

# **The Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme**

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

### **Introduction**

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Pacific Project office in Suva, Fiji, has requested the assistance of LGMA to disseminate information on opportunities for Councils to become involved in international local government development projects.

As part of its regional local government capacity building project in the Pacific, CLGF is scaling up one of its key technical support mechanisms, the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme, initially in Papua New Guinea and later on to Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu.

Councils in Australia that are interested in the mutual benefits that come from participation in international cooperation and partnership projects are encouraged to consider this opportunity. Apart from providing technical support to a local authority in a developing country, such projects have the potential for enhancing professional local government development from a global perspective.

### **Background**

The Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme (CLGGPS) was launched in 1998 and has been designed to support the implementation of focused local government projects, based on the exchange of good practice and skills between practitioners working in the field of local government. The aim is to apply a partnership approach to help councils improve the efficiency of service delivery and local democracy.

The goal of the Scheme is to promote effective, responsive and accountable delivery of local authority services, particularly to poor and disadvantaged communities, identifying examples of good practice for application elsewhere. Its purpose is to improve planning and management performance, and the implementation capacity of local authorities in the target countries and beyond. Since its inception, the Scheme has been facilitating practitioner to practitioner projects between Local Authorities in the UK and partners in the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. More recently, successful technical partnerships between Councils in Australia and Papua New Guinea, and Australia/New Zealand and Solomon Islands have been established, all of which reinforce the two-way value of the Scheme. It is proposed to roll out this mechanism to other Pacific Island counties shortly.

National associations of local government and professional staff associations also play an important coordination role in the Scheme by identifying potential local partners, managing aspects of the twinning projects, technical backstopping, etc.

The Good Practice Scheme currently supports practical capacity-building projects between councils in Australia and their counterparts in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Projects are designed to draw on the skills and expertise of councils in Australia and combine that with the skills of councils in their developing counterpart to help the council to identify and develop workable and sustainable solutions to challenges being faced on the ground. Projects normally comprise a series of exchange/work-shadowing visits for staff and councillors, combined with joint-working, piloting new activities, and other local activities such as community workshops etc.

The projects, currently funded by AusAID and likely to be supported by other donors, focus on building the local governance arrangements and strengthening local skills/service delivery capacity. They are not designed to fund major capital works. Funding normally covers travel, accommodation and sustenance, some materials and related costs, etc.

Currently partnerships are in place between:

- Orange and Mt Hagen, who have just completed the development of the local town development plan and an exhibition landscaping project
- Cairns and Lae who are developing a waste management strategy and operation
- Port Moresby (National Capital District Commission) and Townsville who are redesigning the regulatory services function of the PNG council
- NSW Local Government and Shires Association and Papua New Guinea Urban Local Level Government Association who have jointly developed the PNG national association's corporate plan.
- Noosa and Alotau who are working together on improving waste management.
- Maryborough and Honiara (Solomon Islands), with Kapiti Coast District Council (New Zealand) are jointly working on institutional rebuilding of Honiara City Council after years of civil unrest.

### **Local Government System in PNG**

Papua New Guinea is divided into 19 provinces and the National Capital District where the Capital City, Port Moresby, is located. All provincial governments were created in 1975 to devolve power from the centre to the community level where many villagers share a similar culture.

Local government underwent extensive reform in 1995. In the New Organic Law on Provincial Government and Local Level Government, 19 directly elected provincial governments were replaced with regional authorities (Local Level Governments), which was a further move to devolve power to the local level giving greater powers to elected parliamentarians and district local government councils.

A considerable urban drift towards Port Moresby and other major centres in the 1990s, has resulted in squatter settlements, ethnic disputes, unemployment, and associated social problems of increased poverty and limited services. Limited capacity exists within the sector to overcome these problems, therefore the focus of national government policy, with the support of donor agencies, is starting to address the need to build the capacity of local level governments to deliver services and strengthen civil representation towards a more participatory approach to local development.

Three councils in PNG - Kokopo, Madang and Goroka - are keen to identify partners in Australia to work with under the next phase of the Good Practice Scheme. These towns are strategic in terms of national and regional development, being major centres of economic and social growth.

#### **1. KOKOPO**

Kokopo is the capital of East New Britain Province and also the regional capital for the New Guinea Islands Region. Administrative functions were relocated from Rabaul after the explosion of the Volcano in 1994, and the urban local level government now has a

population of 20,262. The Catholic Church has had a major influence in the area and still provides a lot of healthcare and education.

It is a financial and business centre and an educational and cultural centre for the region. Its hinterland is agriculturally rich and there is a good network of road infrastructure. Urban development is taking place in a linear pattern along the corridor between Tokua Airport and the Kokopo township. This development has generated significant employment opportunities for the local population.

Kokopo is keen to link with a council in Australia to help it to continue to develop and enhance its local service provision. As a 'new' local authority, Kokopo needs support to enhance service delivery capacity, particularly staff training, corporate planning, improved waste management, urban landscaping and an urban development plan.

## **2. MADANG**

Madang has a population from the last census of 27,394, but is estimated to now hover around 40,000. The town is located on the northern part of the mainland, it is the administrative capital of the Province and the shipping distribution point for cargo and freight in the region and the Highlands Provinces beyond.

Many manufacturing industries are based here including the tobacco industry, meat and fish canneries. Educational institutes, tourism and leisure also thrive in Madang. It has beautiful parks and an impressive waterfront.

Priority issues around which Madang would be keen to work in partnership with a community in Australia include: Development of a town plan; recruitment and training of technical staff; improving waste management; traffic management/roads; tourism provision and promotion; urban landscaping; and, reassessment of the rating system.

## **3. GOROKA**

Goroka, with an official population of 18,619 (but unofficial estimates put this around 40,000) is the Provincial capital of the Eastern Highlands. Established in 1939, it was used as a rest centre during World War II, and it was built around the airstrip. It is also now a commercial centre for four other Highland Provinces – Simbu, Western, Enga and Southern Provinces. The town is growing rapidly, with a sizable squatter settlement on its border, in common with many Highland towns.

Although closure of Talair's headquarters had a significant impact in the local economy, the town plays host to one of the national universities, University of Goroka, the National Sports Institute, Institute of Medical Research, national secondary and international schools. It is also the heart of the coffee industry.

The town is keen to identify a partner authority and get involved in the Good Practice Scheme. Upgrading of the town and general environmental improvements are seen to be a major priority, as are urban development planning and building inspection. Assistance with financial management (particularly revenue raising and collection) has also been identified.

**Further Information:** *Additional information on the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme and the participating Councils (including detailed profiles) can be obtained from Terry Parker at CLGF Pacific Project Office in Suva ([clgfsuva@connect.com.fj](mailto:clgfsuva@connect.com.fj)). Tel +679 3300257, Fax +679 3302729. Information on the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the Good Practice Scheme can also be found on the CLGF website – [www.clgf.org.uk](http://www.clgf.org.uk)*