

THE INTRA-ACP PROGRAMME – ARIAL

(Supporting and strengthening ACP Local Government Associations)



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1. BACKGROUND

The development cooperation component of the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement is implemented at three levels: national, regional and intra-ACP. The European Development Fund (EDF) is the core instrument for geographic cooperation with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The ARIAL programme is part and parcel of the overall intra-ACP fund – 9th EDF totalling EUR 2 884 million. Activities funded under the intra-ACP allocation cover all ACP States.

The ACP-Local Government Platform (ACP-LG Platform) was formally established in May 2001 as an umbrella organisation by representatives of existing ACP-LG associations. In 2003 the Platform submitted a project proposal for ACP Local government institutional strengthening at national and regional levels. The Platform proposal was approved by the ACP Committee of Ambassadors in October 2003. In order to allow for a proper feasibility study of the project, the Platform submitted an updated and revised project in 2005.

Following the submission of a project proposal by the Platform in 2003, revised in 2005, and in the light of the revised Cotonou Agreement (especially Art. 4 & 33.4 thereof) the ACP and the EU have agreed to create a framework programme entitled ‘Supporting and Strengthening Local Government Associations’ (ARIAL). The revised project proposal was the subject of a feasibility study in 2006. This led to the signature of the Financing Agreement in November 2007.

ARIAL aims at supporting LG in ACP States in the decentralisation process by reinforcing their representative associations [Local Government (LG) associations]. LG associations will be targeted through ARIAL from the national level through the regional to the all-ACP/EU level. The programme is to facilitate participation of LG in the dialogue concerning development policies with civil society, private sector, central government, and donors.

The programme consists of support to 6 regional associations of LG (RALG) and national associations of LG (NALG) in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, which are to be identified, among existing associations, by the programme in consultation with stakeholders in the field – and support to the ACP-LG Platform.

2. THE PROGRAMME ORIENTATION

2.1. Objectives

The ARIAL programme aims at promoting the African, Caribbean and Pacific LG participation in ACP-EU cooperation and at reinforcing the political dialogue with national governments and development partners, in particular the EU. Therefore:

- Global objective: The global objective of the programme is to promote the political recognition, role and participation of LG as full-fledged development actors and partners.
- Specific objective: The specific objective of the programme is to promote and reinforce the capacities, resources and effectiveness of ACP-LG and of their representative institutional structures which support and represent them at all levels (from the national to the international level) so that they will be able to take part in the dialogue and in the implementation of development policies (notably with the EU) and to play their political part, as agreed in the revised Cotonou Agreement.

The relevance of the objectives and priorities of the programme is related to the fact that the catalytic role of LG in development processes is increasingly recognised, including by the revised Cotonou Agreement, and such recognition should be translated in effective LG participation in the political dialogue and in development processes, notably in ACP-EU cooperation processes.

However, the majority of LG and their associations at the different levels lack the necessary capacity and resources allowing them to fulfil their new role as development partners.

The perceived needs and constraints of LG have been identified by various studies, including the feasibility study of the present programme and the Platform survey on LG participation in ACP-EU cooperation. It appears from these studies that despite the recognition of LG as development partners, their participation in the political dialogue and development cooperation is still weak.

With a view to promoting the participation of LG in ACP-EU dialogue, the programme responds directly to the (ever changing) needs of LG and their representative structures.

2.2. Financial resources

The programme is to cover all ACP States. The financial allocation for the programme is set out below:

- For the national/regional/(sub-)continental level: EUR 5,164,000
- For the international/all ACP-EU level: EUR 781,000¹
- For the Steering Committee: EUR 245,000

Overall, one of the key strategic principals of the programme will be to provide support to ACP LG actors involved in this programme by putting at their disposal the technical and human resources required for them to appropriately support ACP LG on the ground.

The resources of the programme are supposed to be used to provide technical and human resources at the disposal of LG involved in the programme and in particular to cover the activities listed in point 3.1 below. In addition, in accordance with the Financing Agreement and the terms of reference it is envisaged that the programme will provide the resources to cover needs inside the ACP-LG associations including, among other things:

- Human resource needs in terms of: salaries of technical staff in ACP NALG as appropriate; salaries of 6 technical staff in the 6 ACP RALG that are to be strengthened by the programme; and punctual technical assistance.
- Equipment needs in terms of: IT equipment; database; and networking of NALG and RALG.
- Communication needs including: publications; websites; conferences and seminars.
- Training needs.

2.3. The Implementation arrangements

The programme has two components:

- The 1st component relates to the strengthening of LG associations at national, regional and (sub)/continental level. This is implemented further to an international call for proposals which selected the contractor in charge of the implementation.
- The 2nd component is implemented by the Platform due to its monopoly position in the relations between ACP-LG and the EC.

¹ The programme for the ACP-LG Platform is for 4 years, while the other component (national/regional/(sub)continental levels and the Steering Committee) is for 3 years.

2.3.1 The Consortium

The Consortium is in charge of implementing the national/regional/(sub)/continental level component of the programme. The programme has a duration of 3 years and will be completed in summer 2013. The Consortium is composed of VNG International, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), the Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa (MDP-ESA), le Partenariat pour le Développement Municipal (PDM), the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI) and the University of the West Indies (UWI). The leader of the Consortium is VNG International.

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2.3.2 The Platform

The Platform is in charge of implementing the all-ACP level component of the programme from its coordinating secretariat in Brussels.

2.4. Beneficiaries/Stakeholders/Target groups

The direct beneficiaries of the activities of the programme are:

- National associations of ACP-LG;
- Regional associations of ACP-LG;
- ACP-LG Platform (based in Brussels)

The core target group will be existing national associations of LG (NALG) and regional associations of LG (RALG) to be identified by the programme in consultation with stakeholders in the field. The selection process will ensure the effective representation of all ACP regions, and, where possible, all ACP countries. It is envisaged, according to the terms of reference, that the selection process will identify a well-balanced and effectively representative target group.

The programme will contribute to the needs of the target groups by undertaking various activities that will strengthen their capacity thus allowing them to participate in political dialogue and in development cooperation process mainly with the EC and play their political role. These activities include:

- Establishing/developing LG national/regional/international associations
- Setting up of national/regional resource/information centres (NRCs/RICs).

The indirect beneficiaries are local citizens and communities benefiting directly from the services provided by the LG.

3. PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

3.1. Activities and their effectiveness

According to the Financing Agreement and the terms of reference, the activities of the ARIAL programme consist of creating/consolidating/developing associations of LG at the different levels and providing them with resource/information centre in order to strengthen LG capacity and resource thus enabling them to effectively participate in political dialogue and in development cooperation mainly with the EU. These activities will help overcoming the low capacity/resource, lack of information and the newness of the association of LG impeding them to be an effective actor of development.

Activities such as building political and technical capacity through the provision of external training, and/or of exchanges with relevant LG actors, of joint conferences, or strategy building workshops could be envisaged.

The following activities are proposed at the various levels.

3.1.1 National level

In each ACP country, according to the terms of reference, the project will help creating national associations where they do not exist yet and where there is a need for strengthening existing national associations. National associations exist in most African countries and in half of the Caribbean countries, whereas in the Pacific only two countries (Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu) have national association and the Solomon Islands are in process having theirs. The establishment/development of LG national association is necessary to represent LG voice and defend their interests at national level against central government and other partners of development, notably the EU (EC Delegation and EU Member States). The capacity building/strengthening of LG national associations, through the NRCs, will ensure effective participation of LG as credible partner in the national political dialogue and in development cooperation, notably ACP-EU cooperation.

The following activities are envisaged:

- Support to the establishment/consolidation and development of LG national associations in all ACP states where there is identified need, in particular through:
 - Organisation of national meetings between LG;
 - Advice concerning national association establishment and organisation;
 - Agents and representation training;
 - Technical assistance, equipment, information and documentation.
- Strengthen LG' ownership of NALG through participatory processes
- Support in promoting LG participation in the national political dialogue and in the dialogue with development partners, in particular the EC, through:
 - Association promotion;
 - Strengthening human resource base;
 - Information and training for LG agents/councillors;
 - Lobbying;
 - Technical assistance.
- Support to the strengthening/reinforcement of the capacities and resources of ACP LG national associations to enable them provide valued services to their members through assistance for:

- Defining and implementing national association communication and policy strategies, with the participation and input of LG;
- Implementation and management of information and networking of LG;
- Support to the establishment/setting up and development of national resource centre in each national association. The assignment of this centre is:
 - To facilitate, coordinate and support dialogue between LG (and their associations) and partners at the national level in the context of the Cotonou Agreement;
 - To structure and disseminate information about cooperation policies and development projects between the stakeholders;
 - To support the setting up and management of an information and relations network;
 - To support the creation of an information/best practice network and linkages between the different associations and LG;
 - To support the dissemination and appropriation of information on the Cotonou Agreement and possibilities for LG to get involved;
 - To support the setting up of LG database useful for LG; procedures manuals; documents; and technical assistance.

These NRCs will monitor all local changes and evolutions in local government in their country, capture them and feed all these updates to their own website. They will also be responsible for disseminating this information to local and other interested stakeholders and feed this information into their respective RIC.

Through the NRC, LG will be kept abreast of any useful information on the Cotonou Agreement and opportunities for participation in the National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) and other relevant thematic programmes. It will also facilitate exchange of experience and know-how in local governance, decentralisation policies, LG participation in ACP-EU cooperation and promote LG cooperation by putting the NRCs of each region in network through the respective RIC. Data on LG will be available ensuring that knowledge and expertise on LG is capitalised and easily accessible.

3.1.2 Regional level

The establishment/development of LG regional association will ensure effective representation of LG at regional level and promote their role on development policies at that level. The reinforcement of capacity of LG regional association through the RICs will promote LG participation in regional dialogue and in ACP-EU cooperation at regional level. Many of the RICs' current and potential clients lack time, expertise or infrastructure to enable them to scrutinise the vast amounts of information relevant to their work now available on the Internet, and in physical centres, distant from their operations. A key part of the centres work will therefore be to sift and reduce material for client consumption, both as part of the collective service specification, and tailored to individual requirements. This will involve the centres in subscribing formally to certain information and data sources, summarising and extracting from them, and alerting clients and subscribers of the relevant items.

According to the Financial Agreement and the terms of reference, activities at regional level will include:

- Support to the establishment/development and/or consolidation/capacity reinforcement of 6 fully representative regional associations in Africa (4 – Western Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa), the Caribbean and the Pacific;
- Strengthen the NALG' ownership of RALG through participatory processes;

- Support to the establishment/setting-up and development and/or consolidation of 6 regional information and resource centres (RIC) in all the 6 regions of the ACP, that will undertake the following operations:
 - Diffusion of information on the Cotonou Agreement and the opportunities for participation of LG;
 - Creation of communication and policy strategies of RALG with the participation and input of NALG;
 - Implementation and management of information and networking of LG actors at national/regional level;
 - Production of newsletters (electronic and paper), website, realisation of guides and didactic materials, etc.;
 - Organisation of exchange of experience through meetings, study visits, conferences and awareness raising regional seminars;
 - Setting up of a database on local governance expertise.

Each RIC will develop links and working relationships with the other RICs and the ACP-LG Platform to ensure that information can be shared as widely as possible. In addition, the link between the RICs and the ACP-LG Platform at the apex level will allow LG to be in permanent contact with the Platform and get timely update information on opportunities for ACP-EU cooperation which allows them to react on time with their respective National/Regional Authorising Officers (NAO/RAO) and national/regional EC delegations.

3.1.3 (Sub-)Continental level

The establishment/development of LG associations at (sub-)continental level will ensure that LG voice and interests are defended at that level. The reinforcement of capacity of LG (sub-)continental associations will promote LG participation in ACP-EU cooperation and dialogue at (sub-)continental level.

In accordance with the terms of references, activities at (sub-)continental will include:

- Support the creation and/or the strengthening of capacities of the (sub-)continental level if relevant.
- Support the creation and management of an information network and the establishment of linkages between actors at ACP (sub-)continental level.

Through the (sub-)continental network and linkages LG will be able to exchange information and best practice in local governance and in participation in ACP-EU cooperation and dialogue at (sub)continental level.

3.1.4 International/all ACP-EU level

At international/all ACP-EU level the Platform is the LG representative. The programme at this level will consist of providing resources for activities aiming at enhanced and reinforced capacity for the Platform to perform/play its role of representation, coordination and service provider to ACP-LG associations. The activities will thus seek to increase the Platform's efficiency in playing its 3 key roles in terms of:

- Representation and advocacy in support of ACP-LG: ensuring effective representation of LG and their representative structures in all ACP-EU fora in order to facilitate their participation in ACP-EU cooperation and promoting decentralised cooperation.
- Information and networking services: conception and realisation of information and communication products for LG on the Cotonou Agreement and other relevant EU programmes.

- Technical support – Helpdesk to ACP-LG: setting up and reinforcement of a technical support network which will act as a “helpdesk” for LG in the context of their participation in ACP-EU cooperation.

These activities will ensure that ACP-LG views and concerns are effectively taken into account in ACP-EU cooperation. The Platform will be in constant liaison with LG in the field through its network with the RICs, which are in permanent contact with the NRCs of their respective region. Through this ACP-wide network, LG will be constantly kept informed of opportunities for participation and financial support offered to them in the context of ACP-EU cooperation. This network will also allow them to share experience, data and best practices on local governance and joint action among ACP actors. On its side, the Platform will be regularly kept abreast of concerns and needs expressed by LG in the field and will be able to use such information in its dealing with the Brussels-based ACP and ACP-EU institutions on behalf of LG.

3.2. Expected results

The strengthening of capacity of LG and their associations and the promotion of their participation in the dialogue on development policies will reinforce LG position and weight when dealing with the central state and other partners in development, notably the EU, at the different levels. The LG representation mechanism at the national, regional, (sub-)continental and all-ACP levels is supplemented and consolidated. It implies/means that LG are represented in each country/region/(sub-)continental and at the ACP level by effective, fully representative and well-resourced associations: capable of defending their interests; to promote their role; to reinforce their capacities; able to bring them the necessary information and tools to play their roles; and to take part in dialogue and implementation of development policies with development partners, in particular the EU at the national/regional/(sub-)continental and ACP-EU level.

According to the Financing Agreement and the terms of reference, the following results are expected from the programme:

3.2.1 National level

The representation of LG at national level is strengthened and consolidated. This means that LG are meaningfully represented at national level by an association capable of providing the necessary tools to enable LG to play their role in political dialogue with national institutions and development partners, particularly the EU. This implies:

- *LG national associations are established/strengthened and play their role:* LG are effectively represented at the national level by associations capable of providing the necessary tools to enable LG to play their role in political dialogue with national institutions and development partners, particularly the EU.
- *NRCs are created in each LG national association:* LG are aware of provisions of the NIPs and other relevant thematic programmes and are in a position to access to the programmes. LG are provided with tools to play their political role. LG are able to share and exchange information and best practices in local development, service delivery, decentralisation and in LG participation in ACP-EU cooperation and cooperate between each other nationally. Expertise on LG is capitalised and easily accessible.

3.2.2 Regional level

The representation of LG at regional level is strengthened and consolidated. This means that LG are meaningfully represented in every region of the ACP Group by associations capable of strengthening their capacities, defending their interests, promoting their role, and taking part in development and political dialogue. This implies:

- *LG regional associations are established/strengthened in the 6 ACP regions and play their role:* LG are effectively represented by associations capable of strengthening their capacities, defending their interests, promoting their role, and taking part in development and political dialogue. To this end up to 6 RALG are strengthened or helped to be created, where the need for a new creation can be clearly demonstrated and is based on the support of the NALG. RALG have the objective of helping to strengthen the capacities of LG and their national associations, putting at their disposal the information necessary to work effectively, and defending their interests.
- *RICs are setup in each regional association:* LG are timely informed on opportunities for participation in the Regional Indicative Programmes (RIPs) and other relevant thematic programmes and are able to effectively participate in the programmes. LG are put in network at regional level, exchange information, data and experience and cooperate between each other and are in a position to innovate in local governance and decentralisation policies.

3.2.3 (Sub-)Continental level

The representation of LG at (sub-)continental level is strengthened and consolidated. This implies that LG are meaningfully represented at these levels by associations capable of strengthening the capacities of LG, defending their interests, promoting their role, and taking part in the ACP-EU dialogue on development.

3.2.4 International/all ACP-EU level

The ACP-LG Platform is strengthened and provides technical and communication support to LG in order to enhance their involvement in political dialogue with European institutions. This implies that the Platform capacity is enhanced thus allowing it to play its role.

3.3. Sustainability

The programme will, from an early stage, deal with the issue of sustainability and how the institutional strengthening attained can be consolidated and be resourced. It is expected that by the end of the project, national/regional/(sub-)continental/international associations will have developed enough capacity allowing them to continue to play their role with less external support.

- *Financial:* The strengthening of national/regional/(sub-)continental/international association capacity and means will improve their capacity to mobilise resources and to contribute to the financial sustainability of the structure to which they belong, respecting the subsidiarity principles. Over a period of time, the products and services delivered by the national/regional/(sub-)continental/international associations will be good and useful enough to be systematically marketed. As the programme progresses, other revenue generating activities will be sought as well as innovative strategies for sustainability.
- *Institutional:* The institutional sustainability of LG national/regional/(sub-)continental/international associations will depend on the relevance of the products and services they deliver to respond to members needs. This will strengthen their legitimacy in the eyes of members. On project completion, members need and believe in their association and ensure genuine ownership.
- *Policy/political/legal:* This will depend on the fact that LG are constantly ‘on the map’ in ACP-EU cooperation processes and effectively participate in political dialogue and development cooperation at all levels (national, regional, (sub-)continental and international level). Finally the issue of sustainability also depends on central government (continued) engagement in decentralisation reform accompanied with appropriate devolution of power and resource to LG allowing the latter to play their role.

4. COORDINATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The main orientation of the programme, the strategic guidelines for establishing the annual work plan and the follow-up of activities will be ensured by a Steering Committee (SC). The SC will meet at least twice a year in Brussels. During their mission in Brussels for the SC meetings, LG representatives will also meet relevant representatives of the European institutions in Brussels (European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee, etc.). These meetings will be organised by the Platform².

Steering Committee

- Chairman: ACP Secretariat
- Members³:
 - Chairman of ACP Local Government Platform
 - Representative of the Western African regional association of local governments
 - Representative of the Central African regional association of local governments
 - Representative of the Eastern African regional association of local governments
 - Representative of the Southern African regional association of local governments
 - Representative of the Caribbean regional association of local governments
 - Representative of the Pacific regional association of local governments
- Observers: European Commission and the programme Contractor
- Secretariat: The ACP-LG Platform will ensure the SC secretariat.

² For the 1st SC meeting, no visit to European institutions will be organised as per agreement at a bilateral meeting with the Contracting Authority in July 2011.

³ As agreed at the tripartite meeting of 20/07/2011, where there is no regional association of LG in a given region, the best suited national association of LG will represent the region.

5. PROJECT TIMELINE

5.1. Steps undertaken under ARIAL

Dates	Steps undertaken
2003	Submission of our project proposal to the Sub-Committee on Political Affairs
23 October 2003	Endorsement by the Committee of Ambassadors of the ACP Group
2004	Submission to the European Commission
2005	Submission of the revised proposal
2005	Feasibility study
November 2007	Signature of the Financing Agreement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Platform component through direct contract – National/regional component through call for proposals
September 2008	Submission of the Platform component proposal
January 2009	Submission of the revised proposal
17 April 2009	Notification letter of award
24 July 2009	Entering into force of the amended Financing Agreement
11 August 2009	Signature by the EC of the contract
September 2009	Amendment of the contract by the ACP Secretariat
31 October 2009	Signature by the ACPLGP of the contract
01 November 2009	Start of ARIAL (Platform component)
16 December 2009	Launch of the call for proposal for the national/regional component
June-July 2010	Notification letter of award for the national/regional component
18 August 2010	Start of ARIAL (Consortium component)

5.2. Project implementation period

Components	Starting dates	End dates
Component at all-ACP level	01 November 2009	01 November 2013
Component at national/regional ACP level	18 August 2010	18 August 2013

