



UK Local Government Supporting International Development

# Prospectus for Local Government Engagement

March 2010

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Front cover photo: Ivor Wells

# 1. Executive summary

How important is local government in the fight against global poverty? What are councils doing to promote international development? And what are the opportunities for achieving more?

This brochure profiles a sector that is often overlooked in international development, but is vital to lasting progress. Responsive, participatory, accountable local government and effective delivery of local services are essential to help the poorest communities meet their needs. If we are to move away from a culture of aid dependency towards communities that are self-reliant and confident, we need a strong and effective local government sector in developing countries.

This document highlights the huge demand for assistance in building the capacity of local government in developing countries. LG Alliance members have received many requests from colleagues in developing countries to support their work.

The brochure also shows how UK councils can have a direct impact on development with specific examples of existing activities. It illustrates the wide skills base of the sector – with councils in the UK providing over 500 services to local communities, providing community leadership and in the process, forging innovative local partnerships. It profiles skills in areas as diverse as climate change adaptation and mitigation; economic development; employment; housing and urban development; social care and community wellbeing.

Two broad areas of expertise are emphasised:

- **delivering good governance and democracy**
- **ensuring efficiency and sustainable service delivery**

UK councils undoubtedly face major domestic challenges in the current economic climate. However, we live in an increasingly interdependent world and the benefits of international development work to UK councils are well documented. These include: learning alternative approaches to improving services; establishing new trade and economic links; building social cohesion through better links with their own Diaspora communities; strengthening community understanding and cultural awareness; as well as enhancing the skills and motivation of council staff.

Many councils are already involved in international development and need no convincing of the benefits that flow to their communities, as well as to developing countries. Examples of their work in countries such as Nicaragua, South Africa and Uganda, are provided in this brochure.

This document is produced by the UK Local Government Alliance for International Development (LG Alliance). The LG Alliance brings together five local government organisations committed to strengthening local government to help to reduce poverty globally.

## 2. Introduction



### 2.1 Local government and the MDGs

In 2000 the British government signed up to the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aiming to end global poverty by 2015. This has shaped development policy, and the scale of the challenge underlines the need for all stakeholders to be working together towards supporting countries to achieve sustainable development and poverty reduction. The delivery of the MDGs will be measured by results at the local level.

Local government is at the front line of delivery of these international commitments. Local government has a democratic mandate to represent the communities that they serve; they are close to the community and can work effectively with local people to ensure that services are planned to meet the needs of the community. For many people local government is the only face of government that they see and it has the most direct relevance to their daily lives.

Local democracy and good governance are central to ensure sustainable local development. A participatory and citizen-focused approach, where local people have a major say in their governance and development is essential. This will strengthen accountability and probity, it will ensure that services are relevant to local needs, and it will strengthen community cohesion and capability. The UK Government, like all other Commonwealth Governments, has formally committed<sup>1</sup> to the Commonwealth Principles on

<sup>1</sup> 2005, 2007 and 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance (the 'Aberdeen Principles') as core principles to promote local democracy and good governance.

In many countries it is local government that has lead responsibility for providing the basic services that are essential to the delivery of the MDGs – it manages water supplies, collects and disposes of waste, plans and runs local primary health clinics, provides environmental protection and agricultural outreach services, and encourages and supports local enterprise. A study by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum<sup>2</sup> identified the linkages between the MDGs and local government

<sup>2</sup> Improving Local Government: the Commonwealth vision, Dr Philip Amis, 2009

functions across the Commonwealth, illustrated in Box 1.

Local government in the developing world is facing critical challenges of rapid urbanisation, economic downturn, and climate change. This is happening alongside a tendency by central governments to decentralise responsibilities without the necessary resources and powers to deliver effectively. Local government is increasingly being called on to play a convening role, drawing together key partners who work at the local level to achieve community development and to deliver services and infrastructural improvement. They are also critical in supporting community understanding and participation in local development processes.

Box 1 the Role of local government in delivering on the MDGs

MDG	Fire & Police	Solid Waste Mngt	Roads	Primary Education	Water & Sanitation	Primary Health	Public Health	Land Use Planning	Economic Dvlpmt
1 Poverty	••	•	••	••	••	••		••*	••*
2 Primary Education			•	•••	•	•		•	
3 Gender Equality	••			••			••		
4 Child mortality		••	••	••	••	•••	••	•	
5 Maternal health	•	•	••	•	••	•••	•		
6 HIV/Aids malaria		••		•	••	•••	•	•	
7 Slums & Water	•	••	•••	•	•••	•	••	•••	•
8 Partnership									•

- Key
- Direct provision
  - Indirect relationship
  - Some relationship
  - \* In some cases LG through bad governance can influence this MDG negatively

Local government therefore requires the right capacity and capabilities to enable it to carry out these critical roles. Recognising this, at the High Level Forum for Aid Effectiveness in Accra, 2008, government donors and aid agencies committed to ensure developing country governments will “work more closely...with local authorities...in preparing, implementing and monitoring national development policies and plans..” and to “identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels”.

Local government has the potential to play a central role in the delivery of the MDGs – and needs to do so. If its capacity and capability are not strengthened, delivery of the MDGs will be compromised. It is essential therefore that local government, where it exists, is treated as part of the solution towards meeting the MDGs. It is important not to undermine or duplicate the statutory role of local government, rather to place greater emphasis on building skills and capacity at the local level to achieve sustainable development in local communities. Local government and central government offer complementary sets of skills and perspectives on development challenges, and it is important to recognise that for effective change both must work together and with other stakeholders in the interests of development.





## 2.2 What contribution can UK local government make?

LG Alliance members are receiving ever more requests for support from developing country colleagues to help strengthen the sector to enable it to build up effective institutional frameworks and service delivery. They are convinced that helping developing countries build their decentralised institutional capacity is central to the delivery of the Millennium Development Goals. The LG Alliance wants to see a greater emphasis placed by international donors on local government capacity building in developing countries.

Local government actors in the UK can support this process through working in partnership with local government colleagues overseas. The LG Alliance provides a one-stop-shop to bring together, coordinate and support UK local government engagement in international development.

The LG Alliance is also working with UK local government to highlight the importance of international development and the role that local government plays in development and to ensure funding is allocated to this important area of work. UK councils are empowered by the Local Government Act 2000 to play an international role, and a number are already active in the field. The sector is keen to work with development partners to align its skills and knowledge base to ensure an integrated approach to international development.

## 2.3 Why is International Development important to UK councils?

Many UK councils have large communities that originate from developing countries. UK local councils engage internationally to learn more about the needs of their local communities, as well as to build cultural understanding and highlight the contribution that ethnic groups make to a community. This approach brings benefits to councils and communities in both the UK and overseas partner countries. UK councils can:

### 1. Support overseas colleagues to:

- draw on unique UK local government practitioner and political expertise, in a coordinated way, to support locally targeted international development;
- promote local self-sufficiency, moving away from aid dependence;
- promote transparency, value for money and efficient aid delivery.

### 2. Bring benefits back home, including:

- recognition of global interconnections through trade and business links;
- working with community Diaspora and promoting cohesion;
- promoting global citizenship – understanding and engagement;
- bringing international learning back to UK;
- professional development and investment in council staff and councillors.

### 3. UK local government skills portfolio



Photo: Southwark Borough Council

#### Local government in the UK

Local Government in the UK operates in a complex environment, with a combination of single and two tier authorities operating in a wide range of contexts, from large cities to rural, shire areas. Town, parish and community councils also operate at the grassroots level. Local government associations exist for Scotland (COSLA), Northern Ireland (NILGA), England and Wales (LGA) with a primary mandate to act as a collective, authoritative voice for the sector, and support the operations of member councils.

UK local government has consistently proved itself to be the most efficient part of the public sector, achieving efficiency savings of more than £3billion between 2004 and 2007. Local government is one of the largest public sector employers in the UK – councils in England and Wales alone employ over 2.2 million people. Local councils represent a wealth of information and skills, ranging from technical expertise in service delivery to skills such as partnership management. These skills have been tested in a wide variety of local contexts, from inner cities, to suburbs and rural communities. Collectively, there are few situations and challenges that local government has not met.

This section summarises the extensive range of skills (both technical and managerial) which the UK local government sector brings to the table. These skills could be drawn on to help build capacity in local government overseas and thereby help address development challenges on the ground and deliver the MDGs. The LG Alliance partners are sensitive to the need for sensible and managed deployment of practitioners, and strategic design of projects,

but equally recognise the benefit to practitioners in the local government sector overseas of working alongside fellow practitioners who are familiar with the local government context and operating environment.

While the breadth of local government expertise is outlined in Appendix 1, in relation to international development it can be categorised into two core areas:

- delivering good governance and democracy;
- ensuring efficient and sustainable service delivery.

### **3.1 Delivering good governance and democracy**

UK councils are not only political bodies, but also complex organizations with turnovers rivalling the largest private sector companies. As such, they possess a range of skills relating to political management and democracy, and to efficient business management. UK councils provide an institutional model with the ability to strengthen the local public sector internationally, and there is a demand for their expertise from developing countries.

UK councils demonstrate an array of governance skills, which can be categorised under three headings:

- democracy and political management
- corporate governance
- community leadership.



Governance area	Theme	Summary of skills
<b>Democracy and political management</b>	Political sensitivity	UK councils are political organisations, led by directly elected councillors with considerable expertise in representing their constituents, both to the council and to their national political party. They are supported by a team of officers providing administrative services and technical expertise. Responding and being sensitive to the political environment is a unique skill held by local government staff.
	Democratic services and member training	Local government officers have an important role in enabling members to fulfil their mandate. This includes adhering to the legal requirements of council proceedings, making administrative arrangements for public meetings and consultations, and briefing and advising members of policy developments.
	Election management and organisation	As imperative as supporting members in daily tasks is ensuring councillors are fairly and democratically elected. Every year elections involving hundreds of candidates, thousands of polling stations, and many more voters, are expertly managed by UK councils.
<b>Corporate governance</b>	Local government associations	These self-governing membership organisations give a united voice for the sector. They represent local government to central government and other stakeholders, and enable seamless service delivery across parties. The LG Alliance partners have a history of providing support to associations in developing countries, enabling national support for councils, political representation, monitoring and improvement.
	Strategic planning and financial management	As complex corporate bodies with diverse operations, priorities and stakeholders, local councils have become exemplars in balancing a direct delivery role with enabling and monitoring partners and external suppliers, to achieve maximum efficiency.
	Innovative financial models	Tools such as PFI and public-private partnerships have become increasingly commonly used in the way in which local councils deliver services to their community. The complex financial and governance arrangements around these tools have become an area of expertise for the sector.
	Project design, planning and management	High standards of project design and management are promoted across the sector.
	Revenue collection	A vital role of councils is to manage the complex process of administering and collecting local taxes, fees and charges, without which councils would not be able to operate.
	Local employer	Local councils are major employers in communities, and as such the sector is adept at promoting itself as an employer of choice, promoting high equality standards, rewarding careers and workforce development.
	Procurement	Councils have well developed procurement processes and skills akin to the private sector. The sector has also harnessed its power as a major procurer to stimulate local businesses, social responsibility and environmental good practice.

<b>Community leadership and empowerment</b>	Community engagement	Transparent, accountable, inclusive governance and decision making is a priority for all UK local councils. Councils have a duty to facilitate the engagement of citizens, not only through formal democratic processes, but also in service decisions made across the authority. Councils promote community engagement via neighbourhood management, community funds, along with participatory tools around budgets, planning and appraisals. The rise in prominence of the scrutiny role in local government illustrates the high standard to which councils hold themselves to account.
	Local knowledge, information and learning	The unique spectrum of activities undertaken by councils makes them a major repository of information, putting them at the forefront of knowledge management tools, such as GIS. In the complex environment in which they operate, councils also act as the first port of call for the services of multiple agents. UK local government can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practice between UK and international partners in relation to community engagement and participatory tools, financial innovation, technical and service delivery improvement and many other areas.
	Partnership working	UK councils are strategic convenors of local groups, bringing together local organisations via vehicles such as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Local and Multi-Area Agreements (LAA and MAAs) and Local Development Framework (LDF); these all engage local partners, ensure ownership on the ground and build regional coordination of development processes. UK Local Government has built up a valuable transferable skills base in the governance, management and legal structures for these partnerships.
	Registration service	Councils are responsible for managing not only the electoral register, but also registration of births, deaths and marriages.

### 3.2 Ensuring efficient and sustainable service delivery

UK local government contains a pool of practitioners and policy makers with experience of working at local levels to improve the quality of life for local people. UK local government can offer considerable practical know-how to support local government in developing countries to achieve the MDGs locally, as outlined below.



Service aim	Service area – UK skills base	Related MDG/s
Social wellbeing	Social housing - providing and managing (either directly or with partners) affordable housing for rent and ownership.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG 8: Partnerships
	Education- Managing the delivery of primary and secondary education including lesson delivery, facilities management, and school administration, and supporting colleges and universities.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG2: Achieve universal primary education MDG 8: Partnerships
	Social welfare, care and benefits - ensuring that the groups of society most in need receive the support on which they depend and are entitled, including children's services, child protection and care for elderly or vulnerable adults.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG2: Achieve universal primary education MDG3: Promote gender equality and empower women MDG4: Reduce child mortality MDG5: Improve maternal health MDG 8: Partnerships
	Safer communities - taking a lead on ensuring that all citizens feel safe and secure in their environment.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG2: Achieve universal primary education MDG3: Promote gender equality and empower women MDG 8: Partnerships

	Community cohesion - councils take a leading role in shaping cohesion in their local community. They are pivotal in tackling equality and diversity issues around race, gender, religion, sexuality. Many councils have expertise in conflict management at the local level.	MDG3: Promote gender equality and empower women MDG 8: Partnerships
<b>Environmental wellbeing</b>	Waste management - the collection, disposal and recycling of household waste across the country, from large rural areas with limited transport infrastructure, to densely populated urban areas.	MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability MDG 8: Partnerships
	Environmental health - monitoring and enforcing standards around food safety, environmental protection, public health, workplace health and safety.	MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
	Natural resource management; ensuring conservation of natural resources, and protecting and harnessing their value for local communities.	MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
	Development planning - Local government is responsible for ensuring that the physical and built environment of the region will enable a pleasant, sustainable and economically productive community.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability MDG 8: Partnerships
	Disaster management and mitigation; Ensuring an effective coordinated response to disasters, and putting in place measures to mitigate their occurrence; including the impact of climate change.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG3: Promote gender equality and empower women MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability MDG 8: Partnerships

<b>Economic wellbeing</b>	Economic development, job creation and skill development - councils have primary responsibility for local economic development, including supporting new businesses, providing training and development opportunities and ensuring it is included in local plans and activities across the council.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG2: Achieve universal primary education MDG3: Promote gender equality and empower women MDG 8: Partnerships
	Tourism development, management and promotion - developing and marketing the local tourism industry, including ecotourism.	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability MDG 8: Partnerships
<b>Infrastructure development</b>	Building control - ensuring that safety, environmental, and planning regulations are adhered to.	MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
	Transport planning and public transport - Ensuring an effective, integrated system of services and infrastructure, collaborating with partners	MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger MDG2: Achieve universal primary education MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
	Planning regulation and enforcement - ensuring that the physical and built environment of the region will enable a pleasant, sustainable and economically productive community.	MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability MDG 8: Partnerships

## 4. International Development – local partnerships in practice

Expertise in partnership management coupled with the sector's understanding of local communities and businesses gives local government a unique capability to contribute to international development and to addressing complex global challenges at a local level. Cooperative partnerships can bring direct benefits to local communities, but where they also involve regional and national local government associations, as well as central government ministries, they can result in scaling-up of good practice and policy improvement.

The following section outlines areas where local partnerships have a particular impact:

- Climate change strategies – adaptation and mitigation
- Economic development – innovation and responding to the downturn

- Workforce development and planning
- Housing and urbanisation
- Social wellbeing

### 4.1 Climate change strategies

Efforts to tackle climate change should be set within the context of local development programmes for poverty reduction, economic regeneration, service delivery, habitat and biodiversity protection, water management and food security. Local government can ensure these programmes complement each other locally and avoid wasteful fragmentation.

Whilst the IPCC predicts the greatest climatic changes in the northern hemisphere, it is clearly the developing nations that are least equipped to mitigate, and adapt to the threats posed. Local government in developing countries will need significant international and national support to face up to the huge challenges



#### Climate change and environmental management – locally determined and owned

##### THE LANCASHIRE–GULU CARBON COMPENSATION SCHEME

A Climate Compensation Scheme (CCS) was set up in 2008 as a four-way partnership between the councils in Lancashire and in Gulu, Uganda and two local community groups. At its core is the premise that Lancastrians can compensate for some of their carbon emissions by helping those most affected. Lancashire does this by supporting practical, small-scale, locally-determined and managed projects in

Gulu. The Scheme features as part of Lancashire's regional climate change strategy.

Lancashire council provides expertise on climate change and environmental projects, and provides project and annual monitoring support to Gulu council. The project is managed by Gulu Municipal Council (GMC) and involves local groups and schools, who are responsible for choosing and carrying out projects, and promoting it to the wider community, thus ensuring local ownership. Projects are designed to bring additional social and economic benefits.

[www.lancashire.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/climatechange)  
<http://gulucarbonscheme.blogspot.com/>

ahead, in terms of developing in-house capacity and technical expertise for developing and implementing local climate strategies, in partnership with other actors, and in line with national strategies.

Councils across the UK are leading the way on climate change; in planning, fighting fuel poverty, developing low carbon housing and infrastructure, integrated transport management, and micro-generation, as well as impact assessment and sustainability appraisals, along with risk management and adaptation preparedness.

#### **4.2 Economic development – Response to the downturn**

In order to respond to the global economic downturn, development programmes must focus on building sustainable, local self-sufficiency and economic capacity. Local government provides a vital role in supporting local economic development, and stimulating new and innovative enterprise. Local government can support and encourage local enterprise through instruments such as small loans or safety net programmes. Such encouragement needs to be provided locally and tailored to local communities.



#### **Economy and peer review**

##### **UK AND SOUTH AFRICAN LGAS**

The Local Government Association (LGA) is working with the world association of local government (United Cities and Local Government) to assess the impact of the economic downturn locally and develop a strategic global response for local government.

As part of the CLGF Good Practice Scheme the LGA is working with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) to share experiences of how local government is responding to the global economic downturn. The LGA also recently carried out a corporate peer review of SALGA, with advice and support from the IDeA. The review's aim was to strengthen both the association's strategic positioning as the national voice for local government, as well as the services it provides to a diverse membership at a challenging time for South African local government.

Councils in the UK play a central role in fostering economic prosperity and growth across their areas – stimulating training and employment, supporting SMEs, and working with marginalised groups, such as women and migrant communities. They promote innovation, better regulation, transport and infrastructure planning, and youth engagement to build vibrant and healthy local economies. UK councils also play a critical role in terms of local procurement and facilitating trade missions.

### 4.3 Workforce development and planning

Stimulating the workforce through education, skills development and job creation is an essential development priority. Local government can play a critical role through promoting stabilisation, regeneration and wellbeing. Councils across the UK have placed a strong emphasis on building skills in local government to stimulate local employment opportunities in their community, especially for young people, including through life-long learning and occupational development.

### 4.4 Social wellbeing – children, young people, disabled and adult social care

At the heart of the MDGs is the common need to promote social wellbeing, equality and prosperity. Local government is the sphere of government that works closest to people. It is at the front line of providing social safety nets and support for those most in need. In many developing countries, this is a role that is either not being met or has pushed councils to the limit of their capacity.

Child and adult poverty, exclusion and inequality are also very real issues for the UK. Despite human resource pressures, UK local councils are working hard to safeguard children and develop leadership in children's services. Local government is promoting learning, skills development and engagement with young people. Councils are working to transform social care to improve safeguards for adults, tackle inequalities, and promote a universal and sustainable system of support for wellbeing.

#### Employment stimulation – scaling up local good practice

#### LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM & EKURHULENI, SOUTH AFRICA

A CLGF Good Practice Scheme project between Lewisham and Ekurhuleni, tackled local unemployment through a job brokerage scheme, supporting both job seekers as well as small businesses. It saw more than 1,000 people back into work and a 7.3% rise in manufacturing employment in Ekurhuleni. South Africa's national Department for Labour supported the project and rolled it out to other areas across the Gauteng province. The SA Office of the Deputy President then supported a national roll out of the Lewisham/ Ekurhuleni model over two years. The project also led to Lewisham examining its own business support systems, adopting a more flexible and responsive approach.



### COMMUNITY INITIATED URBAN HOUSING IN UGANDA

The C3 fund provided a localised funding stream targeting projects that are community initiated, city-based and capacity-focused. The project's purpose was to develop an effective (in terms of cost and human resource efficiency) and transferable mechanism for channelling multiple small-scale investments to community-initiated urban development projects. Specifically the C3 fund aimed to support poor urban communities and their representative local authorities in undertaking sustainable poverty eradication initiatives, with the support of established international civil society, local government and private sector networks.

“Practitioner to practitioner cooperation between Ugandan and UK local government through the DFID-funded C3 (City Community Challenge) produced tangible results; new homes and jobs for some of the poorest people. This project has empowered local councils responding to the basic needs of their community and has led to a resurgence of physical planning in urban areas such as Mpumudde in Jinja”. Raphael Magyezi, Secretary General, Uganda LGA

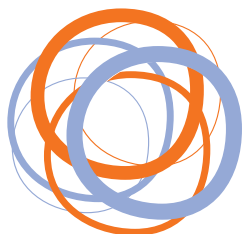
Supported by DFID and then UN Habitat, this urban housing & infrastructure financial mechanism involved local communities but also the Ugandan national association and central government ministry for local government ensuring political support and wider learning outcomes.

## 4.5 Housing and urban management

UK local government is leading on making homes affordable, improving the quality of place, and enhancing the financing and management of infrastructure. UK councils conduct strategic housing peer reviews, drawing from expert councillors and officers to help improve service delivery, and deliver better outcomes for local communities nationally.

The management of urban settlements is also an important area of expertise within the local government sector, involving a cross section of skills in order to manage urban development effectively. A range of direct support mechanisms exist, including the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)'s Planning Advisory Service (PAS) which offers support on development management and local development frameworks (LDF).

# 5. UK Local Government Alliance for International Development – a coordinated approach



## 5.1 Who we are

The UK Local Government Alliance for International Development (LG Alliance) is an alliance of five local government bodies, committed to increasing understanding of the role of local government in reducing global poverty.

The five partners together represent:

- approximately 160 organisations representing ministries of local government, local government associations, and individual councils, in over 40 Commonwealth countries.
- 433 local authorities in the UK
- approximately 10,000 UK parish and town councils with 100,000 councillors
- 1700 chief executives and senior managers in the UK

## Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

With a membership that includes local government and ministries from across the Commonwealth, CLGF works to promote effective democratic local government in the Commonwealth and to facilitate the exchange of good practice in local government structures and services. Working directly with the local government sector in developing countries it receives regular requests for technical and capacity building support from its members and partners. It is actively engaged in supporting local government capacity building programmes at regional and national and local level across the Commonwealth including through its management of the (DFID-funded) Good Practice Scheme.

### **Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)**

Focusing on performance improvement in the local government sector, the IDeA uses innovative tools such as the Local Innovation Awards and the virtual 'Communities of Practice' networks to build peer-to-peer learning and improvement in councils. The Beacon Scheme has been adapted for use in Bosnia and trialled more recently in Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

### **Local Government Association (LGA)**

The LGA supports international development through encouraging the involvement of local councils in development activities, engaging directly in local government association capacity building programmes and through working with partners at UK, European and international levels, promotion and coordination of the local government role in poverty reduction.

### **National Association of Local Councils (NALC)**

NALC represents the interests of around 8,500 town and parish councils in England. Parish and town councils employ over 25,000 staff, with annual expenditure in the region of £400 million. International development initiatives include promotion of the 'Fairtrade towns' campaign', now involving over 450 towns and cities across the country.

### **Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE)**

As the representative body for senior strategic managers working in the public sector, SOLACE provides a senior-level sounding board, on how best to communicate international development issues within the context of pressing local domestic priorities and how to greater utilise the wealth of local government management expertise in an international context.

## 5.2 Our offer

Acting as a united voice for all UK local government bodies engaged in international development, the LG Alliance facilitates a stronger partnership and more coordinated approach to working with the local government sector. The LG Alliance offers:

### Local Government Expertise

- access to the knowledge and experience of over 2.9m UK local government staff across over 200 occupations, and over 23,000 elected councillors
- strong understanding of international development in a local government context
- in-depth knowledge of the local government sector in the UK and overseas
- access to networks within the sector (UK and overseas)

### Coordinated Local Government Response

- coordinating activities at a national, regional and international level
- working with local government partners overseas (councils, national associations and ministries) to provide a strategic contribution to development programmes
- monitoring and evaluation of impact

### Local Government Improvement Tools

- facilitating UK international development activities, through provision of training, support and analytical tools (including peer-review, impact assessment, promotion of governance, election monitoring)

### Sustainable Impact

- scaling up of activities – working through national local government associations and government ministries to ensure that positive impacts from individual council to council activities are scaled up on a national level.

## 6 Conclusion

The LG Alliance partners through a coordinated UK local government response can assist in the delivery of the MDGs. UK local government has the capacity and skills to make a valuable contribution towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the local government sector in the UK is ready to make its contribution at this level.

Strong local government is essential to ensure effective aid delivery, self sufficiency and sustained impact.

Local government in the UK has taken a proactive role to develop its skills base at officer and elected member level, and much of this is done within the sector through peer inspections, provision of peer support and peer learning. There is a culture of working cross-organisationally and of mutual learning to support improvement across the sector. This has shown major results in efficiency, innovation and in a more professional approach to governance and local service delivery.

UK local government has skilled and knowledgeable staff and councillors with extensive experience of managing and delivering effective services. The sector in the UK recognises and understands many of the challenges that their counterparts in developing countries are facing, not least because of their understanding of large Diaspora communities locally. Many councils have already been involved in a range of international development activities, but the LG Alliance believes that a more strategic approach would result in a more sustained impact on poverty reduction.

The LG Alliance provides a single entry point to a significant pool of knowledge and expertise. It would value the opportunity to work with development partners to identify how our resources could best be deployed

### **Contact**

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[www.lg-alliance.org.uk](http://www.lg-alliance.org.uk)



*Photo: Ivor Wells*

The UK Local Government Alliance for International Development brings together five local government bodies in the UK, committed to increase understanding of how local government can help to reduce poverty internationally.

### Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

is a membership organisation that brings together local government and ministries of local government from across the 53 countries of the Commonwealth. It works to promote and strengthen effective democratic local government in the Commonwealth and to facilitate the exchange of good practice in local government structures and services.

[www.clgf.org.uk](http://www.clgf.org.uk)



### The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)

focuses on performance improvement in the local government sector, the IDeA uses innovative tools such as the Local Innovation Awards and the virtual 'Communities of Practice' networks to build peer-to-peer learning and improvement so that councils can serve people and places better. [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)



The **Local Government Association (LGA)** is a voluntary membership body of more than 400 member authorities in England and Wales. The LGA support international development by promoting the involvement of local councils, engaging directly in local government association capacity building programmes, advocating on behalf of local government on international development issues. [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)



### National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

represents the interests of town and parish councils in England – a total of around 8,500 councils. Parish and town councils provide employment for over 25,000 staff, with annual expenditure in the region of £400 million. The 'Fairtrade towns campaign', now involves over 400 towns and cities across the country. [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk)



**SOLACE** promotes public sector management excellence and provides professional development for its members who come from all areas of the public sector. SOLACE provides a senior-level sounding board, enabling the LG Alliance to understand how best to communicate international development issues within the context of pressing local domestic priorities and how to engage the wealth of local government management expertise. [www.solace.org.uk](http://www.solace.org.uk)



For further information please contact the LG Alliance at: [lgalliance@lga.gov.uk](mailto:lgalliance@lga.gov.uk) or visit [www.lg-alliance.org](http://www.lg-alliance.org)

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