

Update on international work

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report sets out the international work undertaken by the LG Group since the last Board meeting in January.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and consider the recommendations about recruiting peers.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Update on international work

International Activities

1. The demand upon UK councils for support to the developing world is increasing and there continues to be a parallel demand for leadership from the LG Group to support and advocate for UK councils active in this work. In this difficult financial climate, the leadership required for the LG Group includes raising additional resources to support this work to ensure that councils are able to meet the demand for support from abroad.
2. This demand for support from sister LGAs tends to come directly to the LGA as our counterparts want to ensure that any support is from local government practitioners rather than expensive consultants.
3. The LG Groups's international service will continue to be a strong, central feature of the work of the organisation. A number of externally funded programmes are currently running and we are working closely with partners, external funders and other key agencies to ensure that momentum is increased as the transition to a new organisation continues.

Update on existing work

4. *UCLGA Pan-African Peer Review Project*

The LG Group is embarking upon a pioneering pan-African peer review project with the pan-African LGA (UCLGA). This work is funded by the government of Luxembourg. The project will be delivered over an 18 month period will pilot one peer review in each of UCLGA's regions (north, south, east, west and central). The African participants in each of the five peer reviews will be selected through UCLGA's internal political processes, but there is flexibility around whether the reviews are between two LGAs or two councils within a region. To take one region as an example, this could mean that the "eastern pilot" could be a peer review between either the Kenyan and Ugandan LGAs, or the cities of Nairobi and Kampala. For the local authority reviews, there is also flexibility to include both urban and rural authorities.

5. The project will be delivered in two stages. 1) initial training and capacity building delivered by the LG Group to the UCLGA Secretariat on facilitating and supporting peer learning, and 2) delivery of five peer reviews with each peer review team being an equal mix of African and UK peers.

Item 6

6. The process for the selection of African member peers will be addressed in the initial training stage of the project and broadly modelled on the peer accreditation mechanism used for UK peer reviews (adaptations of course will need to be made to take into account differences in political and leadership structures and local and regional contexts). It is proposed that the selection process for UK member peers is carried out along the same procedures as current UK peer reviews whereby members participating in reviews must be 1) accredited peers and 2) selected by the four national member peers. In addition to this however, given the international dimension of this project, it is also suggested that the Chair of the European & International Programme Board play an active role in the selection process for member peers.

7. *Kosovo*

DFID funded project “Strengthening Financial and Administrative Systems for the Decentralisation of the Social Care Services Programme” started in January 2011. The LG Group is delivering the project together with the lead partner, COFFEY International and two other implementing partners from Kosovo and Slovenia. LG Group has made a significant contribution to work budget and finance reform and is now working on a detailed implementation plan.

8. *South Africa*

The project with South African LGA (SALGA) – funded by the Commonwealth LGA (CLGF) - comes to an end in September and there is one more phase of activities planned to wrap up the project. Local government elections were held in South Africa on 18 May and SALGA has naturally been preoccupied in recent months. However, the final activities will take forward some of the recommendations of the peer review carried out by UK local government practitioners in 2010 to ensure that the issues raised are provided to the new political leadership of SALGA.

9. *Pakistan*

Like the South Africa project, our work with the Local Councils Association of Punjab (LCAP) is also funded by the CLGF and will be coming to an end in September. The strategic planning workshop held in January has resulted in a new national campaign to strengthen elected local government, while also mobilising more funding. The final activity programme will focus on capacity building and dates are being finalised.

10. *Zimbabwe*

The EU-funded project with the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe is ongoing, despite significant delays at the Zimbabwe end. All but one of UCAZ

Item 6

member councils are controlled by the Movement for Democratic Reform. By mid June we expect to have a clear indication of the LG Group's contribution to the project, which is focussing on strategic business review of the association, stakeholder engagement with members and a leadership training programme.

Future work

11. The new LG structure provides opportunities to deliver the LG Group's international programme in more creative ways, drawing on expertise from across the Group: from the programmes, the peer review and leadership teams. Discussions regarding both the fundraising and delivery of programmes are being held with those companies that have a strong record in delivering DFID commissions and who wish to have a strong public service input into the delivery of their programmes. We also continue to approach aid agencies on behalf of sister LGAs to support the demand for UK local government expertise. As a national LGA, we are able to lead this work to ensure that we continue to deliver high quality programmes and capture the benefits of international engagement for the LG Group and our member councils as much as possible.
12. Thus we are seeking to strengthen this area of work in the new organisation. Example of planned work includes:
13. *Falkland Islands:* The LG Group has been working on the capacity building of the Falkland Island Government (FIG) over the past year. The project has come to an end and the government of Falkland Islands are looking into acquiring further funds for continuation of the project. Future work will focus on the review of the established appraisal system and succession mechanism within the FIG.
14. *Israel:* The LG Group has submitted a project proposal to the British Embassy in Israel at the request of Israeli municipalities with a majority Arab population to support capacity building on urban planning. This bid build on past work which was supported by the FCO.
15. *Kenya:* We are awaiting news from the World Bank on an expression of interest lead by HTSPE (an aid organisation) for a "Supporting Local Government Institutional Strengthening in Kenya". The 18 month project is part of a wider programme administered by the World Bank.