

Jørn Holm-Hansen

Norway's Municipal International Cooperation Results Achieved and Lessons Learnt



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Jørn Holm-Hansen

Norway's Municipal International Cooperation - Results Achieved and Lessons Learnt

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Abstract: Municipal International Cooperation (1997-2014) was a programme involving municipalities in Norway and the Global South. It was managed by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This report sums up results and identifies lessons to be learnt for a possible future scheme.

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Preface

This report has been written for KS – the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities within a framework of 3.5 man weeks. It has been a participatory process in which the involved municipalities have provided information, comments and suggestions on several occasions. We would like to thank them for the effort. The purpose of the report is to sum up many years of municipal international cooperation and identify lessons for the future. KS has been exemplary in the role as an open-minded and self-critical commissioner of the report. We would also like to thank Dag Juvkam and Frida Tømmerdal at NIBR for their assistance in giving the report's look a final touch.

Oslo, March 2015

Geir Heierstad
Research Director

Table of Contents

Preface.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Summary	4
Sammendrag.....	8
1 Introduction	13
1.1 Background on MIC.....	13
1.2 Purpose of this Report	14
1.3 Method	15
2 Municipal International Cooperation	17
2.1 Evolution of the MIC mechanism in Norway.....	17
2.2 International experiences	19
2.2.1 Finland.....	19
2.2.2 Belgium: Flanders.....	20
2.2.3 Canada	22
2.2.4 Summing up experiences of other countries.....	24
3 MIC methods and results	25
3.1 Stjørdal – Panajachel, Guatemala.....	25
3.2 Ál – Sololá, Guatemala.....	26
3.3 Stord – San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala.....	27
3.4 Tinn – Champerico, Guatemala.....	28
3.5 Odda – Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala.....	29
3.6 Melhus – Taveta, Kenya.....	30
3.7 Skodje – Voi, Kenya	31
3.8 Jølster – Mpulungu, Zambia.....	32
3.9 Aust-Agder – Mwanza, Tanzania	33
3.10 Porsgrunn – Kisumu, Kenya.....	35
3.11 Ringebu – Mityana, Uganda	36
3.12 Lessons from the partnerships.....	37
3.13 Summing up.....	37

4	Conclusions and recommendations.....	39
4.1	Conclusions.....	39
4.2	Recommendations for a possible future scheme.....	42
	References.....	45
	Appendix 1 Terms-of-Reference.....	47
	Appendix 2 Questionnaire	52

Summary

Jørn Holm-Hansen

Norway's Municipal International Cooperation - Results achieved and lessons learnt

NIBR Report 2015:6

The Norwegian Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) involves paired cooperation between Norwegian municipalities and partner municipalities abroad. It is similar to programmes run by municipal and regional associations in other countries of the Global North in cooperation with partners in the South. MIC's overall strategic goal is to see capacity built in areas of prioritised municipal tasks. Managed by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the MIC programme had operated since 1997 in a wide range of countries, until the specialised directorate for development aid under the MFA – Norad – in 2014 recommended not financing another programme period.

This report sums up results from the last programme period and indicates some lessons learnt for a possible future version of international cooperation between Norwegian municipalities and municipalities in other countries. The findings are drawn from MIC in the period 2011–2014, with some references to prior periods.

In order to function, MIC is dependent upon two basic preconditions: functional equivalence between municipalities across state borders, also North/South; and that value is added as a result of bringing municipal equivalents together in specific activities. Both assumptions have proven problematic, although not totally wrong. KS International Projects MIC has expended considerable effort in seeking to match municipalities and issues, so that project activities could concentrate on functional

NIBR Report 2015:6

equivalents, like waste management. This has been challenging. Likewise, it has proven difficult to take the step from matching municipal individuals and institutions to concrete and focused activities. A main challenge has been to reconcile MIC's knowledge intensity on a broad range of issues with the fact that the personnel drawn upon have mainly gained their experience in municipal affairs at home.

Although MIC 2011–2014 struggled with the problems identified in several previous evaluations and reviews, the programme has gradually and systematically managed to improve its capacities for tackling such challenges. The core activities of the individual partnerships in 2014 were more in line with MIC priorities and methodologies than ever, and with a stronger focus on core municipal tasks in both partners.

The concentration of all MIC partnerships on a few common issues has been conducive to learning and further dissemination. Also the requirement for MIC activities to be better linked up with national strategies and policies has reduced the risk of MIC partnerships ending up as stand-alone projects. In Guatemala, activities have concentrated on environmental protection (waste management), and gender equality (local political participation of women). In partnerships with African municipalities, the focus has been on improved governance and service production, and integration of environmental concerns in plans and daily activities.

Capacity has been built mainly through training in workshops and visits to the Norwegian municipalities, in addition to peer learning and secondments. Training and visits have emphasised the importance of democratic processes at the local level, and have concentrated on specific matters of municipal day-to-day operations, through activities like visits to municipal and inter-municipal waste disposal companies in Norway. During the MIC period 2011–2014 all MIC partnerships have resulted in enhanced capacities in dealing with certain municipal tasks, to some degree. For instance, some African municipalities have made use of MIC to improve their urban planning capacities. Also the activities of the Guatemalan municipal offices for women and for the environment have been given a boost through the MIC involvement. Some municipalities have improved their waste

management due partly the opportunities offered through the MIC partnership.

Well-functioning local government is often a precondition for realising other development objectives, and is a key factor for sustainability. The MIC programme is based on the fact that municipalities are responsible for the operation and maintenance of key infrastructure, accommodation of development and public services on a permanent basis. Norway stands out globally as a country with a strong and well-functioning local government. These facts combine to make it likely that a scheme for international cooperation involving Norwegian municipalities will reappear at some time. There are some lessons that should be taken into consideration.

One lesson from MIC is that, in practice, functional equivalents between Norwegian municipalities and municipalities in the Global South are rare. This issue must be addressed if a future MIC-like scheme is to be designed. It may also well be that core elements of the MIC approach could be applied in intra-European municipal cooperation, or for cooperation with middle-income countries.

A future scheme should start out as a purely municipal undertaking, with no links to people-to-people cooperation, like FK Norway or Friendship North/South. A control question before starting up a project would be: Can other actors do this – for instance, gender-awareness or training of school pupils in waste sorting – better than a municipality can? Other issues, like adaptation to climate change, may prove more suitable for municipality-to-municipality cooperation, because of the role of local governments in physical planning and certain types of infrastructure. In that case, only countries with real and ongoing strategies for local adaptation to climate change should be selected.

To the extent that Norwegian municipal ‘laypersons’ are envisaged a central role in a future scheme, as in MIC, it will be necessary to train them thoroughly – not least in contextual aspects, like the political administrative system in the partner country, ongoing reforms, expected behaviour (level of formalising /formalities) and decision-making structures.

The model based on partnerships in pairs should be re-considered in case of a new scheme. Working in clusters of municipalities

could bring a useful concentration of efforts with built-in dissemination and learning. Furthermore, many countries are not able to provide proper training for people who are going to work in municipal administrative positions. A future scheme could include support to higher education in local administration and democracy, perhaps in cooperation between KS and a Norwegian university or university college.

Sammendrag

Jørn Holm-Hansen

Norway's Municipal International Cooperation - Results achieved and lessons learnt

NIBR-rapport 2015:6

Programmet for internasjonalt kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid – Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) – har bestått i parvist samarbeid mellom norske kommuner og partnerkommuner i det globale Sør. Lignende programmer finnes særlig i Finland, Belgia og Canada, og de har mye til felles med norske MIC.

Det overordnede strategiske målet for MIC har vært å sørge for økt kapasitet til å løse prioriterte kommunale oppgaver. Den norske kommunesektorens organisasjon, KS, har vært ansvarlig for programmet, som er blitt finansiert av Utenriksdepartementet. MIC har eksistert siden 1997. Det var operativt i en lang rekke land inntil Norad - Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid – i 2014 anbefalte å avslutte programmet.

Denne rapporten oppsummerer resultater og lærdommer, og legger fram noen anbefalinger til bruk dersom et lignende program skulle bli utviklet i framtiden. Den baserer seg på en analyse av MIC's siste programperiode (2011-2014), men viser også til erfaringer fra tidligere perioder.

For å fungere, er MIC avhengig av at to grunnleggende forutsetninger er oppfylt: a) det må foreligge funksjonell ekvivalens mellom den norske kommunen og partnerkommunen, for eksempel ved at de har kommunale avdelinger med samme type ansvar i de to kommunene; og b) «merverdi» må bli skapt som resultat av at man bringer kommunale ekvivalenter, eller motsvarigheter, sammen i konkrete fellesaktiviteter. Det har vist seg at det slett ikke er noen selvfølge at disse forutsetningene er til stede.

KS har lagt ned mye arbeid i å koble kommuner og temaer sammen sånn at prosjektene kan konsentrere seg om kommunale oppgaver som er felles i partnerkommunene. Avfallshåndtering er ett slikt tema, som er en kommunal kjerneoppgave i mange land. Det har vært en utfordring å få partnerskapene til å konsentrere seg om konkrete og fokuserte aktiviteter.

De involverte folkevalgte og ansatte har sin styrke i inngående kjennskap til kommunale forhold i hjemlandet. Samtidig stiller MIC store krav til kunnskap og forståelse av *hverandres* kommunale systemer og handlingsrom. Betydningen av denne typen kunnskap har i økende grad blitt erkjent innen MIC.

MIC strevde i programperioden 2011-2014 med utfordringer av samme type som har vært påpekt i flere gjennomganger og evalueringer av programmet tidligere. Likevel er det tydelig at MIC gradvis og systematisk har forbedret evnen til å takle disse utfordringene. Kjerneaktivitetene innen hvert partnerskap var i 2014 mer i tråd med MIC's prioriteringer og metodikk enn noen gang før. Konsentrasjonen har blitt klart mer samlet om det som er kjerneoppgaver i begge kommuner i hvert partnerskap.

I tillegg har alle MIC-partnerskapene samlet seg om et begrenset antall temaer. Dette har gjort det lettere å få til læring og spredning av kunnskap og ferdigheter. Det har også vært lagt ned arbeid i å knytte MIC-aktivitetene bedre opp mot nasjonale planer og strategier. På den måten har man redusert faren for at partnerskapene ender opp som enkeltstående tiltak uten effekter utover seg selv.

I Guatemala har aktivitetene dreid seg om a) miljøvern (avfallshåndtering), og b) likestilling mellom kjønnene (kvinner deltakelse i lokalpolitikken). Partnerskapene med afrikanske kommuner har konsentrert seg om a) forbedret styresett og tjenesteyting, og b) integrering av miljøhensyn i planer og drift.

Kompetansebyggingen har hovedsakelig skjedd gjennom opplæring og øvelse i workshops samt besøk i hverandres kommuner. Fagfeller har jobbet sammen og i perioder vært utstasjonert på hverandres arbeidsplasser. Opphold ved norske avfallshandteringsbedrifter har inngått. Opplæringen og besøkene har dreid seg om konkrete, kommunale oppgaver. Betydningen av

demokratiske prosesser på lokalnivået har vært et gjennomgangstema.

I løpet av perioden 2011-2014 har alle MIC-partnerskapene til en viss grad bidratt til økt kapasitet i kommunene til å løse kjerneoppgaver. I noen tilfeller har de afrikanske kommunene brukt MIC aktivt til å bli bedre til fysisk byplanlegging. Både kvinnekantorene og miljøkantorene i noen guatemalanske kommuner har satt i gang konkrete aktiviteter muliggjort av MIC-partnerskapet. Flere kommuner har gjort framskritt innen avfallshåndtering takket være MIC.

Velfungerende kommuner er ofte en forutsetning for utvikling. Kommunene har ansvar for viktige kjerneoppgaver på permanent basis. Dette dreier seg om lokale næringsstrategier, offentlige velferdstjenester samt drift og vedlikehold av grunnleggende infrastruktur. Norge skiller seg ut internasjonalt som et land med et sterkt og velfungerende lokalt selvstyre. Kommunesektorens betydning for demokrati og utvikling gjør at det ikke er usannsynlig at norske kommuner også i framtiden vil bli involvert i samarbeid med kommuner i det globale Sør. I så fall, er det verd å ta med seg noen lærdommer fra MIC.

Én lærdom er at det i praksis er stor forskjell på norske kommuner og kommuner i de fleste land i Sør. Det er ikke mange funksjonelle ekvivalenter det gir mening å koble opp mot hverandre. Dette må tas med i betraktningen dersom et MIC-lignende program skulle se dagens lys. Det kan godt være at kjerneelementer fra MIC med hell kunne brukes i samarbeid mellom norske kommuner og kommuner i andre europeiske land eller i mellominntektsland i Sør.

En framtidig ordning for kommunesamarbeid bør være rent kommunalt fra starten og ikke bygge på folk-til-folk-samarbeid, slik som Fredskorpset og Vennskap Nord/Sør driver med. I de fleste tilfeller vrir denne typen samarbeid oppmerksomheten vekk fra det kommunale.

Et kontrollspørsmål før man starter opp, bør være: «Kan andre gjøre dette bedre?» Det er ikke sikkert norske kommuner er rette partner dersom man har til hensikt å drive bevisstgjøring om likestilling mellom kjønnene eller lære opp skoleelever i søppelsortering. MIC har drevet med begge deler. På den annen

side: Hvilken aktør vil være mer egnet enn kommunen dersom temaet er lokal tilpasning til klimaendringer? Kommunene har ansvar for fysisk planlegging og for mye av den relevante infrastrukturen.

Dersom et framtidig program skulle fortsette å basere seg på tung innsats av kommunale aktører som er «legmenn» innen internasjonalt samarbeid, må det satses mer på opplæring enn hittil. De trenger en grundig innføring i det politiske og administrative systemet for kommunene i det landet de skal ha samarbeid med. De bør være oppdatert på nasjonale reformer av relevans for samarbeidet, men også skaffe seg innsikt i hva slags forventninger det ligge til formaliteter og formalisering fra samarbeidspartneren og hvordan beslutninger fattes lokalt.

Modellen der kommunene arbeider sammen parvis i partnerskap, bør revurderes. Det er ikke usannsynlig at man ville oppnå mer erfaringsutveksling og læring dersom man jobbet i «klynger» av kommuner.

Det er også et faktum at mange land mangler et skikkelig utdanningstilbud for folk som skal jobbe i kommunesektoren. Stadige bistandsfinansierte workshops er ikke noen fullgod erstatning for grunnleggende utdanning. Derfor er det verd å tenke over om ikke støtte til et utdanningstilbud innen lokaldemokrati og kommunalforvaltning innenfor et etablert universitet i de aktuelle landene burde inngå i et eventuelt framtidig program.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background on MIC

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is the interest organisation for municipalities, counties and local public enterprises in Norway. KS also serves as the employers' association. It conducts a wide range of international activities with partners in the European Union, the EU neighbourhood and in the Global South. Its Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) programme began operations in 1997, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). At first only municipalities in Africa were included; in 2002 Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina joined, and in 2007 Guatemala was incorporated in the programme.

MIC's niche within development aid was support to democratic institutions of local government, i.e public authorities, and not primarily civil society. As stated in the 2013 edition of the KS MIC Guidelines:

Capacitated local governments can contribute substantially to achieving development goals through service delivery, yet they are largely ignored by development actors. NGO activities are often directed towards providing services locally, such as in education and health, but this can create an accountability vacuum and weaken the relationship between people and local government. Instead, Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) encourages capacity-building which enables local authorities to fully deliver on their mandate and provide appropriate, relevant and sustainable services to their citizens.

Most MIC activities are conducted 'in pairs'. The cooperation has been increasingly focused on core municipal responsibilities. Its primary goal is to be of help to partners in the Global South, but benefit to the Norwegian partner municipality is also a concern. The overarching objective has been to contribute to the decentralisation of public responsibilities, resources and power to local-level authorities.

In 2014 Norad decided to discontinue its funding, on the grounds that the MIC programme had been showing poor results. KS was provided with NOK 3 million in funding for 2014 to phase out the programme.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

Norad's decision to discontinue funding for MIC was accompanied by relatively harsh criticisms of the programme – *inter alia*, for being unclearly linked up to ongoing processes and institutions in the South, for lack of precision as to what Norwegian municipalities actually can contribute, for vagueness on methodology, and for reporting mainly on output levels.

The MIC partner municipalities found the Norad criticisms exaggerated on some points. Therefore, KS decided to document results and experiences from the last MIC period, 2011–2013, as part of its phasing-out process. The task was assigned to an external consultant/senior researcher, who has authored the present report. He has followed the development of MIC since 2004, when he conducted his first evaluation of the programme; four evaluations and reviews of MIC have followed. In general his assessments have been quite critical, indicating some of the same concerns that Norad emphasised in deciding not to continue funding MIC. This report will form part of KS' Final Report from the MIC programme, and its findings will be used in KS' considerations on possible future international activities involving Norwegian municipalities. A major question in this regard is how the 'municipal surplus value' might be utilised.

The core questions addressed in this report as follows (for further details see Terms of Reference, Appendix 1):

-
- What are the results since 2011, as defined as changes in partner municipalities resulting from the MIC cooperation? Other factors that might have influenced the results?
 - What was new in the 2010 Guidelines as compared to earlier editions? What are the experiences with the 2010 Guidelines?
 - Does one-to-one municipal cooperation create results more efficiently than a ‘collective’ approach directed at a cluster of local governments abroad would have done?
 - How do programmes similar to MIC in Finland, Belgium and Canada make use of the ‘municipal surplus value’?
 - Are KS and the involved Norwegian municipalities sufficiently well-informed about context, and how do they get their information? Has considered been given to whether Norwegian experiences are transferrable to other contexts?
 - How do the involved parties understand the concept of ‘capacity building’? What capacities have been transferred (democratic practices, service development, development of local society)? Who in the Norwegian municipality has contributed?
 - Do the partner countries have ongoing public sector reforms, decentralisation or other reforms that make this type of assistance conducive to results? How is MIC linked up with other development aid directed at the municipal sector?

1.3 Method

This report is based on data from a wide range of MIC documents, from earlier evaluations and reviews, programme plans and the three latest editions of the Guidelines, to specific documents from several of the individual partnerships. A short questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was sent to the Norwegian as well as African and Guatemalan partner municipalities (in Norwegian, English and Spanish, respectively). Moreover, the consultant took part in one

of the final programme workshops (in Taveta, Kenya, November 2014) and received a very thorough résumé of discussions at the workshop in Panajachel, Guatemala (November 2014). The participating municipalities have had the opportunity to comment on draft versions of this report. In addition to analysing the Norwegian MIC programme the author has consulted written sources from similar programmes in Finland, Belgium and Canada.

2 Municipal International Cooperation

2.1 Evolution of the MIC mechanism in Norway

The MIC Guidelines have been subject to continuous revision since the programme started in 1997. The fifth and last edition was issued in 2013) and were put to use for the activities in 2014. The Guidelines have been revised on the basis of organisational learning in KS and participating municipalities through workshops, professional input from Norad and external evaluations (Holm-Hansen and Hjorth-Johansen 2004; Anger & Moberg 2005; Holm-Hansen 2008a, 2008b; Holm-Hansen, Kambewa and Hvidsten 2009).

The Organisational Review (Holm-Hansen, Kambewa and Hvidsten 2009) noted low cost efficiency, unclear added value from Norwegian municipalities, and programme goals that were too broadly formulated to make it possible to link them easily with results from project activities. KS responded by concentrating MIC activities geographically and thematically, keeping strictly to municipal issues, and refining the results-based management of the programme by making it more realistic and measurable. The 2010 Guidelines replaced the Logical Framework Approach with Results-Based Management (RBM). RBM is a dynamic tool that assists in tracking effects and achievements and simplifies reporting on outcome. RBM also analyses how an intervention might work in a given context, and identifies external risk factors.

One of the lessons learnt is that the cooperation needs to be strictly focused and concentrated on issues where the municipalities as such – not merely the local community, its NGOs

or local enthusiasts – add value. The 2013 Guidelines emphasise the importance of concentrating cooperation activities on fields of work that lie within the field of competence of municipalities not only in Norway but also in the Southern country involved. In line with this, for the period 2011–2014 KS made a significant tightening of activities within the MIC partnerships.

In Guatemala, activities concentrated on environmental protection (waste management), and gender equality (local political participation of women). Here, KS linked up with the municipal women's offices and environmental offices. All Guatemalan municipalities are required to establish such offices, and the municipalities that entered into MIC partnerships were given a welcome opportunity to get concrete activities funded. In the partnerships with African municipalities, the focus was on improved governance and service production, and integration of environmental concerns in plans and daily operations.

For a partnership to be accepted for funding there had to be clear concordance between the skills of the involved municipalities and individuals involved in the project, and the subject matter and activities in focus with the project in question. Participants were required to have a mandate (as elected local politicians) or a task (as municipal employees). This point was stressed in order to avoid having MIC confused with programme for people-to-people cooperation or general support to civil society. The objectives of the cooperation were to be concrete and identifiable, so that the effects could be traced.

Each MIC partnership was conceived as a small-scale undertaking. It had to strike a balance between being big enough for projects to be carried out without being under-financed on one hand, and not being so ambitious that additional municipal staff would have to be engaged or major additional funding provided in order to secure implementation. Activities were to be conducted by the municipality's own people. Ideally, the contribution from the municipalities was to be in the form of working hours and spare time of those involved.

KS International Projects and involved partner municipalities have been a learning organisation. This has enabled MIC to develop into an increasingly focused and fine-tuned mechanism. It is, however, worth considering whether this has come at the expense

of MIC's compatibility with mainstream developmental aid. It may be questioned whether placing MIC under Norad's department for *civil society* has been advantageous. MIC is about democratic institutions of *public authorities* – indeed, a central precondition for MIC to develop into an efficient tool with a clear niche has been its *de-coupling* from civil society activities. Several evaluations have shown how MIC partnership links with – or origins in – arrangements like Friendship North/South and FK Norway have proven a hindrance to the realisation of core MIC concepts. These links form part of the 2010 Guidelines, but were meant to be auxiliary.

2.2 International experiences

Norway is not the only country where municipalities have engaged themselves in development aid with partner municipalities in the Global South. Among the most active countries in this field we find Finland, Belgium and Canada. Like Norway, these countries' municipal international partnerships are coordinated by the national associations of municipalities and regions, and are financed mainly by the government. KS participates actively in international forums, like the Capacity and Institution Building Group in the United Cities and Local Governments,¹ where experiences and methods of international municipal cooperation are exchanged with organisations that run programmes similar to MIC.

2.2.1 Finland

Finland has a Cooperation Programme for Municipalities in North and South, administered by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and funded by Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Cooperating Finnish and Southern local governments can apply through the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities.

The aim of Finland's programme is to strengthen municipal competence so as to create welfare, and to support local decision-

¹ United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is an umbrella organisation for cities, local governments and municipal associations throughout the world. It is based in Barcelona.

making and good governance globally. The geographical focus of the programme is on Africa.

Finnish municipalities and African partner municipalities exchange knowledge and skills in typical municipal fields of activity – like resident participation in planning and decision-making, or the provision of basic services. Funding has gone to technical assistance, research and surveys, training and producing training materials, information exchange (colleague-to-colleague cooperation involving local government officeholders and elected representatives), information dissemination and small-scale investments. Under the programme, education in international awareness and tolerance is also conducted in Finnish municipalities.

Like the Norwegian MIC programme, the Finnish programme for municipality-to-municipality cooperation draws on a legacy of local North–South NGO cooperation.

In 2010 the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities conducted a systematic study of how and to what extent the North–South partnerships were linked to the Southern partner-municipalities' strategies (Kuusi, 2010).

Scope: For the planning phase of the cooperation (a maximum of one year), a maximum of € 20 000 per cooperation project can be applied for. There is an average of € 200 000 per year per cooperation project for conducting the implementation phase

2.2.2 Belgium: Flanders

Flanders has 308 municipalities, of which 30 were involved in municipal international cooperation as of 2014.² This cooperation is aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of local governance – that is, promoting the sustainable and structural development of local administrative entities in the South. Further, the cooperation is intended to support democratisation and

² Belgium's French-speaking municipalities (in Wallonia and the Brussels region) conduct similar municipality-to-municipality projects in French-speaking Africa through their respective municipal associations, l'UVCW (Union des Villes et Communes de Wallonie) and AVCB (Association de la Ville et des Communes de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale). The cooperation's acronym is CIC (*coopération internationale communale*).

decentralisation processes and develop administrative facilities by sharing technical know-how in regulatory areas that are the responsibility of the municipalities in question. The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) acts as the programme administrator and coordinator in Flanders. The Directorate-General for Development establishes the same administrative and financial regulations for the VVSG as for NGOs. The programme's geographical focus is Southern Africa.

The concept of 'twinning' (Flemish: *stedenbanden* ; French: *jumelage*) features more prominently than in KS documents. In fact, KS has opted not to use the concept of twinning, in order to distinguish MIC from the connotations that twinning has in Norway, where the concept is associated with people-to-people activities not necessarily conducted with a developmental aim. 'Municipal partnering' is another term used within the Flemish towns' bilateral North–South cooperation. VVSG calculates with one and a half years to establish a twinning relationship. In order to succeed, the municipality's political and administrative institutions must be engaged, as must the residents.

The Flemish municipalities have two support schemes (subsidy programmes) from which they can draw funds for municipal international cooperation, one Flemish, the other federal (through the Directorate-General for Development). A twinning generally starts out under the Flemish scheme. After having 'matured' over a few years, some partnerships apply for funding from the federal scheme to concentrate on specific aspects of the cooperation.

For both schemes, a set of fairly strict requirements is applied to the participating municipalities, aimed at ensuring commitment. Firstly, towns that wish to receive a subsidy from the Flemish government must set up an international cooperation advisory committee, recognised by the municipal council. This committee is to consist of various civic actors, in order to secure the participation and involvement of local civil society. Secondly, the towns must include an item in the municipal budget specifically designated for international cooperation: this comes in addition to the grants from the support scheme. Thirdly, the municipalities must appoint a 'councillor for international cooperation', as the politically responsible local figure. Also a 'North–South civil servant' must be contracted, to follow up on the policy established

in the municipal management plan, including the twinning. After three years of receiving the twinning subsidy, the town itself must finance this North–South civil servant position on a full-time basis.

VVSG pays considerable attention to the twinning process. Twinned municipalities are expected to have something in common – perhaps having a commercial port, a university or the like. Municipalities with little in common stand to fail as partners, in the view of VVSG.

Likewise, VVSG emphasises the need to ‘sensitise people’ in Flanders. Municipalities are *niet domein specifieke* (literally: ‘not domain-specific’) actors: international cooperation is not a main task or goal for them. They are involved in the field of international cooperation because of their knowledge and expertise in other sectors. Special training is needed if they are to operate in the Global South.

Scope: Each partnership may receive a maximum of € 68 000 per year from the federal government and around € 60 000 per year from the regional Flemish government.

2.2.3 Canada

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities runs several programmes that involve developmental partnerships between Canadian and municipalities in other countries. These programmes are financed by Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

The *Municipal Local Economic Development Programme* consists of 13 partnerships involved in conducting 14 local economic development demonstration projects in Ukraine. The aim is to help Ukrainian cities develop marketing and investment strategies, establish new industrial parks, enhance tourism opportunities, and implement waste management and environmental rehabilitation programmes. The programme also involves the Association of Ukrainian Cities and Ukraine’s State Agency for Investment and National Projects, which increases the likelihood the lessons from the partnerships are disseminated and that the activities are linked up to current national strategies.

The core methodology of the programme consists of exchange of elected officials and technical professionals. A peer-to-peer approach is used to build capacity in partner municipalities in Ukraine: practitioners from Canadian partner municipalities provide advice, training and information on best practices in supporting the strategic planning efforts. This takes place through two mechanisms: through missions of Canadian municipal practitioners from partner municipalities who travel to Ukraine and participate in training workshops, intergovernmental forums and direct meetings with Ukrainian counterparts associated with capacity-building efforts; and/or through technical missions to Canada for Ukrainian officials who represent the interests of Ukrainian municipalities, national associations and stakeholders associated with the project.

The fact that the Ukrainian cities involved are geographically concentrated to the two regions of Lvov and Dnepropetrovsk facilitates concentration of efforts and reduces loss of focus.

Scope 2010–2014: 14 mill Canadian dollars from department of Foreign Affairs plus 3.1 mill. from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and partners.

The *Municipal Partners for Economic Development programme* operates in partnership with local government associations (LGAs) and selected municipal governments in Asia, Latin America and Africa. It provides local governments with practical strategies for incorporating themes of gender equality and environmental sustainability into local economic development projects, from initial planning to final evaluation. The methodology used involves demonstration projects that result in knowledge that can be used to influence national policy development and replicate successful projects in other municipalities. There are currently more than 20 local economic development demonstration projects under the programme, involving 27 overseas municipal governments and 25 Canadian municipalities.

Scope 2010–2015: 18.4 mill. Canadian dollars from the Department of Foreign Affairs and 5.8 mill from FCM and partners.

The *Caribbean Local Economic Development programme* assists local governments in implement programming, policies and services to

support existing enterprises and attract new businesses. The aim is to develop business-friendly environments in which micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises can prosper. The programme is currently active across 22 communities in seven Caribbean countries.

Scope 2012–2015: 19 mill Canadian dollars from the Department of Foreign Affairs and 4 mill. from FCM and partners.

2.2.4 Summing up experiences of other countries

KS is actively involved in UCLG (see footnote 2), where it meets regularly with representatives of other organisations that conduct programmes similar to MIC. There is probably much to be gained from even closer cooperation and more frequent exchange of experience between the MIC-like programmes of these forerunner countries. Suffice it here to mention a few pertinent aspects:

The Flemish MIC has two ‘stages’, one more general which may be followed up with a more specified twinning. In a possible future Norwegian scheme, experiences with a ‘waiting room’ or ‘maturation process’ should be studied. The Flemish MIC is designed to ensure that civil society is brought in, *inter alia* by having an international cooperation advisory committee in each participating municipality. In a future Norwegian scheme that might be of interest, but Norwegian experience thus far has been one of strong civil-society engagement, at times almost superseding the municipal content of MIC.

The Canadians run three separate programmes involving North–South municipal partnerships. One of these concentrates on a specific country (Ukraine) and one on a specific region (the Caribbean). The third has a cross-municipality focus on integrating gender and environmental issues in local development plans. Sometimes it is possible to draw on historical links, for instance, there are large number of Canadians with Ukrainian and Haitian family backgrounds.

3 MIC methods and results

This chapter presents MIC's partnerships in some detail, to enable an assessment of the methods applied and the results achieved.³

3.1 Stjørdal – Panajachel, Guatemala

Activities and methods

In the field of environmental protection the project has involved an awareness-raising campaign on the detrimental effects of disposing plastic in nature. Dustbins and other waste disposal equipment have been provided by the project. Local personnel and restaurant owners have been trained, *inter alia* in waste sorting.

Gender-equality activities have involved training women through consciousness-raising and information about rights, as well as practical courses in traditional female activities like sewing and baking.

Reciprocal visits have been arranged, actively involving the municipally-owned waste management company in which Stjørdal is a co-owner.

Results

In the field of environmental protection, 500 households in Panajachel now have separate containers for solid, non-solid and organic waste thanks to the cooperation with Stjørdal. The MIC

³ The planned (and agreed) partnership between Fredrikstad and partners in Guatemala (San Martín Jilotepeque and Patzún) never got started, because the MIC programme was discontinued. This applies also to cooperation between Tysnes and Mbulu in Tanzania. They are therefore not included in this overview. Likewise, two of the municipalities that took part 2011–2013 did not apply for 2014. We nonetheless include one of these partnerships, Stjørdal – Panajachel, since it has played an important role in the programme.

project in Panajachel was able to link up with the existing municipal waste plan. Recycling capacity for plastic, paper, electronic materials has been improved. The municipality has the necessary equipment to compress plastic and to crush glass. It has established a demonstration plot to show local farmers how to make use of compost.

the local authorities of Panajachel report that the share of women in the COCODES⁴ has increased from 15% to 34% in the project period. Several women hold top positions in the COCODES, like presidents, vice-presidents or head of finances. In the case of the COMUDES⁵ the increase has been from 25% to 28%. Today 30% of the leaders in the municipality of Panajachel are women, and there are two women on the municipal council. The municipal offices for social development and for fund raising are headed by women, as are the library and the gymnasium. For women wishing to qualify for positions in the municipality or in the COCODES and COMUDES, the training offered through MIC may be useful. Thanks to the project with Stjørdal the office for social development has been used as a Women's House for meetings and gathering, with Stjørdal and Panajachel sharing the expenses for rent and meals. Women from COCODES meet here, and trainings are held.

3.2 Ål – Sololá, Guatemala

Activities and methods

Exchange visits, training, support to acquire equipment for waste disposal and sorting.

Results

Spokespersons from the two municipalities report that the activities carried out by COCODES on various levels have strengthened municipal capacities in the fields of community participation, health, environment, promotion of economic activity and education. Female participation in the COCODES has been

⁴ COCODES – Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo (Community Development Councils).

⁵ COMUDES – Consejos Municipales de Desarrollo (Municipal Councils of Development).

strengthened, and more than 25 Women Commissions have been established in Sololá.

In the field of environmental sorting 100% of Sololá's urban population has been trained in correct disposal of solid waste, and the person responsible for the project in Sololá claims 80% of the households now practise this. Some schools have run campaigns for pupils on waste sorting. Waste sorting has been introduced in the centre of Sololá town, in some schools and also in some villages. As a result of the project, Sololá now has a plant for composting and waste sorting into three categories: organic, recyclable and non-recyclable waste. Today 60% of the waste is organic and much is composted; some 30% is recyclable waste. According to reports from the municipality of Sololá, today only 10% of the waste collected is not being utilised. MIC participants from Ál report that Sololá has undergone visible improvements as regards waste. Previously, litter was left about in the town. Also more than 150 hectares of woodland have been planted during the last four years.

3.3 Stord – San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala

Activities and methods

Exchange visits, training, support to acquire equipment for waste disposal and sorting.

Results

Figures from Comalapa show that recirculation of plastic, glass, and metal rose from 21 tonnes in 2011 to 60 tonnes in 2013. Also composting was introduced (30 tonnes in 2013). Some 40% of the population took part in municipally organised waste-sorting arrangements in 2013, against none two years earlier.

The problem of illegal waste disposal in ravines has been reduced. This is due not least to the introduction of municipal rubbish collection, made possible thanks to a lorry provided as part of the MIC project, as well as an area for a landfill that was made available for ten years by a private landowner and approved by the Guatemalan Ministry of the Environment. The introduction of rubbish collection in urban areas and the closure of some of the illegal rubbish dumps led to much initial dissatisfaction. However,

after better information was provided by the municipality, most local people consider it to be a better system although many are reluctant to pay for it. During the Guatemalan partners' in-depth visits to the inter-municipal waste disposal company in Stord, questions related to cooperation across municipal boundaries were discussed.

Stord reports that in the project period Comalapa has emphasised the role of women to an increasing degree. Since 2012 more female 'auxiliary mayors' have been elected. In 2013, in the town in eight women (50%) were 'auxiliary mayors', whereas in the rural areas their share was 12%. The COMUDE had a female membership of 42%. The corresponding figures for COCODES were 48% in the town and 12% in rural areas of the municipality. In all this makes 21% as compared to 6% at the outset of the MIC cooperation. Several women who have attended the capacity-building workshops arranged under MIC auspices have later been candidates from various political parties in local elections.

Stord and San Juan Comalapa are among the MIC partners with a prior history as partners in civil society partnerships. These relations date back to 1989, and were begun on the initiative of the Stord municipal council. In 2002 the two municipalities expanded their cooperation through a FK Norway partnership.

3.4 Tinn – Champerico, Guatemala

Activities and methods

Exchange visits, training (e.g. 32 workshops for women at micro-local level), support to acquire equipment for waste disposal and sorting.

Results

Tinn and Champerico have made use of MIC to upgrade an almost defunct waste management plant built in 2002 from public Guatemalan funding and support from Italy. Likewise, the Women's Office in Champerico functioned more like a social welfare office and had no strategy for gender equality.

An environmental protection office has been established in Champerico and its employees trained. The office has a strategic

plan and operative manuals. The local waste management system has been strengthened.

As of now around 80 households pay for waste disposal. The waste-disposal plant processes waste from 300 households and from the municipal marketplace. Every day, large amounts of organic waste come from this market. Organic fertilisers are being produced; further, a very simple system for waste sorting has been introduced and has achieved a coverage of 60%.

The Women's Office in Champerico has been strengthened. It has linked up with women's movements and organs at state level that promote gender equality. In all 300 women have been trained; some 95 of the women involved in training activities complete the courses.

3.5 Odda – Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala

Activities and methods

Exchange visits, training, support to acquire equipment for waste disposal and sorting. The MIC cooperation with Odda has enabled training and capacity-building in the COCODES and within the waste management sector. MIC has financed trainers and teaching materials.

Results

COCODES have 28% women membership. Furthermore, 40% of the households practise waste separation. Transport of rubbish from users to the treatment plant has been provided. MIC has also covered payment to specialists who assisted in setting up the local women's policy and for a person to assist the municipal Women's Office.

As in the other Guatemalan municipalities involved in MIC, in Santiago Atitlán the waste sorting started out in the schools. From there attitude campaigns have been arranged directed at the youngsters, and then parents. Radio, local TV and banners have been used to promote awareness regarding waste management.

Through the MIC project, schools received two rubbish bins, one for organic and one for inorganic waste. Two educators were hired to train teachers and pupils.

Santiago Atitlán collects fees for each municipal service (the garbage collectors take one quetzal = 0.12 € per visit). On their visit to Odda, municipal representatives learned that a standard fee for all services might be more efficient.

Algae from Lago Atitlán are removed and mixed with the organic waste, after 9–10 months resulting in good humus. Households are offered a bag each of this mould for use in their vegetable gardens.

In the course of the partnership with Odda, the municipality of Santiago Atitlán has increased its spending on environment. The budget for the municipal Women's Office has been tripled.

3.6 Melhus – Taveta, Kenya

Activity and methods

Exchange visits, training, and material support have constituted the main focus of activities. The Melhus–Taveta MIC partnership has been able to link up with ongoing processes in this Kenyan municipality and has been anchored in the Kenyan Ministry of Local Government's Department of Urban Planning. This has reinforced the status, legitimacy and not least relevance of the project.

The MIC Project is integrated in the Land Use Plan process regarding environmental and strategic issues. The ongoing process of urban planning in Taveta has included a new marketplace, completed in 2014. A new town district is being planned, preferably to be integrated with the existing town.

The Melhus–Taveta partnership comes very close to the core intervention logic of MIC as conceived by KS International and the MIC partners. Melhus has been able to draw on a wide range of municipal officers from its Technical Department, Land Use Department, Development Department, ICT Department and Envina Waste Handling Company. Regional Authorities like the Governor's Office and the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate also contributed. This has created commitment on the Kenyan side, and a systematic MIC exchange programme focusing on infrastructure and environment has been set up. Interestingly, Melhus has been able to include FK Norway and

Friendship North/South, without this distracting attention from the MIC municipal core.

Results

Trainings at local level in Taveta have included a wide range of actors: municipal councillors, staff, community-based organisations, and other stakeholders with whom the municipality interacts. As a result of the partnership with Melhus, Taveta has improved its capacities in technical infrastructure planning, water and sewerage, waste management, climate change, energy, environmental protection, agriculture and health. In addition to training, the cooperation has included material inputs like a drum trolley and litter bins, computers/laptops, and mobile toilets.

Waste management is among the municipal issues highlighted in the Melhus–Taveta MIC partnership. The project was initially called ‘Make Taveta Clean’ but this was changed to ‘Keep Taveta Clean’. In Taveta, the Environmental Office has been in charge. The Norwegian municipality contributed with officers from the Technical Department, Land Use Department, Development Department, ICT Department and Envina Waste Handling Company. Regional Authorities like the Governor’s Office and the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate also contributed. Today Taveta has a regular system for waste disposal and its streets are clean.

Side-effect: A pilot project on green energy with a firm from Melhus and a report on pumps from Sintef technical research foundation.

3.7 Skodje – Voi, Kenya

Activity and methods

Training, exchange visits and provision of waste disposal equipment.

Results

In the field of waste management the project has provided training of several categories of local residents in waste management and recycling: women’s groups, small-scale tradespeople and teachers have been trained. A youth group has been involved and is now

earning money on recycled plastic from bottles sold to the group by other townspeople.

The MIC project initially provided 73 dustbins to facilitate collection; now stakeholders and residents are providing their own dust bins.

The MIC partnership between Skodje and Voi has contributed to the establishment of Voi's system for garbage collection, the computerisation of the town's revenue collection, the internet connection of its municipal office for revenue collection in the marketplace and the municipal website. The project has helped Voi municipality to develop greater transparency in its activities and has helped to increase municipal revenues.

3.8 Jølster – Mpulungu, Zambia

Activity and methods

Exchange visits and workshops. The project has applied methodologies derived from the capacity-building programme Women Can Do It.

Results

The MIC partnership between Jølster and Mpulungu has, *inter alia*, involved in training in how to integrate environmental considerations into municipal plans. Traditional leaders, members of Area Development Committees and well as head teachers and pupils have received such training through the project.

Moreover, newly elected councillors have been trained in matters pertaining to efficient service delivery.

MIC has also contributed to improving service delivery through the construction of refuse bays at three marketplaces. Participatory health and hygiene education workshops have been conducted in all 13 wards of the municipality.

A main focus has been the training of women and young people, to promote more active participation in local politics as well as entrepreneurial skills. This is in line with Zambia's National Decentralisation Policy, which is aimed at involving the communities (grassroots) in the planning and implementation

processes of local development projects. Bringing young people together for debate competitions has been one side-effect of MIC.

As a result of the project partnership, a rule was introduced, stipulating that Ward Development Committees cannot have chair and vice-chair of the same gender.

Four women were candidates at the last elections. Two of them were elected, as against only one at the previous election.

The Jølster–Mpulungu partnership has had a typical side-effect of the positive kind. Mpulungu’s district forest commissioner participated in his municipality’s delegation to Jølster in 2012. There he was inspired by the information he received on good forest management and the connections between deforestation and environment challenges. The forest commissioner has initiated the planting of 40 000 trees along the banks of one of the rivers in Mpulungu. This, combined with reduced deforestation by the village people, has reportedly already resulted in less erosion, less sand and soil transported by the river, and fewer problems for the hydropower plant generators further downstream. Eventually it will also lessen the problems concerning the fish population in Lake Tanganyika, where river-borne eroded sand/soil had begun to pollute the spawning grounds, causing a reduction in the fish population and therefore in the catches of local fishermen.

3.9 Aust-Agder – Mwanza, Tanzania

Activity and methods

Training, exchange visits, working with universities.

Results

The report from Aust-Agder is very sober, to the point and without elements of wishful thinking.

As a part of the MIC project one public hearing on waste management was arranged in one of Mwanza’s city districts. In all, 24 activists from six community-based organisations were trained.

Students and teachers in two schools have benefited from the project. Through activities concerning waste management, they have developed a greater understanding for global challenge of

waste management as well as local solutions. Students at Pamba School have established a 'MIC club' where they hone their skills in presentation, leadership and waste management. They have had opportunity to teach at other schools in the Mwanza area and to take part in an exchange to Norway. There they visited students at Arendal Upper Secondary School involved in the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme who have worked through the MIC project to develop teaching materials and presentation regarding waste management. They have taken part in the exchange to Pamba Secondary School, the planning and organisation of the Pamba students' visit to Arendal Upper Secondary School and have initiated several spin-off projects with voluntary work collecting funds for schoolbooks and science and sports equipment for Pamba. Students in both places have developed intercultural understanding and communications skills as well as valuable hands-on experience of dealing with global challenges like waste management

Four dustbins were donated to the schools in Mwanza. An environmental group of 120 trained students has been constituted. Its membership is constantly renewed, so the total number of those who have been trained in waste sorting is much higher than 120.

In order to increase the amount of waste properly delivered to the landfill, public meetings to stop burning of waste were held in three wards. An inter-street competition among streets on waste management was conducted in eight wards. One dispensary got written guidelines and information on how to handle healthcare wastes, and a low-cost incinerator was installed. One hospital and one public health centre had six staff trained in healthcare waste handling, and the hospital was given five big waste bins and 12 small dustbins as part of the MIC project.

A baseline study on waste management at dispensaries in 2010 revealed poor infrastructure regarding waste management. There was no running water, and wastes were not separated, simply burned outside on the ground. Infectious waste was handled just like ordinary paper waste. Routines for hygiene and disposal of dangerous waste at the dispensaries have been improved through the introduction of an incinerator, colour-coded dustbins and training. The public health centre may have improved its service

delivery as a result of staff visits to Arendal and conversations with municipal staff there, but, because of high staff turnover, the long-term effects may be insecure.

As a result of the MIC partnership, environmental considerations have been incorporated into Mwanza's plans and daily operation of a school, several public health centres and a hospital. A plan for dealing with dangerous waste is under preparation. In general, awareness of waste management problems, including the benefits of composting, seems to be developing. However, as yet the way of carrying out waste management in practice has not undergone change. Progress here will hinge on the availability of technical equipment, like transport facilities.

3.10 Porsgrunn – Kisumu, Kenya

Activity and methods

Training in planning methods, exchange visits. The training in planning methods for capacity-building in planning processes in the municipality took place at sites where the city planning office had ongoing challenges. On-site workshops included communication with local stakeholders; cooperation with professors and students from Chalmers University Göteborg (see below) were vital to the learning process.

Results

The mayors of Porsgrunn and Kisumu signed a Friendship City agreement in late 2008, renewed for the period 2014–2018. The municipalities joined the MIC programme in 2011, aiming to build capacity in the Kisumu city planning office. Exchange visits were held to learn differences and similarities in the legislation and planning processes in Kenya and Norway. A workshop on the shores of Victoria Lake included training in registration, mapping and measuring, as well as participatory planning processes. As a result of the workshop, a local area plan for upgrading Tilapia Beach was made. Another workshop was held at Nyawita market, one of many marketplaces that Kisumu is aiming to upgrade.

Kisumu is the third largest city in Kenya. The new Constitution (2010) led to major changes in the local government after the 2013 elections, with the new Kisumu county government also dealing

with the planning processes in this city. Kisumu is giving planning a high priority, according to reports from Porsgrunn. The city planning office changed personnel, but also expanded with new and highly qualified staff. The cooperation with Porsgrunn's planners therefore fits in with local priorities in Kenya.

Kisumu is a major university city in Kenya, and Chalmers University in Göteborg, Sweden, has for many years cooperated with Maseno and Bondo Universities in Kisumu on running Master-level studies in planning. Within the MIC programme, the cooperation with Chalmers has led to new learning and has been central to building capacity in participatory planning.

In 2013 Porsgrunn and Kisumu started developing a cooperative arrangement for enhancing women's participation in economic development, based on the network and relationship already established.

While observing Kisumu's way of conducting planning processes in interaction with stakeholders, Porsgrunn representatives took note of the important role of oral communication. This gave rise to reflections on how oral communication could play a role in Norwegian planning as well, to increase the accessibility to information and lower the threshold for feedback from members of the public.

3.11 Ringeby – Mityana, Uganda

Activity and methods

Training, exchange visits.

Results

The project has focused on creating increased awareness about waste management. Municipal staff has been trained in use of computers through spreadsheet training. Students and staff at 31 schools have been made aware of the importance of garbage handling and sorting. Local leaders and community members from 30 villages have been trained in garbage management. In all 38 posters and billboards warning against littering have been put up, and a bye-law has been enacted to guide and fine waste producers.

3.12 Lessons from the partnerships

On the project level, representatives of participating municipalities have mentioned some lessons that have been learned. One of them is to have strategies ready to cope with shifts in personnel. These are more frequent in many countries of the South than in Norway because municipal managerial staff are often replaced a change of government. The fact that MIC 2011–2014 has linked up with institutions (like municipal environmental offices in Guatemala) and policy fields (like urban planning in Africa) that continue to exist notwithstanding the local political regime, although often with changing personnel, help reduce the problem of discontinuity. Also the involved Norwegian municipalities have been urged to relate to the new political leadership in the partner municipality immediately after elections.

Another lesson is that the number of project activities should be kept low. Meetings between the partner municipalities often generate massive enthusiasm and an ensuing myriad of new ideas. At times this may come at the expense of implementation of activities already initiated. The last MIC programme included measures for coping with the problem. These measures consisted in concentrating efforts on two core issues. In addition, such concentration has facilitated more efficient exchange of experiences and learning.

According to representatives of some municipalities involved in MIC, if they were to start all over again they would have studied the MIC Guidelines and core documents more carefully, to get acquainted with the intervention logic and theory of change underpinning the MIC programme.

3.13 Summing up

Despite efforts to make reporting requirements closely linked to actual project activities, most of the partnerships' formal reporting still fails to indicate the links between the results they report and the MIC activities. In many cases activities carried out by partner municipalities in the South are listed, but it is unclear how these can be attributed to MIC input.

Nonetheless, follow-up questions and conversations made it clear that each partnership can identify results of MIC activities. In most cases, however, the results are confined to the institution where the project activity took place. So far, there has been little in terms of dissemination effects to other agencies or institutions within the involved municipality, or to other municipalities in the same country. Through the MIC workshops there has, however, been exchange of experiences between the MIC municipalities in each country/region. Also, representatives of national local government associations have attended MIC workshops and have been informed about the programme activities. In some cases, as with the Association of Local Government Authorities of Kenya, experiences have been shared with the members. Nonetheless, results on the aggregate or systemic level have not yet materialised.

The MIC methodology involves facilitating an interface between two municipalities (local politicians and municipal employees). Training and study visits are core elements, together with some essential material support. The small amount of funds available for each partnership is well reasoned. However, the fact that the municipal representatives involved seldom have prior training in international work or development aid creates some problems. Much has to be learned from scratch during brief encounters with partners. KS International Projects make use of regular workshops to convey insights and methodology, but much of the learning still proceeds by trial and error within each individual partnership.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

As an instrument for promoting local development, Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) takes two basic assumptions as its starting point. The first is that local self-governments around the world have basically similar tasks. Despite the socioeconomic and cultural differences, municipalities are public bodies that provide services to their citizens. They have democratic legitimacy through local elections. These functional similarities across state borders enable municipalities to enter into a dialogue between equals, and between equivalents. MIC's second core assumption concerns methodology: the belief that bringing equivalents together in specific activities will create added value.

In practice, however, the MIC programme suffers from problems that are common to any kind of development assistance that relies on voluntary professionals and enthusiasts in the municipalities. MIC is knowledge-intensive. Translating structures, skills and methods from Norway to countries that have been selected on grounds of underdevelopment is a very complex operation. This complexity is not easily grasped by municipal politicians or professionals without specific country knowledge or a background from development aid. Even with such background, the task of identifying the baseline from which a programme can start and develop equally realistic expectations among participants is huge. Nonetheless, such skills and knowledge are needed to understand the national and local context of the partner municipalities – and not least to extent to which Norwegian approaches, skills and methods can be transferred to a very different context.

At times the Norwegian partners' understanding of the situation in which their partners operate is tainted more by the external rhetoric of national aid agencies and fund-raising NGOs than by sober, research-based information. At times even clichés like 'they are poor but happy, and we have a lot to learn from that' are reproduced.

The natural and legitimate lack of professional capacities in international work and development aid among Norwegian municipalities is the weakest point of MIC, since the programme's core theory of change evolved around activities conducted in the interface set up by the programme between local politicians/municipal officers in two municipalities. KS International Projects has been aware of this and has introduced a set of measures to overcome the problem. In addition to workshops involving partner municipalities there has been a narrowing down of the number of municipal policy fields and project activity types involved. This has boosted learning within MIC. Also requirements for reporting have been made more down-to-earth and directly linked to project activities and their results. Moreover, KS International Projects has made efforts to link MIC activities up with national strategies and priorities. In short, although MIC has struggled with the challenges encountered in bringing in 'laymen' in the field of international work/development aid, in recent years the programme has gradually and systematically improved its capacities for overcoming the challenges. The core activities of the individual partnerships 2011–2014 were more in line with the MIC priorities and methodologies than ever, with a sharper distinction between purely municipal issues and the broader community ones.

However, even when purely municipal issues are selected for cooperation activities, problems may arise. Norwegian municipalities and municipalities in the South are not necessarily as similar as one might believe. Waste management illustrates this point. Norwegian municipalities have highly advanced systems – in the South, a municipality may have one lorry that collects waste from a very small number of households and small enterprises. At worst, bringing in representatives from an entire Norwegian municipality to teach basic waste sorting and composting is tantamount to cracking nuts with a sledgehammer. At best, getting acquainted with Norway's elaborate systems of waste management,

although this knowledge may not be directly transferrable, can provide inspiration for local improvements at home.

The overall strategic goal of the MIC programme concerns capacity building in areas of prioritised municipal tasks. Such capacity building has taken place in all MIC partnerships in 2011–2014 but the degree to which the desired results have been achieved varies somewhat. In some partnerships, municipalities of the South have been able to improve their urban planning capacities making use of the opportunities offered through MIC. In these cases, as in the successful Melhus–Taveta partnership, the efforts made have largely exceeded the frameworks of MIC, and the partners have drawn on additional activities. The key to the Melhus–Taveta success has been close cooperation over time between specialists around specific municipal issues. Also the activities of the Guatemalan municipal offices for women and for the environment have been given a boost through MIC activities.

Capacities have been built mainly through training in workshops and visits to the Norwegian municipalities. Such training and visits have focused on very concrete cases and issues of municipal day-to-day operation. Often, the training has been systematic and clearly linked up with ongoing processes in partner municipalities in the South. MIC has emphasised the importance of democratic processes at local level. At times, however, capacity-building has been held to come as a result of ‘showing, not telling’, in the sense that seeing how well municipal issues are solved in Norway can make partners understand the need to improve and even how to improve. For instance, showing the important role that young people and women usually play in Norwegian local decision-making is believed to have an effect. However, there may be deeper causes than mere individual ignorance underlying the inadequate representation of certain groups in partner municipalities in the South. Some Norwegian municipalities make a point of showing how representatives of different political parties are able to respect each other, and socialise in friendly ways. This of course, probably is easier in Norway than in a country like Guatemala, where the people have experienced civil war and massacres for decades. In turn, such examples illustrate the need for more training on the realities in partner countries.

In earlier periods, the MIC programme contained a heterogeneous mix of activities aimed at achieving the goal of stronger municipalities. The 2010 Guidelines were the result of a gradual development of the MIC concept into a considerably more focused and streamlined mechanism than before. This has allowed more efficient guidance and follow-up from KS International Projects, and not least the more meaningful exchange of experiences across partnerships. Some of the progress observable in the period 2011–2014 may also be attributed to the fact that the links to people-to-people activities, FK Norway and Friendship North/South have been reduced, to the benefit of a stronger *municipal* focus. Actors with direct municipal relevance, like professionals within planning or inter-municipal waste management companies, have been involved.

Finland, Belgium and Canada have programmes that resemble Norway's MIC. They are very much conceived in the same way as MIC, with municipalities intended to work in pairs. The Belgians have a two-stage system where the more in-depth partnerships are financed from the federal level. The Canadians run three programmes involving municipal cooperation in pairs. This allows for geographically and thematically specialised programmes.

4.2 Recommendations for a possible future scheme

Norway has strong municipalities that are responsible for a wide range of core public policies and activities. Indeed, this is a striking characteristic of Norway's political and administrative system. Therefore, there is all reason to include local self-government as a part of Norway's cooperation with other countries. Other countries, like Finland, Belgium and Canada, include cooperation between municipalities in their policies for development assistance. Municipal cooperation North–South might well become one of Norway's comparative advantages within development assistance. Also as part of Norway's cooperation with middle-income countries and emerging national economies, municipal cooperation could play a more important role, as it could more generally on the European scene.

The existence of a well-functioning local government is often a precondition for other objectives to be realised. For instance: the development aid policy of the current Norwegian government gives priority to business development and trade. Business investments are made locally. Serious investments are more likely to happen in locations where local authority and physical planning, water, sanitation and waste management are in place.

Norwegian municipalities may contribute, also in countries that do not belong to the typical aid-receiving group of states, like the states of the former Soviet Union. There is also a huge potential in international municipal cooperation in countries that are *similar* to Norway. The MIC principles of equality and mutual benefit would probably come into their own in, say, a Norwegian–Dutch partnership on waste management. Thus far, the MIC mechanism has been tried out in the parts of the world where it is in fact *least* functional, due to its heavy reliance on reciprocity and equivalence.

A precondition for bringing in Norwegian municipalities would be that they ‘add value’ as compared to other actors. A control question could be: Could these activities be done more efficiently by other actors? Likewise, as regards working with schools: would schools, or teachers’ associations working directly in pairs, be more efficient?

The strategy of establishing municipal partnerships between municipalities where civil society actors have already established links should be avoided. This somewhat counterintuitive conclusion is based on several evaluations of MIC showing that civil society people-to-people cooperation makes it difficult to succeed with a municipal focus.

Cooperation should concentrate on issues that are purely municipal in both countries involved. In addition, it is recommended to select issues that can be improved in the South without having to change everything else, the context. The reason why things work in a Norwegian municipality is not necessarily that the municipal tool in itself is good, but that it works well *in that given setting*. This insight needs to be brought more explicitly into municipal international cooperation.

A possible future scheme for international municipal cooperation in the Global South should rely less on one-to-one partnerships

than they did within MIC. The knowledge-intensive character of this type of development aid must be acknowledged, and a stronger support apparatus should be involved, e.g. through formative research processes. Among the issues that should be addressed are: the political administrative system in the partner country, ongoing reforms, particularly difficult issues, behavioural expectancies (level of formalising/formalities), legality, decision-making structure (e.g. as regards the process of obtaining permits).

The potentials of the one-to-one interface between municipalities have not been realised on a broad basis within MIC. However, in some of the partnerships, the municipalities have ventured beyond the more sentimental aspects of meeting each other and have started up professional cooperation concentrating on purely municipal issues. Nonetheless, and despite the fact that the individual partnerships increasingly have been brought together thematically and through joint workshops, there is reason to discuss whether working in pairs in relatively small projects is the most efficient way to achieve the objectives set for international municipal cooperation. A 'collective' approach directed at a cluster of foreign municipalities and involving a cluster of Norwegian municipalities might be one way to ensure more efficient use of resources and learning in a possible future scheme for international municipal cooperation.

Such a renewed scheme might focus, for instance, on adaptation to climate change. The role played by municipalities in physical planning and municipal infrastructure makes them a central actor. In such a case, only countries with a real and on-going strategy for local adaptation should be selected as partners.

The model based on partnerships in pairs is not the only conceivable model for cooperation between Norwegian municipalities and municipalities elsewhere. Many countries lack proper training to prepare people for work in municipal administration. They often rely heavily on staff without academic education, many even lack of political training. Therefore, consideration should be given to support to higher education in local democracy and administration. This could be in connection with establishing a training centre, perhaps involving a Norwegian university college.

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Programme documents

Cooperación Internacional Municipal, MIC: Seminario, Panajachel,
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Mic Guatemala, Reporte de Conferencia, Panajachel 4–7.11.2014

MIC Guidlelines 2007

MIC Guidelines 2010

MIC Guidelines 2013

Various documents from each individual MIC partnership

Appendix 1

Terms-of-Reference



Mandat

Dokumentasjon av resultater og oppsummering av erfaringer fra gjennomføring av avtale QZA-10/0908 mellom Norad og KS om Internasjonalt kommune-til-kommune samarbeid

Bakgrunn

KS med finansiering fra Norad har i en årrekke lagt til rette for strukturerte samarbeid mellom norske og utenlandske kommuner om kommunale oppgaver. Hovedvekten i disse samarbeidene har vært lagt på nytte for utenlandsk samarbeidskommune. Det har likevel vært en underliggende antakelse om at samarbeidet har vært positivt også for norsk kommune. Ved starten i 1997 omfattet programmet bare kommuner i Afrika. Det ble fra 2007 utvidet til også å inkludere kommuner i Guatemala.

Retningslinjer fra 2010 slår fast at KS internasjonalt kommune-til-kommune samarbeid skal tilrettelegge for gjensidig kapasitetsbygging mellom norske og utenlandske kommuner i utvalgte land utenfor Europa om et avgrenset antall kommunale oppgaver felles for begge land. Tiltakene skal bidra til overføring av oppgaver, resurser og makt til lokale myndigheter.

Problemstilling

Norad besluttet i 2014 kun å gi videre støtte til KS program for internasjonalt kommune-til-kommune samarbeid for utfasing innen utgangen av 2014. I Norads beslutningsnotat rettes det sterk kritikk mot programmets resultatoppnåelse. Deltakende norske kommuner oppfatter denne kritikken som urimelig og til dels ubegrunnet eller feil. Det ble derfor besluttet etter forslag fra KS at deler av utfasingsstøtten skal brukes til å dokumentere resultater og erfaringer fra avtaleperioden 2011-2013 (QZA-10/0908) som har en økonomisk ramme på NOK 19,5 millioner. Funn vil inngå i sluttrapport fra KS til Norad for hele programmet og danne grunnlag for vurderinger om muligheten for å videreføre kommunenes internasjonale arbeid i en annen form og med andre midler.

Oppdrag

KS har bedt NIBR undersøke gjennom en dokumentanalyse hvordan lignende programmer finansiert av utvalgte givere (Belgia, Finland og Canada) utnytter «den kommunale merverdien» i styresettprogrammer rettet mot lavere forvaltningsnivå.

Resultater oppnådd siden 2011 (Norads kontrakt QZA-10/0908 med KS) i Norges internasjonale kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid skal dokumenteres. Det skal gis svar på hva som er endret i deltakende utenlandske kommuner på de feltene samarbeidet dreier seg om og hvordan slike samarbeider har bidratt til disse endringene.

Norad fikk gjennomført en organisasjonsgjennomgang av KS i 2009 i forkant av at ny samarbeidsavtale ble inngått (QZA-10/0908). KS utarbeidet på grunnlag av anbefalinger i rapport fra denne organisasjonsgjennomgangen nye retningslinjer for internasjonalt kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid. Hva er nytt i metodikken i retningslinjene fra 2010 sammenlignet med tidligere retningslinjer? Hva er erfaringene med omleggingen?

Kommunal merverdi omfatter både faglige og økonomiske elementer. Oppgaver kan ved tilførsel av «merverdi» løses enten billigere eller på en bedre måte. Dette skal problematiseres i en vurdering av hvordan «kommunal» merverdi utnyttes i disse samarbeidene og hva en en-til-en relasjonen mellom kommuner tilfører ut over det en norsk «kollektiv» tilnærming mot et knippe utenlandske lokale myndigheter ville bidratt med.

Har KS og de involverte norske kommunene tilstrekkelig kunnskap om kontekst, og hvordan tilegner de seg denne? Har landene virksomheten foregår i trekk – forvaltningsreformer, desentralisering eller annet – som gjør denne type bistand egnet? Hvordan er kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid koplet opp mot annen bistand rettet mot kommunesektoren i det enkelte landet?

Er overførbarheten av norske erfaringer blitt undersøkt, vurdert og analysert?

Hvordan forstår aktørene begrepet kapasitetsbygging? Ny kapasitet kan knyttes både til evne til å utforme eller gjennomføre forbedringsreformer og til bærekraften i resultater fra selve reformarbeidet. Hvilket element er her mest framtrædende?

Hvilken kompetanse – demokrati, tjenesteutvikling eller samfunnsutvikling – er overført? Hvem i den norske kommunen har bidratt til dette?

Hva er direkte mål i det enkelte kommune-til-kommunesamarbeidet? Dersom målene er nådd, hvordan har kapasitetsbygging gjennom internasjonale kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid bidratt til måloppnåelse? Det er tenkbart at resultater kan attribueres til andre faktorer og sannsynlighet for internasjonale relasjoner betydning for måloppnåelse må etableres.

Betingelser

Innenfor en økonomisk ramme på NOK 185.000 ønsker KS å motta en rapport som dokumenterer og drøfter oppnådde resultater i KS internasjonale kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid 2011-2013. Rapporten skal utarbeides på grunnlag av eksisterende dokumentasjon, strukturerte spørsmål til deltakende kommuner og medvirkning i et erfaringsoppsummeringsseminar for deltakende partnerskap Norge-Øst Afrika i Taveta (Kenya) 4. og 5. november 2014. Utgifter til reise og opphold i forbindelse med seminaret

dekkes av KS etter regning ut over denne kontrakten. Dokumentasjon fra et tilsvarende seminar samtidig i Guatemala skal inngå i vurderingsgrunnlaget. Rapporten skal skrives på engelsk og må foreligge i endelig form senest 1. februar 2015.

Dokumentanalyse

KS tilrettelegger for tilgang til alle relevante sakspapirer og gir kontaktinformasjon i kommuneorganisasjoner som gjennomfører tilsvarende programmer finansiert av andre givere.

Spørsmål til partene

Det skal utformes maksimalt tre forhåndsspørsmål til hver av partene som skal avdekke motivasjon for samarbeid, utbytte av samhandling og erfaringer med internasjonale kontakter. Disse skal inkludere problemstillingene under og sammen med innsendt rapportering fra partnerskapene gi grunnlag for analyse.

Norske kommuner:

- Hva er oppnådd siden 2011? Hva er konkret endret i samarbeidskommunen siden da på de feltene samarbeidet dreier seg om, og hvordan har internasjonalt kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid bidratt til disse endringene?
- Hvordan har det vært nyttig å ha med den kommunale kompetansen? Hvordan har den blitt utnyttet?
- Hva slags kompetanse er det konkret som er blitt overført – teknisk, styresett/demokratiske strukturer, økonomisk etc.? Hvem i den norske kommunen bidrar inn med denne kompetansen?
- Hvordan vet dere at det området dere jobber på er relevant i partnerkommunen? Hvordan vet dere at den kapasitetsbyggingen dere bidrar til, faktisk er hva partnerne trenger? Hvordan er det koblet opp mot reformprosesser i landet og annen kommunerettet bistand?
- Hva er lært om prosjektsamarbeid med samarbeidskommune siden 2011 som dere ville tatt med dere videre inn i en ny periode? Hva ville dere gjort annerledes?

- Hvor stor andel er gått til partnerkommune? Hva er gått med til reiser og seminarer? Hvor mye er brukt til investeringer eller materialer? Er diettgodtgjørelse en del av opplegget ved møter og seminarer i samarbeidskommunen?

Utenlandske kommuner:

- Hva er oppnådd siden 2011? Hva er konkret endret i kommunen siden da på de feltene samarbeidet dreier seg om, og hvordan har internasjonalt kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid bidratt til disse endringene?
- Hvorfor og hvordan har kompetansen til den norske partnerkommunen vært nyttig?
- Hva slags kompetanse er det konkret som er blitt overført – teknisk, styresett/demokratiske strukturer, økonomisk etc? Hvem i den norske kommunen bidrar inn med denne kompetansen?
- Hva er lært om prosjektsamarbeid med kommuner i nord siden 2011 som dere ville ha tatt med dere videre inn i en ny periode? Hva ville dere gjort annerledes dersom dere skulle fortsatt med internasjonalt kommune-til-kommunesamarbeid i framtiden?

Seminar for erfaringsoppsummering

Program og reiseopplegg for seminar i Taveta (Kenya) 4. og 5 november 2014, kommer.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Spørsmål til norske kommuner:

1. Hva var målsettinger og indikatorer for prosjektet siden 2011? Hva er oppnådd siden 2011? Hva er konkret endret i den afrikanske kommunen siden da på de feltene samarbeidet dreier seg om, og hvordan har MIC bidratt til disse endringene?
2. Hva slags kompetanse og læring er det konkret som er blitt overført til dere fra partnerkommunen? Hvem i den afrikanske kommunen har bidratt med denne kompetansen?
3. Kan dere skrive ned en eller to konkrete historier som viser resultatene dere har oppnådd og som dere er stolte av?

Preguntas para los municipios guatemaltecos

1. ¿Quales han sido las metas y indicadores de la cooperación desde 2011? ¿Quales han sido los resultados más importantes de la cooperación desde 2011? ¿Quales cambios han sido los más importantes en su municipio en los ámbitos centrales de cooperación con el municipio noruego? ¿De qué manera ha contribuido la cooperación a estos cambios?
2. ¿Qué tipo de competencias y capacidades han aprendido del municipio noruego? Ejemplos pueden ser en los ámbitos de la técnica, la gestión municipal, las prácticas democráticas, la

eficiencia económica, o de cualquier otro tipo. ¿Quién en el municipio de Noruega contribuyó con esto?

3. ¡Por favor!, escriba una o dos historias de cooperación concretas sobre la forma de trabajar juntos y como llegar a los resultados

Questions to MIC partners in Africa:

1. What have been the objectives and indicators since 2011? What has been achieved since 2011? Have concrete changes been made in your municipality since then as a result of MIC in the fields of activity focused upon in the partnership? In that case, what changes have been made and how did MIC contribute to this?

2. What kind of competence, skills and capacities have been transferred from your Norwegian partner municipality to your own municipality? For instance in the technical fields, governance, democratic practices, economic efficiency, or other. Who in the Norwegian municipality did contribute with this?

3. Would you please write down one or two concrete stories to show the results you have achieved and your are particularly happy about.