducted the audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards applicable in Sweden. Our responsibility according to this is described in more detail in the section entitled Auditor's responsibility. We are independent of the association according to generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden and have otherwise fulfilled our ethical responsibilities under these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our statements.

### THE BOARD AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Directors and the Secretary General are responsible for the administration according to the statutes.

### AUDITOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Our objective regarding the audit of the administration, and thereby our statement of discharge from liability, is to obtain audit evidence to be able to assess with a reasonable degree of certainty whether any board member in any material respect:

- has taken any action or been guilty of any negligence that may give rise to liability to the association.

Reasonable assurance is a high degree of certainty, but no guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden will always detect actions or commissions that may give rise to liability to the association.

As part of an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. The review of the administration is primarily based on the audit of the accounts. The additional audit procedures performed are based on our professional judgment based on risk and materiality. This means that we focus the review on measures, areas and conditions that are essential to the operation and where deviations and violations would have particular significance for the organisation's situation. We review and examine decisions made, decision bases, measures taken and other circumstances that are relevant to our statement of discharge from liability.

Visby, on the date shown  
in the electronic signature.  
Grant Thornton Sweden AB

  
Per Gardelin  
Authorised Public Accountant

**ICLD** Swedish International  
Centre for Local Democracy

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