

15 January 2013

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African Peer Review Project

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

Following the successful completion of a majority of activities, this report provides an update on the progress of the project and next steps forward for the LGA.

Councillor Dave Wilcox, Chair of the European & International Board, will be giving a verbal update on the progress of the project.

Recommendation

Members are asked to discuss comment on upcoming activities.

Action

LGA officers to take forward as directed by Members.

Contact officer: Andy Bates
Position: Principal Advisor (Peer Support)
Phone no: 07919 562849
E-mail: andy.bates@local.gov.uk

Contact officer: Ian Hughes
Position: Programme Director (European & International)
Phone no: 0207 664 3101
E-mail: ian.hughes@local.gov.uk

African Peer Review Project

Background

1. The LGA delivers a number of projects which provide support to local government in the developing world. This work includes capacity building, peer support and general training/development.
2. There are a number of basic political steers which guide the LGA's work in this area:
 - 2.1. All work is based on demand from sister LGAs or councils in the developing world.
 - 2.2. The funding for projects is sourced externally.
 - 2.3. Delivery is based on practitioner-to-practitioner support, rather than the use of expensive consultants.
3. In 2010 the LGA was asked to undertake a peer review with the South African LGA based on the UK's experiences of peer challenge. As a result United Cities & Local Government Africa (the pan-African LGA) commissioned the LGA to support it in piloting the concept across Africa during the course of 2012. Funded by the government of Luxembourg, the programme draws on the UK's experience of peer review over the last decade in delivering five pilot peer reviews in five African countries for either a local authority or a national local government association in Uganda, Ghana, Cameroon, Namibia and Ivory Coast.
4. The programme has been developed and delivered by the LGA through a successful collaboration between the Programmes Team and the Peer Support Team, drawing on their respective skills and expertise, and is a good example of how joint working across the organisation is delivering positive outcomes and enhancing the LGA's wider reputation.

The Project

5. Since the start of the programme the majority of the activities in the project plan have been carried out. This includes;
 - 5.1. design and delivery of a bespoke training program on peer review in London for a cohort of African peers from 13 African countries (Feb/March 2012); and

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- 5.2. completion of four out of the five pilot peer reviews in Namibia, Ghana, Cameroon and Uganda (June to November 2012).
6. Due to a number of logistical challenges, the fifth and final pilot peer review in the Ivory Coast was unable to take place before the end of 2012. UCLGA has subsequently made a formal request to the government of Luxembourg for a six month extension until June 2013 in order to complete the final peer review, an external evaluation and audit activities.

Project outcomes

7. So far the project has been well received by the participating organisations and the UK and African peers. There is growing international interest in the UK's peer review model, particularly its emphasis on the sector-led, self-improvement. For the African peers and the African organisations receiving a peer review, the project has proven to be a unique learning experience. The feedback from the training in February and each of the five peer reviews demonstrated a broad consensus that the philosophy and methodology of the UK's peer review model is adaptable to most African contexts. Moreover, the personal development that the African peers experienced on their peer reviews has been considerable.
8. Feedback from the UK peers has also been very positive, not only in terms of what they were able to offer their African counterparts but also the personal reflections on their work back home that the experience provided. Considering some of the challenging environments the UK peers worked in, as well as the cultural, political and linguistic sensitivities they navigated, their commitment and professionalism has been a powerful example of what can be achieved by UK local government peers internationally.
9. Throughout the course of the programme there have been a number of logistical and communication challenges which is understandable on a transnational programme of this nature. The LGA has also, at times played a greater role in the delivery of the programme than was envisaged. It has therefore become crucial that the remaining activities, including the evaluation process ensures African ownership of the outcomes.

Next steps

10. The project has produced a high level of demand across Africa for peer support based on the LGA's peer review model. It is likely that UCLGA will want to commission more work from the LGA in order to respond positively. Over the coming months the LGA and UCLGA will be having discussions with a number of development donors and international local government networks about opportunities to scale up this work in a way that takes into account the learning from the pilot and the additional resources required.

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11. An internal evaluation will be carried out between UCLGA and the LGA as soon as the final peer review has been completed. Parallel to this, UCLGA will be commissioning an external evaluator for the project and this report will form the basis for wider dissemination of the project's achievements as well as the design of future activities.

Financial Implications

12. The current project has been entirely externally funded and all expenses incurred by the LGA in the delivery of its activities have been reimbursed, including administration costs. Any continuation of the LGA's international peer review work is reliant on external resources.