

MINISTRY OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Local Government Reform Position Paper

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALAN	Association of Local Authorities of Namibia
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EU	European Union
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HoD	Head of Department
ICMA	International City/County Management Association
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFMS	Integrated Financial Management System
ILMS	Integrated Land Management System
LARC	Local Authority Reform Committee
LED	Local Economic Development
MRLGHRD	Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development
NIPAM	Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management
NALAO	Namibia Association of Local Authority Officers
NamPower	Namibia Power Corporation
NamWater	Namibia Water Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNMF	Namibia National Mayors' Forum
NPM	New Public Management
NVCF	Namibia Village Councils Forum

OAG	Office of the Auditor General
PMS	Performance Management System
REDS	Regional Electricity Distributors
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SALGA	South Africa Local Government Association
TIPEEG	Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth
TQM	Total Quality Management
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAT	Value Added Tax

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1.0 Background

After many years of apartheid rule, characterised by a long and bitter struggle led by freedom fighters with support from allied forces, Namibia finally gained independence in 1990. The country's apartheid history has had serious implications for the building of an inclusive and cohesive society, let alone a local government system. The challenge of integrating previously divided and disadvantaged communities to reflect the values of peace, unity and equality while at the same time creating a culture of participatory local democracy, was a formidable one that required, and still requires, constant and consistent attention.

Dismantling and replacing apartheid institutions and practices were prerequisites for building this cohesive and inclusive society on the principles of freedom and democracy. To this end, the regional system was introduced to replace the tribally-based administrative areas instituted under the apartheid system. Re-engineering the local government system was necessary to promote democratic values such as inclusion, openness, participation, accountability and good governance. The introduction of these institutions was among the many concrete changes made by the post-independent government of Namibia, in pursuit of the afore-mentioned ideals ultimately leading to an egalitarian nation.

The system of democratic local government in Namibia existed for about 14 years after the first Regional and Local Government Elections in November 1992, before the demands for reform were mooted. The fledgling system was an ideal replacement for the apartheid system but, as expected, was not without its shortcomings. There was need for a review, and possibly an overhaul, of the existing institutional, political and administrative structures, so that local government could be relevant and more responsive to the changing dynamics and demands of a maturing democracy. Additionally, it was intended that these reforms would ensure sustainability of local governments, enrich the democratic process and enhance their capacity to contribute to Vision 2030. Further, it was also the aim of the reforms to entrench good governance and acceptable public management practices.

A Local Authority Reform Committee comprising elected local officials, practitioners and professional staff from the Ministry of Regional and Local Government Housing, and Rural Development was constituted. It utilised an integrated, wholistic and participatory approach to local government reform which was facilitated by the Ministry and involved the various stakeholders. The activities of the Committee included legislative review, nation-wide consultations, country visits to Botswana and South Africa and a national conference which culminated with the production of the Local Government Reform Position Paper 2007.

At its presentation to Cabinet, the policy-makers noted that there were some grey areas that needed to be clarified and some divergent issues for which consensus must be achieved. Concerns were also expressed about the need for international best practice on local governance to be reflected in the Paper. With this feedback, it was agreed that an international local government expert be engaged to review the Position Paper with the aim of addressing the issues and concerns raised by Cabinet.

This came through a technical assistance agreement between the Government of Namibia and The Commonwealth Secretariat which provided for the attachment of a Local Government Adviser in the Ministry for a period of 2 years.

The expert reviewed the Local Government Reform Position Paper along with other relevant documents, conducted relevant research and facilitated consultations with stakeholders. To ensure maximum participation, six 3-day consultations were held in different parts of the country, including one specifically for the officials of the local government associations. At these consultations, the issues identified in the Position Paper were presented and discussed with specific attention being given to the concerns raised by Cabinet. Related presentations, namely on the Models of Political Management of Local Authorities, Revenue Sources for Local Government, Gender Representation in Local Government in Namibia, The Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance, were also made.

Following these consultations and taking into consideration the feedback provided, a Discussion Paper with recommendations for changes was developed and used as the basis for further review by the senior management staff of the Ministry. These officials worked in groups to deliberate on the issues and provided feedback in plenary presentations. The outcome of this consultation resulted in an updated version of the Discussion Paper from which a summary of the recommendations was then developed. A consolidated presentation was then made to the Minister. The outcomes of all these consultation sessions and other related activities were used to revise and update the Local Government Position Paper of 2007 and a one-day national conference was organised to crystallise the issues before submission was made to Cabinet.

2.0 Introduction

Local government epitomises democracy to the extent that local representatives are elected by the people in regular and timely elections under conditions of political freedom and that these citizens are subsequently engaged in the local decision-making process. In this way both the vote and the voice will be adequately represented. Institutionalised structures are expected to be in place to facilitate and maximise citizens' participation in the affairs of their communities. This is a fundamental principle of local democracy that promotes inclusion and enriches the discourse on issues affecting communities so that ensuing decisions and development programmes reflect citizens' preferences and priorities. Citizens are expecting nothing less and, with recent global events, are even prepared to resist attempts to deny or deprive them of these rights.

The information and communication technology revolution has made the world a proverbial global village and citizens can interact and relate through means and media that never existed before. Through these platforms citizens share opinions and ideas and mobilise support for common interests including making demands for participatory, responsive and inclusive governance structures. Lack of a desired response has led to different types of social unrest.

Empirical evidence suggests that there is a growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments based on concerns of corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor and the absence of viable participatory arrangements that link governments to the ordinary citizen. This situation has led to apathy, loss of interest and confidence in institutions of state, particularly at the local level. Notwithstanding this crisis of confidence in local institutions, citizens desire strong, responsive and accountable government whose primary motivation is the desire to enhance the quality of life of all citizens within the local authority jurisdiction.

Beyond being mere voters at periodic elections, taxpayers, consumers of goods and beneficiaries of local services, citizens desire and expect to be meaningfully engaged in the decisions that affect their lives. Because local authorities are expected to exemplify local democracy, it is necessary that the institutional arrangements must provide a direct connection between the citizens and the local authority through appropriate participatory modalities. These will provide the opportunity for constructive engagements between the elected and the electorate. Possible outcomes will be inclusive decision-making, empowerment of citizens, and collective ownership of the development agenda.

Functionally, for local authorities to be truly local and governmental, these bodies must possess the requisite autonomy over their affairs. Administratively, these are manifested in their ability to hire and dismiss staff. Financially local councils must have discretion over revenue generation and expenditure responsibilities. Legal autonomy is expressed in council's ability to create and implement by-laws and regulations to be applied within the jurisdiction. The general consensus is that a good indicator of real local autonomy lies in the extent of the financial independence of local councils.

The LARC identified the following issues to be addressed through the reform:

- Institutional Structures
- Political Structures
- Administrative Structures
- Local Government Financial Management
- Developmental Local Government
- Organised Association for Local Government
- Intergovernmental Relations
- Local Government Relations
- Social Responsibilities

Structural (institutional, political and administrative) changes were necessary but were not sufficient to deliver the desired results and expectations of local democracy. These need to be accompanied by a viable local government fiscal framework along with other changes. The current local government legislation (Local Authorities Act 23 of 1992) does outline sources of revenue for local authorities but there are prevailing impediments that need to be addressed so as to enhance the fiscal capacity of local authorities. For instance, removing the mandatory 5% of property taxes that local authorities are required to remit to regional councils. Another example is the need to cancel debts incurred by local authorities during the pre-independence era since these are a huge financial burden on councils. Moreover, a comprehensive local government financial regime is essential to boost the fiscal status of local authorities. This would include replacing the current ad-hoc system of fiscal transfers to local authorities in favour of a more stable and predictable one. A formula-based grant system will satisfy this condition and will be impartial as well.

Reviewing the current inter-governmental mechanism was essential so as to strengthen the linkages between the three spheres of government. This would result in the elimination of duplication of activities and removal of jurisdictional overlap while simultaneously providing for alignment of national priorities thereby maximising the use of resources and institutions for the benefit of all citizens. This is consistent with the principle of complementarity in which one sphere of government is expected to relate to level (s) above it as well as below it. In this case, local, regional and central governments relating to each other through appropriate inter-governmental mechanisms.

It was recognised that several local authorities in Namibia are involved in various inter-municipal arrangements both at the local and international levels. For the former, the more developed local authorities provide a range of technical assistance services to the lesser developed ones. This type of cooperation is admirable but it is anticipated that using a more coordinated approach involving the various stakeholders would result in significantly more benefits being achieved for all.

Local authorities are involved in international linkages with similar bodies through Twinning, Sister Cities, Cooperation and other relational arrangements. Undoubtedly, these linkages facilitate the exchange of expertise and ideas and the sharing of best practice for the benefit of those involved especially the Namibian local authorities. The LARC noted that Namibia benefits from these associations but there seems to be no policy guidelines for these engagements. Further, the Committee was concerned about the absence of any mechanism to share lessons learnt and experiences beyond those councils involved. Another area of concern was whether all the linkages were equally beneficial and therefore needed to be pursued or whether a shortlist of the more relevant and suitable ones should be developed.

As the Namibian society becomes increasingly developed, new and emerging issues such as e-governance, the effects of climate change, globalisation and its impact on local economies along with others would need to be addressed. The challenges of managing a modern state would also have to be recognised and appropriate responses fashioned, especially in addressing national and international imperatives, while simultaneously attending to escalating local and community demands.

New global issues that have emerged at the end of the last century have generated new opportunities but at the same time created challenges for national governments. The impact is often experienced at the sub-national levels and affects the poor and vulnerable in society. Strong local governments are needed to respond to these challenges so as to complement the efforts of national government. For instance, the impact of urbanisation resulting in the unplanned and unregulated growth of major cities and the depopulation and under-development of rural areas, has serious implications for the provision of local services and integrated development planning. This situation presents grave challenges to both national and local governments.

2.1 Objectives of Reform

The local authority reform is intended to:

- Create a formal system of governance where central, regional and local governments function as a cohesive whole to address common goals and national priorities.
- Promote inclusion and participation of all citizens in the development of their communities.
- Strengthen the capacity of local authorities to provide adequate, reliable and sustainable basic services to all.
- Increase accountability and transparency at the local level.
- Strengthen the capacity of local authorities to forge strategic, partnership and cooperation with other spheres of governments, the private sector and the NGO community.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful citizens' participation in the development of their communities...
- Strengthen the institutional framework of local authorities to facilitate local economic development including attracting investments.

3.0 Challenges of Local Government in Namibia

Post-independent Namibia faced varied challenges and it was no different for local government. The LARC identified the main challenges as:

- Limited citizens participation
- Inadequate financial resources
- Declining local economies
- Capacity constraints
- Rural-to-urban migration
- Dilapidated physical infrastructure

Limited citizens' participation: Emerging from years of apartheid rule characterised by discrimination, marginalisation and non-inclusion, the post-independence government of Namibia was required to disassemble the institutions, structures and systems of the apartheid regime in favour of a democratic one in which all citizens are included. This new democratic dispensation is intended to allow citizens to elect their local representatives and to be actively involved in the development of their respective communities. This means participating in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Commendable progress has been made but councils need to be more creative in harnessing the social capital that exists in communities. This is a virtually untapped resource with the potential to positively impact developmental initiatives for the benefit of all.

Inadequate financial resources: Most local authorities are financially challenged and for some of these bodies, revenues gained through the sale of water and electricity to citizens have been used for operational expenses. While this is an unacceptable public management practice and should be discouraged, it reflects the desperate measures that some local authorities have resorted to so as to maintain functionality. This has affected their ability to meet financial obligations to the suppliers, namely, NamWater and NamPower, often resulting in suspension or termination of service.

For various reasons, including lack of capacity, strategy, enforcement, among others, some local authorities are unable to maximise revenue collection and therefore suffer income shortfalls. Consequently, they are unable to honour some of their financial obligations and to fulfil their service delivery mandates as expected.

Some local authorities carry a huge debt burden, part of which they have inherited from the pre-independence era and another portion from the inability of the unemployed and/or indigent people to pay for services provided to them. This is further exacerbated by the narrow revenue base of these local authorities.

Declining local economies: The local economy of some local authorities is declining because the main sources of economic development such as mining or other large business undertakings have been discontinued or severely curtailed. Usually these would provide direct and indirect employment for a significant section of the working population and would be a catalyst for economic development. Compounding this situation was the non-existence, at the time, of national initiatives to stimulate local economic development

Capacity constraints: Deficiencies in human and organisational capacity have affected the quality of governance and decision-making of some councils. Consequently, citizens are becoming cynical about the motives and commitment of councillors and their sincerity in developing their communities.

Because of their limited financial capacity, many local authorities are unable to recruit certain key professionals resulting in a skills deficit in local authorities. This lack of requisite expertise sometimes contributes to misuse and mismanagement of resources.

At the time of reform there was no functioning national institutions that provided programmes that specifically targeted capacity deficiencies in the public service including local government. Tertiary educational institutions, as well as some organisations, provided relevant training, but these targeted the general public. NIPAM was established to address, *inter-alia*, the capacity shortcomings in the public service but at that time it was not yet functional.

Rural-to-urban migration: After independence and on the return to democracy, people were free to move and this they did, from the under-developed areas to the more developed urban centres, in search of a better quality of life. This rural-to-urban migration resulted in depopulated rural areas and highly populated urban centres. Some were fortunate to be integrated into the formal urban setting but for others living on the outskirts was the only option available to them. This led to the emergence of growing informal settlements. These are unregulated and largely undeveloped areas, for which the provision of services has been a particular challenge to local authorities.

Dilapidated infrastructure: Pre-independence Namibia experienced skewed development of the country in which developmental activities were carried out in areas where a certain set of people lived. This was consistent with the apartheid policy. These favoured areas benefitted from superior municipal and other services which were denied the greater part of the population who lived in under-developed tribal lands. Re-orienting society and establishing inclusive service delivery systems, so that all citizens can benefit equally from basic services, was and still remains a formidable challenge. In many cases it meant introducing new service delivery systems and structures.

Additionally, a significant part of the infrastructure in local authorities had exceeded their life span and were either dilapidated or in a state of grave disrepair. This situation was further exacerbated by the rapid increase in population growth caused by urbanisation placing further strain on already deteriorating infrastructure. This often led to power outages, sewerage overflows, and severe water losses.

4.0 Principles of Local Democracy

Local government reform will undeniably usher in a new dispensation of local democracy in Namibia in which LAs will be characterised by good local governance principles and acceptable public management practices. The *Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance* endorsed and adopted by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2006, outlines a set of principles and standards that are expected to guide Commonwealth governments' policies in promoting local democracy and good governance. These, along with others, are listed below and if practised will lead to strong and sustainable local democracy systems capable of delivering services and development in an effective and efficient manner to the satisfaction of citizens.

Accountability: This is a foundation principle of good governance that requires persons and organisations entrusted with public resources and authority to have a legal and moral obligation to give full account for the use of these resources and the exercise of that authority. There are three dimensions of accountability in any democratic local governance system. Horizontal accountability describes the accounting relationship between the executive and other elected officials of council. Downward accountability refers to the accounting relationship between council and citizens. Upward accountability denotes the accounting relationship between the council and higher level central government ministries or agencies.

Autonomy: This is the extent to which local governments have full discretion in the execution of their mandates without recourse to higher level governments. Oversight functions by central government ministries or agencies must be clearly defined by legislation. Autonomy does not imply anarchy but rather responsibility. Neither does it suggest secession since local government has infra-sovereign character. Basically, local autonomy manifests itself in the following forms:

Administrative autonomy – This means that local government has the power to develop policies to hire and dismiss staff and negotiate contracts for employees. Within this framework, there is no provision for the arbitrary dismissal of local government staff by higher level authorities as is the practice in some jurisdictions.

Political autonomy – Local government leadership is elected by citizens in open and freely contested elections in which all eligible voters can participate. Citizens are allowed to participate in the decision-making and governance processes of local councils and provisions for recall of elected officials are in place.

Legal autonomy – Local government has the authority to create and implement by-laws and regulations that are applied specifically to its jurisdiction and without prejudice to any other national laws that may exist.

Fiscal autonomy – Local government can raise and expend resources based on its own deliberate judgment and for purposes for which it has determined, taking into consideration the interest, preferences and priorities of its citizens together with its obligatory functions. Similar discretion and consideration are applied to unconditional transfers from central government. Robust financial accounting and management systems must be an integral part of any fiscal autonomy arrangement.

Definitive Central-Local Relations: The relationship between local and central governments should be based on partnership and clear demarcation of the functions of each entity, guided by the principles of subsidiarity, autonomy and legitimacy and should be reflected in appropriate legislative provisions. A viable inter-governmental modality provides for partnership and cooperation between the various spheres of government. This is likely to result in enhanced inter-governmental coordination, elimination of duplication of responsibilities and programmes inevitably leading to greater alignment of national, regional and local priorities and maximisation of the use of resources.

Democratic Determination of the Leadership of Councils: Citizens should be able to elect their local representatives under the conditions of political freedom through fair and regularly staged elections, in which all eligible voters are able to participate. This should be an open and inclusive process. The practice of electing local councillors from specific wards or constituencies is common and provides a vital link between citizens and their elected officials as well as the opportunity for persons in their individual capacity to contest for local government leadership. This often leads to more responsive, responsible and accountable political leadership at the local level.

Efficiency and Effectiveness: Local government should have the capacity to deliver the services for which they are responsible in a cost-effective, efficient, transparent and responsive manner and to the satisfaction of citizens. Efficiency is the maximising of outputs of goods and services from a particular given input, that is, local government officials are expected to use value-for-money considerations as a guiding principle in the decision-making process. Effectiveness speaks to the extent of achievement of pre-determined goals. Setting targets and working collectively towards their achievement is necessary for the measurement of local government effectiveness. These require the prudent use of limited resources. Performance measurement systems and standards along with periodic reviews should be introduced to determine the extent of effectiveness and efficiency of local government operations.

Empowerment of Citizens: This entails ensuring that citizens and communities have access to information and opportunities whereby they can build their capacity to contribute to governance processes, management of local affairs and charting the course for local development. Local governments should develop a framework for citizen-centred governance embodying certain principles namely: rights-based approaches; bottom-up accountability; and evaluation of government performance (Andrews and Shah 2005)¹. Within this framework, local government is a facilitator of a network of providers by citizens' as elected officials, taxpayers and consumers of public services.

Transparency: This is often referred to as open local government and is another pillar of good governance. It seeks to ensure that the processes and criteria for decision-making and service delivery are clear and clearly communicated to all citizens in the community that it serves. It is the onus of local government to ensure that all citizens have a full understanding of the processes. In this regard, local councils need to adopt suitable public information and education strategies.

Closely related to transparency is scrutiny, in which citizens either as individuals or through civil society groups can scrutinise the policies, decisions and processes of local government operations. The local government legislation in Namibia provides for citizens to inspect the minutes of council meetings.

Inclusiveness: This involves the embracing of all citizens, regardless of ethnic background, political affiliation, religious persuasion, socio-economic status or any other characteristic, in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. It specifically provides for the inclusion of minorities, disadvantaged groups etc.; whose exclusion may result in their interests not being adequately represented. It demands that local government give special consideration and make the necessary provisions to involve these categories of persons in the decision-making process. Local government decision-making must take into account the social, economic and cultural needs of the entire community.

Equity: The provision of equal opportunities for all citizens and for their treatment with even-handedness and impartiality, especially those who have special circumstances and may not be provided for if they are not given the opportunity to articulate their circumstances.

Financial Independence: Local authorities should be able to garner and expend their own resources, supported by financial management and accounting systems and practices that are consistent with international standards. This exemplifies fiscal autonomy.

Participation: Citizens' participation is an essential element of democracy; otherwise democracy becomes a misnomer or merely exists for rhetorical purposes. It is even more critical for local government to exemplify democratic principles in its operations given that it is the sphere of government closest to the people and through which they can experience the manifestations of democracy at work.

¹ Shah, A and Shah, S. The New Vision of Local Governance and the Evolving Roles of Local Governments

Citizens can learn vital lessons about democracy and democratic practices by observing their local government operations and participating in the decision-making processes. Through various participatory mechanisms, citizens can be meaningfully engaged in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. This should transcend mandatory participation such as voting and paying taxes and should include more substantial involvement.

Capacity Development: Local authorities should be adequately structured, staffed and empowered so that they possess the requisite capacity to effectively perform their assigned or mandated functions. Legal and regulatory frameworks should be developed to provide for the institutional capacity and security of local government and for creating the enabling environment for the discharge of its mandate. Human resource development initiatives aimed at equipping personnel with skills, knowledge and attitudes and at developing requisite competencies should be undertaken. Strengthening the management structures, streamlining systems and simplifying processes are integral parts of organisational capacity development programmes and are necessary for the effective and efficient functioning of any local government system.

Integrity and Ethical Standards: Ethical standards comprise the accepted norms which guide and regulate the conduct of all persons holding public office and whose mandate is to discharge their responsibilities in the best interest of the public. Integrity speaks to the predisposition of persons towards honesty and truthfulness in their undertakings. These concepts seek to ensure that public officials carry out their obligations in a fair, principled and satisfactory manner which the wider society considers acceptable.

Principle of Complementarity: Different spheres of government should relate to each other within the context of a clearly defined framework, specifically, each level relating to the one above and below it. This is necessary for inter-governmental coordination and alignment of national priorities.

Principle of subsidiarity: The assignment of responsibilities and functions must be given to the lowest sphere of government to which they can be effectively carried out and/or to the level closest to the people affected by them. This principle provides for decision-making to take place at other spheres of government apart from the central government and is also equally applicable to social institutions.

5.0 Role of Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development

Undoubtedly, Namibia's local government reform and decentralisation initiatives will not only affect the functionality of LAs but that of central-level Ministries including MRLGHRD. Within this context, the roles of the Ministry must be clearly defined and understood by all stakeholders and should include:

Policy-Development

MRLGHRD, as the principal policy making agent for local government, must create an enabling environment to allow local authorities to deliver their mandates. Policies must be developed to promote and advance local government growth and development on the basis that this sector is a significant partner in achieving national development goals. The current constitutional recognition (Constitution of Namibia, Chapter 12, Articles 102-111) provides the necessary institutional security for local democracy in Namibia with the enabling legislation (Local Authority Act 23, 1992) providing for its powers, duties and functions, including its institutional character and operational framework. However, the current local government reform is likely to require legislative changes and may also have implications for constitutional provisions. While these constitutional/legislative provisions are necessary, they do not constitute the full gamut of policy development. Unquestionably, these lay the critical foundation upon which coherent policies can be built. Policy development must also address issues such as central-local relations, organisational and capacity development, financing, and operational systems and processes with the aim of making LAs sustainable, effective and efficient.

Legislation and Regulation

Local government legislation and regulation are necessary to protect the fundamental principle of local democracy and to provide for its security. These are evident in Namibia's local government system. Through this reform process and beyond, it would be necessary to amend the legislation and to introduce new regulation to give legal empowerment to policies so as to bring about the desired outcomes. This legislative mandate rests on MRLGHRD.

Standards and Quality

The Ministry should develop national standards for LA management, operations and engagements including service delivery. Local government operations and service delivery should be performed at acceptable and pre-determined quality standards. Several international and regional mandates, relating to democracy and good governance, to which Namibia has committed itself or is otherwise obligated, provide useful guidelines for developing such standards.

Internationally, the *Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance*, endorsed and adopted by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, outlines a set of standards that should characterise local governments within the Commonwealth. Similarly, the Millennium Development Goals, a global blueprint sponsored by UNDP and agreed to by the entire world's countries and international institutions, identifies specific issues to be addressed and corresponding targets to be achieved by 2015. These all have a bearing on local government and have been integrated within the national development policy framework of many countries.

Regionally, Namibia is a member of SADC and is therefore obligated to adopt and implement any initiative by that body to enhance democracy and good governance particularly at the local level. For instance, the regional body has targeted a 50% women representation in all aspects of public life.

Capacity Development

It is unlikely that local governments can perform in a satisfactory manner without the requisite capacity (human resource, organisational and institutional) to do so. The Ministry should encourage, promote and facilitate the development of local government capacity and mandate local authorities to do likewise. Given the dynamic environment under which local government operates it is absolutely necessary that staff possess the requisite competencies in finding creative and innovative solutions to the challenges that face the sector. The apartheid system deprived the majority of Namibians of essential knowledge and skills. This, coupled with the migration of skilled personnel, has created capacity gaps in the public service in Namibia including in local government. Since independence in 1990, laudable efforts have been made by the government to address these capacity shortfalls with impressive results. Current capacity development initiatives by the Ministry, the local government associations, institutions of higher learning and, to some extent international\donor organisations have been commendable but need a more structured, systematic and coordinated strategy to maximise the benefits. A resource centre within the Ministry is likely to complement these efforts. Altogether capacity building interventions should be an integral part of human resource development aimed at equipping and empowering staff with knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform their duties effectively.

Another relevant aspect of local government that requires capacity development intervention relates to the organisational aspects. The LARC has identified shortcomings and inconsistencies in local government management and operations, structures, processes and procedures and recommended that these be streamlined to ensure consistency and uniformity. A comprehensive review of the local government system will identify specific areas where interventions are needed.

Institutionally local government in Namibia has both constitutional and legal guarantees thereby providing for their legitimacy and security. Provisions for accountability are well documented; however more needs to be done to provide autonomy in relation to its mandated functions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Namibia is a unitary state. Within this context and taking into consideration the principles of subsidiarity and the practice of local government autonomy, there should be clearly defined central-local relations with specific focus on the Ministry's role in monitoring and evaluation of local government operations and projects. Legislative provisions should be made in this regard. Notwithstanding this, the Ministry's role in monitoring and evaluation is essential to ensure that policies are not breached, procedures are not circumvented and that systems are functional. Additionally, ministerial oversight is necessary so that standards can be maintained, ministerial assistance and support obtained as needed, and for the monitoring of development projects. Moreover, this will enable the Ministry to identify constraints and challenges facing LAs and craft focussed, targeted and timely interventions.

Resource Mobilisation

Sources of revenue for local authorities are stipulated in the legislation and these include fees, licences, permits, investments, inter-governmental transfers and trading services. Trading services, in which LAs provide services such as electricity and water to citizens on behalf of the bulk suppliers, have been a major source of revenue. For most local authorities these revenue sources are inadequate. Therefore making interventions to enhance the revenue capability of local authorities would be necessary. These should include the development of a feasible intergovernmental fiscal transfer modality and building the capacity of local authorities to increase tax compliance and revenue collection. Additionally, clear policy guidelines for investment, credit control and borrowing should be developed. Guidance should also be provided on ways and means of harnessing the social capital that exists in communities for the benefit of local government development. This untapped resource has the potential to make a significant contribution to local government development.

Occasionally, international organisations/donor agencies such as the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, GIZ, UNDP, UNCDF, and EU are interested in supporting various local government initiatives. The Ministry should proactively seek out these opportunities and enter into appropriate arrangements that would benefit local government development.

Strategic Interventions

Even though decentralisation is likely to result in increased autonomy for local authorities, the Ministry will be expected to intervene in local affairs in the best interest of the public so that citizens would not lose confidence either in their elected officials or in the potential for local authorities to deliver their mandates. Occasionally, the Ministry, in discharging its own obligations, will have to interface and interact with local authorities, provide guidance to councils and where necessary assign staff members to assist in council operations. Altogether, these initiatives will be for the benefit of local authorities and advancement of local democracy and strengthening good governance practices. Additionally, the combined effort of the Ministry and local authorities may be necessary to achieve a particular outcome such as strengthening local government capacities through strategic inter-municipal cooperation initiatives.

Moreover, occasions and opportunities may also arise where a tripartite approach involving the Ministry, local authorities and local government associations will be the best means of achieving desired results. In all these instances, the Ministry is expected to be vigilant and responsive so that its contribution can be instrumental in bringing about a positive impact.

Technical assistance

Occasionally, as has occurred previously, MRLGHRD will be expected to respond to the needs of local authorities in tangible ways. In addition to subsidies and other timely financial interventions, the Ministry may have to place some of its professional staff at the disposal of local authorities in order to boost their capacity. These attachments will be necessary to fill human resource deficiencies in particular areas and to provide requisite skills and expertise that may be lacking. Such interventions are often specific and time-bound.

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6.0 Institutional Structures

Basically, the Republic of Namibia comprises three spheres of government:

- Central Government consisting of ministries and other related government bodies.
- Regional Government consisting of the 13 administrative regions governed by the Regional Councils Act, Act 22 of 1992.
- Local Government comprising municipal, town and village councils provided for by the Local Authorities Act 23 of 1992. Municipalities are further sub-divided into Part I and Part II. Traditional Authorities are a special form of local government administered under the Traditional Authorities Act, Act 25 of 2000.

Confer City status on Windhoek Municipality

The LARC, recommended and the stakeholders of the various consultations unanimously agreed that city status be conferred on Windhoek Municipality. This is consistent with international trends regarding capital cities.

Remove Village status classification

The LARC with subsequent concurrence of the stakeholders proposed the removal of the village status classification from the local government structure. This change may have to be subjected to Chapter 12, Article 102 (4) of The Constitution of Namibia which seems to implicitly suggest the existence of village councils.

Remove Part I & Part II Municipal classification

It is not usual practice to place municipalities in categories regardless of their level of development since there will always be some municipalities that are more developed than others. Those that are outstandingly developed can be used as standard-bearers for the others or be accorded city status provided that they satisfy the basic criteria for cities.

Develop Objective Criteria for Classification of Local Authorities

The LARC noted, with some concern, that the Local Authorities Act 23 of 1992 Part 1(3) provides for the Minister to declare a local authority as village, town or municipality. However, it offers limited guidance on which such judgments should be made. As a result, it recommended that objective criteria be established to guide this decision making process. and an independent statutory Advisory Board be constituted to advise the Minister accordingly. These recommendations were subsequently endorsed at stakeholder consultations.

Even though it was recognised that with the evolution of local government over the years, the application of objective criteria is likely to result in a re-classification of some LAs thereby adversely affecting the current status of some, the general consensus has been that this is the best approach based on its fairness and objectivity. It is also proposed that the objective criteria be used as the basis for upgrading of local authorities, that is, promoting LAs from one category to another e.g. town to municipality.

Furthermore, these criteria will guide the formulation of national standards of operation and service delivery for local authorities and provide the basis for performance measurements. The LARC proposed that the following criteria be used:

- Revenue-generating capacity
- Human Resource capacity
- Physical infrastructure
- Social infrastructure
- Economic activity
- Performance and results

6.1 Local Government Commission

The LARC proposed the establishment of a Local Government Advisory Board to advise the Minister on principles, processes and procedures in relation to establishing objective criteria for classification, promotion and performance of local authorities. These can easily be developed by the professional staff of the Ministry in collaboration with other stakeholders. Concerns have been expressed by the stakeholders about the need to enhance accountability, increase transparency and boost fairness in the administration of personnel policy and the decision-making process at the local level. In this regard, a majority of local government stakeholders have suggested that establishing a local government commission would be a valuable institutional intervention to achieve these goals. Typically the commission's functions will relate to:

Advisory services: Review applications by local authorities for promotion from one category to another after initial evaluation against established criteria is done and submission made by the Ministry to the commission. In the case of demotion, the Ministry recommends to the commission, for review, a list of local authorities that should be demoted. The commission reviews these and provides feedback to the Ministry.

Recruitment: Appointment of persons to fill senior level staff vacancies in local authorities after a shortlist of applicants has been submitted to the commission by the local authorities.

Investigation: Intervene and investigate, on request, complaints made to it by local government functionaries (elected and staff) and advise the Ministry on course of action to be taken.

Discipline: Propose, after conducting the relevant investigations, disciplinary action against any senior-level officer or elected official.

Mediation: The commission, by request, may mediate in disputes between two parties in the local government sector.

Appeals: The commission may consider and rule on appeals made to it by parties in the local government sector.

Composition of Commission

The commission should be constituted for a 5-year term and should comprise:

- A Chair appointed by the President
- A representative of the Ministry of Regional and Local Government Housing and Rural Development appointed by the Minister
- A representative of ALAN
- A representative of NALAO
- A representative of NIPAM.

6.2 Local Government Association

Local government associations are a common feature in the sector. Usually they are self-financing and self-regulating membership bodies that seek to improve and advance the cause of local democracy. Typically, they are two groupings, one representing elected officials and the other practitioners, mainly administrators. In developed countries these associations are strong, vibrant, active and influential so much so that they are an integral part of the international development landscape delivering development programmes as in the case of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and International City\County Municipal Association (ICMA).

With very few exceptions the opposite is true in relation to developing countries where associations tend to have weak institutional structures, limited organisational capabilities and inadequate resources resulting in unsatisfactory influence and impact on policy formulation. In Namibia there are four (4) local government associations:

Association of Local Authorities in Namibia – ALAN
Namibia Association of Local Authority Officers – NALAO
Namibia National Mayors' Forum – NNMF
Namibia Village Council Forum - NVCF

The LARC has recommended that there be one organised local government association that should be recognised by legislation and supported through the appropriate national budget allocations similar to SALGA in South Africa. This proposal found favour with the elected officials at the consultations because of the likelihood of financial support from the national coffers coming to one organisation as against separate ones. While the practitioners did not dissent, concerns, and to some extent doubts, were expressed about whether or not the interest and issues of their constituency will find full expression and adequate representation under the rubric of one umbrella organisation. Indeed this is a genuine and valid concern that must be accorded due consideration. Generally, the common practice is to have two separate organisations so that there is adequate representation of the respective constituencies that is one for elected officials and another for practitioners. The modalities of funding from national budget allocations can be worked out thereafter.

7.0 Political Structures

Increase representation on councils

The LA Act 23 of 1992 provides for LAs to be governed by councils elected in a 5-year cycle from a party list under a proportional representation electoral system. Councils comprise 5-10 councillors based on the category of local authority; ten (10) in case of Part I Municipalities, seven (7) for Part II Municipalities and towns and five (5) for villages. Taking into consideration the size and increasing population growth of these local authorities, there is need for a corresponding increase in the representation on councils with the aim of deepening local democracy and increasing citizens' participation in the democratic process. This can be done by introducing a constituency (ward) system so that a direct link between citizens and their elected representatives can be established consistent with common trends in local democracy. This will certainly constitute a new paradigm in local governance in Namibia

Introduce the constituency system for local government

Several years ago Namibia attempted to introduce the constituency system as a means of electing persons to local councils only to discover that there is likelihood that some semblance of the pre-independence apartheid era in which constituencies become enclaves of ethnic groupings, may appear. With increasing integration over the years, it is anticipated that this situation may no longer predominate and therefore it would be an opportune time to re-examine the possibility of introducing a constituency system in Namibia. This recommendation is consistent with a similar one made in the recently completed Electoral Reform Report. Support for this system should be based on the outcomes of thorough evidence-based research. The advantages of a constituency system for local authorities in Namibia have been discussed earlier.

Reduce term of council

Currently the term of a local authority council is five (5) years which corresponds to the tenure of national government but is incongruent with international good practice in which the term of local authorities is less than that of central government. Decreasing the term of council to three (3) or four (4) years and allowing for Mayors and Village Chairpersons to serve throughout the full-term of council, subject to recall, will be consistent with global trends.

Ensure functional competence of councillors

The LARC, as well as the stakeholders at the consultations, have expressed concern about the quality and competence of councillors and their ability to conceptualise, plan and deliver development projects as mandated by legislation and the resulting adverse impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of local authority operations. Councils are expected to initiate development projects, articulate and interpret legislation, policies and by-laws, and have a functional understanding of local government finance. This would require that councillors possess a minimum standard of competence; otherwise councils will be challenged in the delivery of their mandates.

Since these bodies are elected through political party structures, then it is expected that the respective parties ensure that their local representatives possess the requisite capabilities to function in their capacity as councillors. Unfortunately, there are numerous instances in which this is not the case resulting in sluggish local development, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of policies, poor public management and unacceptable level of governance at the local level. To reverse this trend, wherever it exists, and to prevent occurrence in future, the LARC has outlined some basic requirements of local authority councillors.

Box: 1 Basic requirements of a local authority councillor

For a local authority councillor to discharge his/her responsibilities, he/she must satisfy the following:

1. Have a thorough understanding of the roles, functions and responsibilities of a councillor and that of the council.
2. Be familiar with the principles and practices of local democracy.
3. Have a functional understanding of local government finance.
4. Be able to contribute to the advancement and development of the local authority.
5. Be able to interpret and articulate local government policies, legislation and by-laws.
6. Understand the dynamics of public relations and communication.
7. Be able to contribute to performance management and decision making.
8. Understand issues relating to ethics and corruption in the public service.

Introduce direct elections of Mayors

Within the new local governance framework and consistent with increasing universal practice, direct election of Mayors should be considered. In this arrangement, the Mayor is directly elected by citizens rather than through council as currently obtains. This can be done using a pilot approach beginning with cities.

Increase tenure of Mayors

The principal heads of local authorities, as identified in the Local Authorities Act are Mayors of towns and municipalities and Village Chairpersons of Villages. These officials are all councillors elected at the first meeting of the newly elected council. Subsequent elections for these positions are held annually in which the incumbent can be re-elected. The LARC, as well as stakeholders, contended that one-year tenure for Mayors militates against effective strategic planning, policy and project development and implementation and is inconsistent with standard universal practice which suggests that these elected officials should serve throughout the term of council, subject to recall. In such cases, the term of council is usually less than that of national government.

Provide for full-time employment of Mayors

The Act outlines the duties and responsibilities of Mayors and Village Chairpersons which must be carried out in consultation with council. While promoting job-creation initiatives is one part of the responsibilities of Mayors, this is not included in the job description for Village Chairpersons. The LARC noted this shortcoming and has recommended that it be remedied through the reform. Accordingly, job-creation should be included in the remit for Village Chairpersons

Even though the responsibilities imposed on these leaders can be demanding, these incumbents serve on a part-time basis and are mainly ceremonial. Throughout our consultations, there has been unanimous and vehement support for all local authority leaders to be accorded full-time employment with remuneration and benefits similar to those of Regional Councillors. It should be noted that these councillors have responsibilities for clearly demarcated constituencies which do not currently exist for local authorities.

Within the context of increasing local autonomy, councils should be allowed to make a determination on full-time employment of Mayors and Village Chairpersons and to develop terms of reference, remuneration and benefits package for these elected officials. Policy guidelines may be needed to inform this process.

Recognise Public Service

Generally, local authority councillors are engaging in public service in this capacity somewhat on a voluntary basis. Most of them are employed in the public and private sectors (few of them are self-employed or unemployed) and would have to use their personal leave entitlements from their places of employment to attend local government workshops, training and conferences. In some cases, these councillors would have to provide temporary replacements during their absence and even compensate them for their services. Needless to say this is an undesirable and untenable situation which is a disincentive to persons willing to serve as local government councillors and must be rectified through appropriate action. Public servants serving as councillors need to be granted the relevant release to attend to council's business. Similar arrangements, although not that straight forward, need to be made for those councillors employed in the private sector.

7.1 Towards a new political management system for Local Authorities

Generally, the basis for determination of the political structure of local authority council is the distribution of administrative, legislative, and executive functions between the Mayor, Council and Chief Executive Officer (City Manager) with the intention of making the decision-making process clearer to citizens. There are three basic models that can guide this process, even though variations exist in each case:

1. Council
2. Mayor – Council
3. Council – Cabinet

Box 2: Basic Models of Political Management for Local Government

1.0 Council

In this format, the unelected Mayor is either appointed by the councillors or the government and leads council meetings. The council usually operates through functional committees which make proposals or recommendations on issues for final determination by council. A common, and perhaps more acceptable, variation of this occur, when the Mayor is elected from the council or directly by citizens. Within this arrangement, the council functions like the board of a public corporation, the functional committees carry out the tasks with the CEO as head of administration and the accounting officer.

2.0 Mayor-Council Model

There are 4 variations of this model

- Mayor-Council (strong Mayor)
- Mayor-Council (strong Council)
- Mayor Council (with top Manager)
- Mayor- Council (with Mayor and Top Manager)

2.1 Mayor – Council (strong Mayor)

In this configuration the Mayor has substantially more executive power than the council and carries out the administrative functions as well. The Mayor prepares the Council's budget and has the power to appoint officers, and in some cases, even to veto council's decisions. This Mayor is very powerful and highly visible to the citizens. For its part the council approves the budget, reviews the performance of the Mayor and may retain limited executive power. The council can also examine issues and scrutinise decisions of the Mayor or establish committees to do so. There are variations within this arrangement based on the distribution of executive functions between the Mayor and council.

2.2 Mayor-Council (strong Council)

In this arrangement, the council carries out executive, legislative and administrative functions. It develops legislation, creates programmes, develops budgets and appoints staff. The Mayor leads council meetings and is an integral part of the discussion and decision-making processes. The council has the option of delegating authority to committees based on its own deliberate judgment.

2.3 Mayor-Council (with Top Manager)

This structure comprises an elected council with the Mayor as head. The council appoints a City (Town, Municipality) Manager who has full responsibility for appointing staff, preparing budgets, developing and implementing programmes including the decisions of council. This arrangement resembles that of the private sector in which the board makes decisions and the CEO implements. In this case, the council functions more or less like a board and the City Manager as a CEO with full or almost full autonomy. The City Manager is accountable and amenable to the council and mechanisms

2.4 Mayor-Council (with Mayor and Top Manager)

One of the weaknesses of the Top Manager format is the creation of a political leadership gap. This is so because the Top Manager is not elected and therefore does not have a political constituency. The inclusion of the Mayor along with the Top Manager addresses this shortcoming. Essentially, the Top Manager carries out the designated functions with the Mayor giving political leadership to the work of the council.

3.0 Council-Cabinet

In the council-cabinet structure, the elected Mayor appoints a cabinet from the council body to which executive authority is delegated. Individual members of the cabinet have specific responsibilities. Decisions made at the cabinet are usually the decisions of the council. This arrangement is similar to the central government structure. However, the council can examine the decisions of the cabinet by itself or through appointed committees.

Adapted from Local Government Political Management Arrangement- An International Perspective. The Scottish Office. Central Research Unit. 1998

Currently, the political management of local authorities in Namibia is a variation of the council-cabinet format, in which the council elects a Management Committee comprising members of the council. The Local Authorities Act provides for the establishment, composition, powers, duties and functions of Management Committees. Among their responsibilities are: to ensure that the decision of the council are carried out; to prepare estimates and supplementary estimates of revenue and expenditure for approval of council and to control appropriations and; to advise council on local authority matters. The Mayor is an ex-officio member of this Committee.

There seems to be no clear demarcation of executive, legislative and administrative functions in local authorities and therefore citizens have difficulty understanding the decision-making process. This often leads to speculation and fuels allegations regarding decisions and the decision-making processes of local councils. Under these circumstances, citizens' perception of local councils becomes tarnished, which in turn affects their relationship with council and can negatively affect its work. Undoubtedly, clearly defining and articulating these functional parameters will enhance transparency, strengthen accountability and boost the relationship with the citizenry thereby enriching the local democratic experience and process in Namibia and laying the foundation for good governance and public management practices and sustainable development.

With the introduction of a constituency system, it is anticipated that the number of persons comprising local authority councils would increase thereby making it more conducive and convenient to establish functional committees as well as to involve more citizens in the local democratic process. The business of council will then be conducted through these functional committees which will make recommendations to full council for final decision. This approach will be consistent with international best practice for local government political representation.

Characteristics of the new local governance paradigm

Local government under the new reform dispensation would be characterised by some major distinguishing features, namely:

Democratically Elected Leadership: In the spirit of the democratic tradition it is necessary that persons elected to representative bodies be chosen through a universally accepted democratic process by those being represented. In this way a direct link is created between the elected official and elector so that the former can be readily identified by the latter. On this basis, councils will comprise persons elected from clearly demarcated constituencies with the Mayor being directly elected by citizens.

Good Governance Practices: These will be evidenced by high standards of accountability with necessary safeguards against mismanagement, malfeasance and inappropriate use of resources. Transparency in the decision making process will be an integral part of local government operations with appropriate strategies in place for engaging citizens in the decision-making process. Local authorities will be inclusive bodies involving all sectors and sections of society including, where necessary, creating special arrangements that would enable the concerns and interests of the disabled and disadvantaged to be adequately addressed.

Citizens Participation: The extent of participation of citizens in the decision-making process of council will define the degree of democracy that is practised. In addition to council's meetings being open to the public, citizens' right to scrutinise the minutes of council meetings and their involvement in budget development, participation will be boosted through the development committee mechanism, regular public forums, citizens' surveys among others. The community empowerment model would be very useful in formulating the developmental agenda and strategies of the local authority.

Quality Service Delivery: Developing performance standards and reporting on them periodically as well as and institutionalising feedback mechanisms for monitoring service delivery will be an integral part of the operation of LAs. These will be complemented by appropriate Customer Care practices including recording and responding to complaints, and maintaining a database of citizens' preferences, choices and needs.

Modern Management Practices: The adoption of TQM (discussed in page 31), which is an integrated, systematic, customer-focussed management approach that merges quality product and service delivery to customer satisfaction, will be vital. Complementing this approach with ICT will undoubtedly lead to enhanced outputs.

Autonomy: Local authorities will have requisite autonomy over their affairs and as such would be able to exercise their discretion in carrying out their mandates. Relationship to and with other government bodies including the Ministry would be clearly defined within the context of a unitary State and through suitable inter-governmental modalities.

Functional Committees

These functional committees will be chaired by a council member and be able to co-opt residents of communities to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities. This arrangement allows for the local authority to encourage citizens' participation through volunteerism and to benefit from the skills and expertise of citizens.

Committees	Main Responsibilities
Audit	Ensuring that internal controls are in place and not breached Implementing recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General.
Budget and Finance	Revenue generation strategies Preparing budget Budget control Asset management
Development Planning	Integrated Development Planning Development control Housing
Public safety and security	Disaster mitigation and management Traffic control Municipal or community policing Fire prevention and response services
Public Health and Environment	Solid Waste Management Primary Health Care services Water quality control Maintenance of sanitary conveniences
Youth and Women's Affairs	Sport and recreation facilities Empowerment
Public Infrastructure	Maintenance of roads, drains buildings, parks, pipelines, community centres, beaches, cemeteries, abattoirs etc.
Commercial Services	All income generating activities e.g. markets, malls
Community Relations	Local Authority Development Committees Public information services Citizens' Forums and other forms of public engagements.
Social welfare	Services to and facilities for the indigent and disabled persons
Human Resource Development	Education and training programmes

City Council

The City Council will comprise elected persons from specific constituencies. Together these councillors will form the City Council with legislative, policy and managerial responsibilities and complete autonomy over the affairs of the City. The work of Council will be conducted through functional committees with final decisions being taken by Council.

Main Responsibilities:

- To provide for and facilitate the orderly and sustainable development of the city.
- To provide quality services to all citizens in a cost effective and efficient manner and at desired standards.
- To develop and implement workable arrangements for meaningful participation of citizens in the decision-making process of Council.
- To provide for the public safety and security of citizens within the confines of the City.
- To ensure financial viability of the City's operations and full accountability of its officers.
- To engage in strategic partnerships with national or international agencies aimed at advancing the development of the City and simultaneously enhancing the quality of life of citizens.

Mayor

The Mayor would be directly elected by citizens for a 3-year period, subject to recall, with full or substantial executive authority with respect to his\her responsibilities. This will be circumscribed by strict accountability provisions.

Man responsibilities:

- To serve as political head of the City Council and to represent them at local, regional and international forums.
- To identify and promote opportunities for local economic development.
- To chair council meetings and be an ex-officio member of all functional committees
- To ensure that council decisions are implemented.
- To initiate sustainable development of the City.
- To account to and discuss with the council and citizens matters relating to decisions made.

City Manager

The City Manager will be appointed by the local government commission and will be accountable to the council. He\she would have complete or considerable autonomy over administrative functions with major areas of responsibilities being as follows:

Head of Administration: In this capacity the City Manager would be the Chief Operations Officer as well as Chief Accounting Officer of the Local Authority to which he\she is accountable. These responsibilities are elaborated under the administrative structures section.

Policy Adviser:

- to advise the council on the legal and policy implications of decisions.
- to update the council on legislative and policy changes when these occur.

Clerk of Council:

- to ensure that the proceedings of council are faithfully and accurately recorded and preserved.
- To ensure that decisions of council are implemented.
- To coordinate the work of functional committees.
- To account for all aspects of City's operations.

Municipal and Town Councils

These bodies will be constituted in the same manner with similar responsibilities as for City Councils except that significant executive authority will reside in the Council, not the Mayor.

Mayor

The Mayor would have similar responsibilities as that for City Council but with considerably less executive authority.

Chief Executive Officer

The title for Head of Administration for Municipalities and Towns would be Chief Executive Officer who would have similar responsibilities and authority as those of City Manager.

8.0 Administrative Structures

The LARC has identified the lack of consistency, uniformity and standards in the administrative structures, processes and operations of local authorities and has made recommendations to address these shortcomings.

Functions of Head of Administration

The legislation is quite clear on the power, duties and responsibilities of Councils, Mayors and Management Committees but does not address the responsibilities of the CEOs for towns and municipalities and Village Secretaries in a similar manner. Compounding this situation is the use of the term ‘town clerk’ and ‘CEO’ interchangeably. Practically, the term ‘CEO’ has been used for all categories of local authorities which seemed to be consistent with the recommendations of the LARC, that is, ‘CEO’ as the official title for all heads of administration of local authorities, regardless of the category. Additionally, the LARC proposed that the legislation provide for these Heads of Administration to be the accounting and operations officers as well.

It should be noted that the responsibilities of local government administration at the municipal and town levels are significantly different, more complex and largely incomparable with those at the village level; therefore classifying them into one collective title will not be an accurate representation of their relevant responsibilities, expertise or competencies. Hence a differentiation in titles is advisable.

It is recommended that the titles for the Head of Administration for local authorities be as follows:

Box 3: Titles for Head of Administration of Local Authorities

City Manager for cities

CEO for municipalities and towns

Village Administrator for Villages

Box 4: Primary responsibilities of Head of Administration of Local Authority

Chief Operations Officer – ensures that all systems, processes and procedures are in place for the effective and efficient functioning of the local authority and spearheads the implementation of council’s decisions

Chief Accounting Officer – provides for and gives strict account for the use of resources (financial and material) by the local authority

Clerk of Council – ensures that the proceedings of council are faithfully and accurately recorded and preserved.

A related issue identified in the administrative structures of local authorities is the non-uniformity of the titles used for Heads of Department across the same category of local authority. Developing a uniform description for the HoDs, as recommended below, would be the solution to this anomaly.

Box 5: The titles for head of department will be:

Directors for cities

Managers for municipalities and towns

Head of Department for Villages

Facilitate the development of personnel rules for local authorities

The LARC identified several issues relating to criteria for the recruitment and selection process, competency levels for local government positions and Code of Conduct for staff. All of these matters can be addressed in a Human Resource Manual or Personnel Rules Handbook. Local authorities have been making significant progress in this area. This is one example in which the recommendations of the LARC have been overtaken by events. The legislation provides that these personnel rules be approved by the Minister. It is envisaged that within the context of decentralisation and increasing local autonomy such ministerial action will not be necessary.

Develop Performance Management System for local authorities

Globally, several countries are undergoing public sector reform initiatives based on the principles of new public management in which government, more specifically the public sector, is expected to be transformed from a bureaucratic entity to an entrepreneurial one. This relatively new paradigm has its basis in the re-inventing government philosophy that has been adopted, endorsed and supported by the international donors and financial institutions and development agencies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Box 6: Principles of New Public Management

1. Catalytic Government – Government must steer not row. Alternatives to traditional service delivery need to be developed.
2. Competitive Government - Instead of the usual monopolistic ways and means of delivering services, introduce competition for service delivery so as to increase productivity levels.
3. Mission-Driven Government – Determine the missions and goals of the organisations and allow managers to decide on the best ways to achieve these rather than being driven by rules and budget.
4. Results-Oriented Government – Shifting accountability from inputs such as line items to outcomes and results. Measuring and rewarding results are of paramount importance.
5. Customer-Driven Government – Citizens are customers with different choices, preferences and needs that must be taken into account in delivering services.
6. Enterprising Government – Changing focus from spending to earning and investing more time in the latter.
7. Decentralised Government – Empowering employees and moving the decision making downwards from one level of government to another.
8. Community-oriented Government – Ownership by the community rather than the bureaucracy.
9. Anticipatory Government – Using a proactive approach rather than a reactive one since prevention is better than cure.
10. Market Driven Government – Using market changes as a means of solving problems rather than simply using public programmes to solve problems.

Adapted from *Reinventing Government*, David Osborne, 1993

The Government of Namibia is currently undertaking the introduction of PMS in the various ministries in accordance with the principles of Mission Driven and Results Oriented Government, as advocated by the proponents of NPM. This is in its advanced stage of completion. The LARC has proposed that PMS be part of the administrative structure of local authorities. Such systems do exist in a few local authorities but local government stakeholders have suggested that after completion of the roll-out of the PMS by central government, a customised version for local government be developed.

Introduce Total Quality Management

The adoption and use of Total Quality Management tools and techniques can be a possible solution to the lack of consistency, uniformity and standards in the administrative structures, processes and operations of local authorities. These can also be used to address the need to enhance the quality of services provided by the local authorities.

TQM is an integrated, systematic, customer-focussed management approach that merges quality product and service delivery with customer satisfaction. It is a wholistic methodology that requires and involves all employees working together to deliver products and services of the highest quality to customers. This often entails re-orienting the organisational ethos along with cultivating certain attitudes and dispositions of employees to their work, each other and the organisation, so that there can be common understanding of each other's roles and expectation with respect to quality outputs. Striving for excellence in operations and outputs is a characteristic feature of this approach.

TQM provides the linkage between a customer-focussed organisation, quality service delivery and citizens' satisfaction. Allied to this is the clear articulation of the organisation's vision, mission and goals as an integral part of strategic planning and strategic management, with quality outputs as the paramount consideration and central element of the process.

Applications of TQM can be done through the different local government departments with each carrying out their responsibilities based on assessment of the needs of communities and fully cognisant of the elements of quality service delivery in their respective area. In so doing focussed, targeted and relevant programmes would be implemented, thereby maximising the use of increasingly limited financial resources while at the same time addressing the preferences, choices and priorities of citizens, and simultaneously decreasing the growing cynicism of these citizens about their local authorities.

In a world where citizens are demanding and expecting customised, timely and quality services from their local authorities, TQM tools and techniques are designed to be responsive to these expectations.

Box 7: Key Elements of Total Quality Management

Customer-focused. The customer ultimately determines the level of quality regardless of the quality and quantity of inputs made.

Employee Empowerment. All employees participate in working toward common goals. Employee empowerment is necessary to achieve high performance.

Process-centered. Thinking through the steps to effect transformation is necessary. Process thinking is needed to change inputs to quality outputs. The steps required to carry out the process are defined, and performance measures are continuously monitored in order to detect unexpected variations.

Integrated system. Although an organisation may consist of many different functional specialties often organised into vertically structured departments, it is the horizontal processes interconnecting these functions that are the focus of TQM.

Strategic and systematic approach. A critical part of the management of quality is the strategic and systematic approach to achieving an organisation's vision, mission, and goals. Strategic planning and strategic management are fundamental.

Continual improvement. Continual improvement drives an organisation to be both analytical and creative in finding ways to become more competitive and more effective at meeting stakeholder expectations.

Evidence-based decision making. Performance measures are necessary. This requires collection and analysis of data to inform decision making.

Communications. Effective communication strategies are necessary to inform, motivate and build morale of employees.

Adapted from *Total Quality Management (TQM) – Definitions and Principles –ASQ*

<http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/total-quality-management/overview/overview.html>

9.0 Local Government Financing and Financial Management

Local Government, as the closest sphere of government to the people is in a better position than central government to assess citizens' needs, choices and preferences. As a result, local governments are able to target services and assess willingness-to-pay which in turn can lead to effective and efficient service delivery. This characteristic of representative government is best manifested when it is closest to the people.

Local governments are expected to carry out a number of functions relating to development, social welfare and service delivery among others. In all these instances, finance is needed and is very often limited and therefore presents real challenges to local governments delivering their mandates. Even in developed countries, local governments are faced with the challenge of balancing expenditure responsibilities with revenue generation. This often gives rise to a fiscal gap that is usually addressed, to some extent, through an appropriate inter-governmental fiscal transfer regime. These transfers are so significant to local governments that they are usually the highest source of revenue in most jurisdictions.

After a copious examination of the status of local government financing and financial management, the LARC highlighted a plethora of shortcomings and had made detailed recommendations to address these. In summary they relate mainly to impediments to increasing revenue generation, lack of standards in financial management processes and systems, prevailing macro-economic factors, increased decentralised functions and lack of proper accountability.

Revenue Sources for Financing Local Government in Namibia

The Local Authorities Act 1992 stipulates the following as revenue sources for local government in Namibia:

- Electricity Supply
- Water supply
- Property tax
- Sewerage charges
- Development charges
- Licence/permits
- Rental of council facilities
- Interest on investments
- Sale of immovable property
- Central government transfers
- Penalty on rateable property
- Commercial activities
- Donations from bilateral and international organisations

9.1 Enhancing the revenue capacity of local government

The LARC has identified some specific actions that can be taken to enhance the fiscal capacity of local authorities. These were subsequently endorsed by stakeholders at consultations held to discuss the reform issues in the Local Government Position Paper.

Remove the 5% Contribution to Regional Councils

Under current legislations, local authorities are required to contribute 5% of their assessed rates to Regional Councils. The obvious effect of this statutory obligation is the reduction of revenues that would have otherwise been available to local authorities. In a situation where local authorities are challenged to provide services because of limited revenues reducing these by 5% will further limit their capacity to deliver services. Moreover, given that Regional Councils are carrying out delegated functions from central government and receive budgetary allocations removing the 5% contribution to Regional Councils would be justified.

Build national consensus on electricity distribution

Prior to the introduction of REDs, electricity was supplied to citizens by NamPower through LAs. This arrangement was a substantial source of revenue for these LAs but concerns emerged about the capacity of some LAs to deliver on their mandate in this area hence the concept of Regional Electricity Distributors was mooted. With the introduction of REDs some LAs have opted not to be part of this new initiative but to continue with the original arrangement, namely purchasing electricity from NamPower and selling these to their residents.

The introduction of REDs meant reduction of revenues for LAs leading to calls for its abolishment. REDs have since developed, expanded and is now a formidable actor in electricity distribution.

In response to the various claims about the impact of REDs on the revenues of LAs, MLRGHRD commissioned a study on The Impact of Regional Electricity Distributors which was conducted by Deloitte. The study found that Municipalities under REDs have increased their revenues from electricity distribution by 27% as against those not under REDs which increased their revenues by 14%. For towns and villages, the report did describe the situation as 'bleak' since these councils do not receive a surcharge for electricity distribution. Until recently villages were not under REDs' jurisdiction.

A proposed national conference to be sponsored jointly by MRLGHRD and the Ministry of Mines and Energy to discuss the outcomes of the report and to chart a common and consensual way forward is yet to be organised. The outcomes of such a conference will undoubtedly lead to the formulation of a national policy on electricity distribution which would be most welcomed by local government stakeholders.

Regularise informal settlements

Namibia, like most other developing countries, is experiencing rapid urbanisation. Globally, urbanisation rates are increasing so much so that within the next few decades most of the world's population would be living in cities in poor and developing countries. The consequence is that major towns and cities will continue to grow in an unplanned and unsustainable manner, nurtured by rural-urban migration resulting from rural under-development. This social phenomenon has serious implications for the provision of social services and often leads to urban squalor and rural under-development, manifested in impoverished suburban squatter settlements and poor, depopulated rural villages. In Namibia, this is evidenced by the growing number of informal settlements that have mushroomed over the years and the associated pressure that is placed on the capacity of local authorities to provide services to these areas. Because of resource constraints, regularising these areas has been a challenge for local authorities and therefore requires collaboration between central government agencies and local authorities, specifically in the areas of land preparation and infrastructure development. Once these are in place, structured development can occur and local authorities would be able to provide services and benefit from revenues.

Assign revenue responsibility for decentralised functions

Some years ago, Namibia had embarked on a decentralisation drive which today is still in progress. The LARC expressed concern that certain functions, such as vehicle registrations, traffic management and road maintenance have been decentralised but revenues from these sources are placed in the central government treasury. Making provisions for local authorities to benefit from these revenues either directly or through some revenue-sharing mechanism will make a considerable difference to the financial status of these bodies.

Make budgetary allocations to the OAG for cost of LA audits

Accountability is the hallmark of any democracy and a characteristic feature of good governance. Conducting annual audits, financial or otherwise, is one means of ensuring that processes are adhered to, systems have not been breached and decision-making procedures are followed. The Office of the Auditor General has statutory responsibility for conducting annual audits of local authorities but the costs incurred are borne by the local authorities and place further financial strain on these bodies. Even though a recent 2-year waiver on payments was a welcome relief for the LAs provision should be made for the OAG to be given allocations from the national budget to cover these auditing costs.

Compensate LAs for services to indigent citizens

Local authorities are expected to provide services to all persons including the less fortunate in their jurisdictions at a cost. These persons, more particularly the indigent ones, do not have the means or wherewithal to pay for services but have an expectation that the local authority will discharge their social responsibility towards them and in so doing absorb the related costs. Ideally, this is the desired approach but in reality, local authorities face genuine resource constraints and while they may be willing to fulfil their social responsibility to citizens, their pecuniary situations may not allow for this in a sustainable manner.

A viable solution can be found by a return to a previous arrangement in which the Ministry of Health and Social Services paid local authorities for services rendered to indigent persons. This should be based on the determination of an acceptable level of usage and cost of services per indigent person for which payment is exempted. Beyond this amount, the beneficiary would have to pay. A means test is necessary to ascertain those eligible for such a facility. In this regard, clear qualifying criteria must be developed and applied. Valuable lessons can be learnt from the South African model.

Increase revenue collection

Without contradiction, revenues are the life-line of local government and, as such every effort must be made to maximise their collection. In Namibia collection rates vary; for Part I Municipalities intake fluctuates between 60-75%, for Part II Municipalities and towns the collection rate is about 50% and 30% for villages. One contributory factor identified by the LARC is the gap between reported revenue and projected revenue. Strengthening administrative capacity to assess revenue base and to enforce payment of taxes will be necessary. The former requires specialised training while for the latter civic education programmes emphasising the benefits of paying taxes and the adverse effects of non-payment need to be implemented. LAs should develop creative ways of improving tax compliance. These should be complemented by improvements in record-keeping, accounting and monitoring arrangements.

Re-orient Trust Fund

The Government of Namibia established a Trust Fund under Act 22 of 2000, called the Trust Fund and Equity Provisions Act, basically to provide financial assistance for the development of regions and local authorities, to effect the implementation of the decentralisation programme and to provide for a variety of technical assistance to the regions and local authorities. An annual appropriation by the Parliament is made to the Fund.

Initially, it seems that this Fund was conceptualised to address disparities in development of Regions and so its focus would have been to fund projects in the lesser developed Regions thereby performing an equalisation function. However, this intention seemed to have been overlooked in the legislation which does not make any reference to the equalisation role of the Fund. Reviewing and re-orienting the role of the Fund to focus primarily on the development of the lesser developed Regions, as originally intended, should be an urgent undertaking. Associated with this will be the prioritisation of development projects in these Regions, developing qualifying criteria for projects, acquainting potential beneficiaries with information relating to priorities, programmes and procedures in accessing funds.

Cancel pre-independence debts

Some local authorities are saddled with pre-independence debts which have been an enormous challenge for them to service. Given the financial situation of local authorities, it is unlikely that these debts could be completely serviced in the long term. In fairness to these bodies and following the South African example, these debts should be cancelled so as to free councils from the shackles of pre-independence indebtedness and give them much deserved fiscal relief.

Strengthen LA capacity to prepare financial reports

Most local authorities lack the capacity to prepare financial reports which is an essential prerequisite for audits. These local authorities have to outsource this part of their operations thus incurring costs. Strengthening the capacity of these local authorities to prepare financial reports will result in much-needed cost savings for these bodies.

9.2 Financing Local Government in Namibia

In addition to the changes proposed for enhancing local government revenues, financing local government can be effected through a variety of revenue sources.

Own- source revenues

Legal and other provisions, along with innovations and consolidated efforts on the part of local authorities, should be embarked upon to boost their capacity to generate revenues from their own sources. This would include, among other things, increasing all-round efficiency of local authority operations, minimising loss from electricity and water distribution and maintaining an updated property register. In relation to the latter, standardising methods for property valuations and interim valuations and making it mandatory for property owners to register their properties with the respective local authorities, will be necessary. These should be augmented by appropriate strategies for enforcing tax compliance

Additionally, local authorities should be encouraged to pursue commercial activities including investments, so as enhance their fiscal status. Reviewing and updating the legislation, with respect to the latter, will be necessary to safeguard the integrity of investments, particularly within the context of the existing increase in financial scams worldwide.

There is a growing universal trend in which local authorities are engaged in a variety of commercial activities ranging from markets to public private partnership initiatives. There is also a widespread interest in promoting and fostering local economic development activities. The Ministry should strengthen the LED Agency so that it can intensify its outreach and expand its activities to promote and foster local economic development.

Revenue-sharing

Local authorities can benefit from increased revenues through appropriate revenue-sharing modalities. Basically, this means identifying taxes from which revenues can be shared between central and local government. The origin of the tax is usually used as the basis, that is, if the tax is collected in a local authority jurisdiction on behalf of central government, it can potentially be used in revenue-sharing. Universally, there is a variety of revenue-sharing taxes that are used including VAT, taxes on alcohol and tobacco, fuel tax, business and vehicle licences and many more. Not all potential sources need to be used for revenue-sharing.

Subsidies and Loans

MRLGHRD should facilitate subsidies to lesser developed local authorities for specific purposes and activities over a prescribed timeframe. These should be governed by clear guidelines and should not be viewed as an entitlement but rather a discretionary intervention to stimulate the growth and development of the local authority.

For the more established local authorities, legislation should be enacted so that they can benefit from loan facilities. Detailed guidelines are needed to effect appropriate use of the facility and to avoid distortion in the national fiscal regime.

Grants

Inter-governmental fiscal transfers through grants are a common means of financing local governments in most countries. In many cases, these form the single largest revenue source for local governments. Currently, in Namibia, grants are issued on an ad-hoc basis. Within the Namibian context, three sets of grants will be of immense value and benefit in advancing local government development, namely:

- Equalisation grants
- Conditional (Specific) Grants
- Unconditional (Block) Grants

Equalisation grants tend to be given to lesser developed regions and local authorities to reduce developmental disparities. Reviewing and re-orienting the Trust Fund, as suggested earlier, so that its emphasis and focus be on the lesser developed local authorities, will be a desirable intervention that is likely to significantly reduce inequities among and between local authorities.

Conditional grants should be allocated to specific projects within the local authority jurisdiction. Projects that can qualify would include those aimed at regularising the informal settlements specifically as it relates to land preparation and infrastructure development, expanding town boundaries and refurbishing and replacing aging infrastructure. Explicit terms and conditions need to be applied to the use of such grants.

Unconditional grants are allocated to local authorities for use as they determine subject to accountability regulations. In the interest of fairness and impartiality, it is increasingly becoming the practice to develop objective criteria for the allocation of these funds. Elements of these criteria constitute a formula and the grant is often referred to as a formula-based grant. For Namibia the elements of the formula should include:

- Population of local authority disaggregated as formal and informal areas
- Geographic size of local authority, specifically the area serviced by the LA
- Poverty index of local authority. If this does not exist for LAs then use the regional one as proxy
- Revenue collection factor aimed at rewarding revenue collection
- Developmental factor intended to stimulate development
- Share of budget to be allocated to LAs

Using the above-mentioned parameters as a guide, the following variables can be defined

X_1 – area (in sq. km) of land receiving services from LA

X_0 – area (in sq. km) of informal settlements in LA

X – Total population of LA = $X_1 + X_0$

P_1 – population receiving services from LA

P_0 – population of informal settlement in LA

P – Total population of LA = $P_1 + P_0$

I – Human Poverty Index

R – Percentage revenue collection

D – Percentage IDP completed

T – Total budgetary allocation for LAs

G – Grant allocation

Box 8: Grant Formula

$$G = (X_1 + X_0) * T * R * I * D / (P_1 + P_0)$$

If no informal settlements exist in the LA, then $x_1 = 0$ and $P_1 = 0$ and the formula will be

$$G = (X * T * R * D) / P$$

9.3 Integrated Financial Management System

The current Finstel accounting system used by local authorities is outmoded and a more integrated system should be preferred. Because of deficiencies in this system it is likely to give rise to accounting inaccuracies to the detriment of the local authorities and with concomitant financial implications for these bodies. There is need to replace the current system with one that has versatile financial accounting features and that can interface with other systems such as GIS, ILMS and the government's IFMS. While there are several financial accounting software available, careful consideration must be given to their versatility, functionality and relevance to the local government context in Namibia. The Ministry can acquire the relevant license and permission to customise existing software or contract the services of a reputable firm that already has these facilities or uses its in-house expertise to develop software for local government with the pertinent features. Out-sourcing the software development can be another option.

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10.0 Developmental Local Government

Over the years, the role of local government in contemporary society has evolved to include developmental dimensions namely social, economic, physical, cultural, and to some extent political. These are underpinned by a strong community participation element. Local Governments are expected to work together with citizens, private sector organisations and civil society groupings to enhance the quality of life of their residents by building sustainable, healthy and habitable communities. Planning, moreso, integrated developing planning and budgeting are indispensable components of this process but these must benefit from the inputs of citizens whether individually or through their representative groups and require their continuous engagement afterwards. Citizen-based approaches will deepen the democratic process, guarantee citizens' support for projects and provide opportunities to harness the social capital that exists in communities. Ultimately, local governments will be more responsive, responsible and results-oriented and development would be orderly and sustainable.

Institutionalise Developmental Committees

Since local authorities have developmental responsibilities it is essential that the developmental committees be functional because these provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the development planning process. Providing for these committees in the legislation is likely to infuse new life into their existence and operations which in turn can lead to more participatory decision-making and developmental processes.

Strengthen LA capacity to develop IDPs

Local authorities are expected to develop IDPs therefore guidelines on the entire IDP process should be formulated in order that standardised methodology is applied. Additionally, a comprehensive capacity-building programme should be introduced to provide skills to local authorities on developing IDPs. An integral part of the training should expose trainees in aligning workplans, budgets and targets to IDPs and using these as the basis for performance management.

Expand LED initiatives

With the establishment of the Local Economic Development Agency and the commencement of its programme mainly with support from GIZ, the Ministry should make LED a central focus of its programmes and make allocations to the Agency so that it can expand its outreach and increase the number of LED projects throughout the country. TIPEEG and other national funding sources should be tapped to fund LED activities. Generally, it has been proven that LED initiatives have enormous potential to promote job creation and reduce poverty.

Address rural-urban migration issues

As discussed earlier, the urbanisation rate has been increasing in developing countries, including in Namibia, spurred by rural under-development and triggering migration to urban areas resulting in the mushrooming of informal settlements. These settlements are often bereft of basic services and the conditions under which residents live are a health hazard and can be considered as dehumanising. Urgent action, involving local governments and the relevant agencies of central government, is required to address this issue.

One approach that may be able to curtail the surge of rural-urban migration is the promotion of development of rural areas. This is likely to create employment and give rise to economic opportunities for residents who would have otherwise migrated to urban centres.

Implement National Housing Policy

Almost on a daily basis people are lamenting the affordability of housing in Namibia. It seems that the cost of housing is beyond the reach of those in the lower income group and the chance of these persons owning homes appears impossible. This is another motivation for families to unilaterally occupy state lands and dwell in shacks which eventually become part of informal settlements.

The National Housing Policy approved by Cabinet in 1991 and reviewed in 2009 discusses the key challenges facing the housing sector and outlines strategies to create sustainable human settlements through integrated housing development approaches. Implementing these strategies will be a significant step towards alleviating a potential housing crisis.

11.0 Inter-governmental Relations

Inter-municipal relations

Local authorities relate formally through the various activities organised by the associations namely ALAN, NALAO, NNMF and NVCF, in which issues affecting the sector are addressed, possible solutions to challenges identified and con-joint actions, where necessary, are formulated. Because these associations have limited financial resources they are institutionally and organisationally challenged and therefore the desired impact of their work is not readily evident. They do have noble and good intentions but are limited by these constraining factors. Sustained capacity development interventions coupled with an influx of resources over the long term are likely to boost the efforts of these associations in a significant way.

Notwithstanding the above, there are several examples of local authority cooperation in which the more developed authorities adopt and provide support and assistance to the lesser developed ones. These initiatives take a variety of forms including sharing staff, technology and equipment; exchanging learning experiences and joint investment projects and make a substantial difference to the operations of the beneficiary local authorities. Considerably more improvement in the operations and effectiveness of lesser developed local authorities can be achieved by facilitating similar interventions across the country through coordination by a strong local government association combined with strategic intervention by the Ministry. Such efforts should be encouraged and promoted.

Local-Regional Relations

The relationship between regional governments and local governments is not clearly defined but seem to be functional nonetheless. There are instances where the coordination between the regional and local authority constituencies is complementary and rebound to the benefit of both parties. There are also cases in which there is overlap between the regional constituency and that of the local authority. This is a likely source of conflict since the former seems to expect interventions and financial commitments from the latter even though the issues to be addressed are under the jurisdiction of the former. Eliminating jurisdictional overlap between regional and local constituencies would be a solution to this dilemma.

Local-International Relations

Local authorities have formal agreements with other local authorities overseas. While there are no guidelines for these engagements and no means of measuring their impact, the benefits gained by Namibia's local government through the sharing of comparative experiences, resources and international best practice are considerable. The LARC noted that international linkages by local authorities have tremendous benefits and has proposed that a more coordinated approach to these linkages as well as a mechanism be instituted for sharing these acquired learnings and experiences with other local authorities. This can certainly be one of the roles of a local government association. The LARC cautioned about using these international linkages for the sole purpose of creating overseas travel opportunities.

Creating linkages to international organisations particularly those whose focus is local government development will provide much needed impetus for local government reform and development. The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) is a network of local government ministries, associations, local and provincial councils and research centres that provides information and access to learning and good practice on local government. Additionally, it facilitates capacity development of local authorities, promotes good governance at the local level and provides for sharing of information and experiences through its web-site, publications, newsletters and its biennial international local government conference. United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) is a global organisation with a similar emphasis.

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