



Strengthening Local Governance

finding quality advisory approaches

Netherlands
Development
Organisation



Connecting People's Capacities



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SNV

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Countries in SNV East and Southern Africa



Abbreviations and acronyms

ACP	Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (countries included in the Lomé Convention)
BAP	Building Advisory Practice initiative
CBO	community-based organization
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DCDO	divisional community development organization
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DGIS	Ministry for Development of the Netherlands
DGOS	Belgian Technical Cooperation
DWD	Directorate of Water Development (Uganda)
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management (Maastricht, Netherlands)
EU	European Union
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
FINNIDA	Finnish International Development Agency
GIS	geographic information system
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH)
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK)
KWADA	Kajiado Women's Advocacy and Development Association
NGO	non-governmental organization
OSA	organizational self-assessment
PADEC	Projet d'Appui au Développement Communautaire
PLUP	participatory land-use planning
TANGO	Tanzania Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
TCCIA	Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
TSU	technical support unit
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VNG International	international cooperation agency of the Association of Dutch Municipalities

Preface

In SNV's drive to contribute to poverty reduction and to promote good governance, we work almost exclusively in an advisory capacity to meso-level organizations, as opposed to the past when we were actively involved in the design, implementation—including financial management—and monitoring of programme activities. This change to an advisory role has had considerable implications on the way issues are handled. In essence, *it is the quality of the advisory service itself*, rather than the specific knowledge to be transferred, that needs to be addressed to manage this change. There is a clear need to provide guidance and support to staff and partners to do this. At the same time there is need to learn from other organizations who may be going through a similar shift.

The East African SNV programmes have undertaken an initiative to build new models for advisory practice, what we call 'Building Advisory Practice' (BAP). The specific objectives of the initiative are:

- to identify the key characteristics of quality for advisory practice
- to harmonize and transform our approaches and methods to advisory practice by fostering innovation as well as by learning from approaches of external partners
- to align our views on future implementation of SNV's advisory practice
- to foster knowledge sharing with the wider public on SNV's current and future practice

Meeting these objectives means building new ways of learning and sharing within

SNV and with external partners and knowledge systems. This publication on local governance is our first major product in that endeavour.

The publication, as with the whole BAP process, has involved the energy, commitment and patience of literally hundreds of individuals, from partner organizations as well as SNV staff, many of whom are acknowledged in the annex. Here I would like to thank a few key individuals that have been at the core of the initiative.

Corina Dhaene and her associates at Ace Europe, a Belgian consultancy specializing in European affairs and international cooperation, undertook the main research and writing for this book. Helen van Houten as the editor provided invaluable support. The members of the BAP working group have provided guidance throughout. They are Alain Rousseau (SNV-Rwanda), Fantahun Wakie (SNV-Ethiopia), Maureen Roell (SNV-Tanzania), Joost Noordholland de Jong (SNV-Tanzania), Rem Neefjes (SNV-Kenya) and Regina Kamuhanda (SNV-Uganda). Rob Sinclair, the lead consultant, and Susan Onyango, communication officer for the entire BAP process, have worked closely with me and the working group and consultants. Last but not least, I thank the SNV Board of Directors for supporting the initiative.

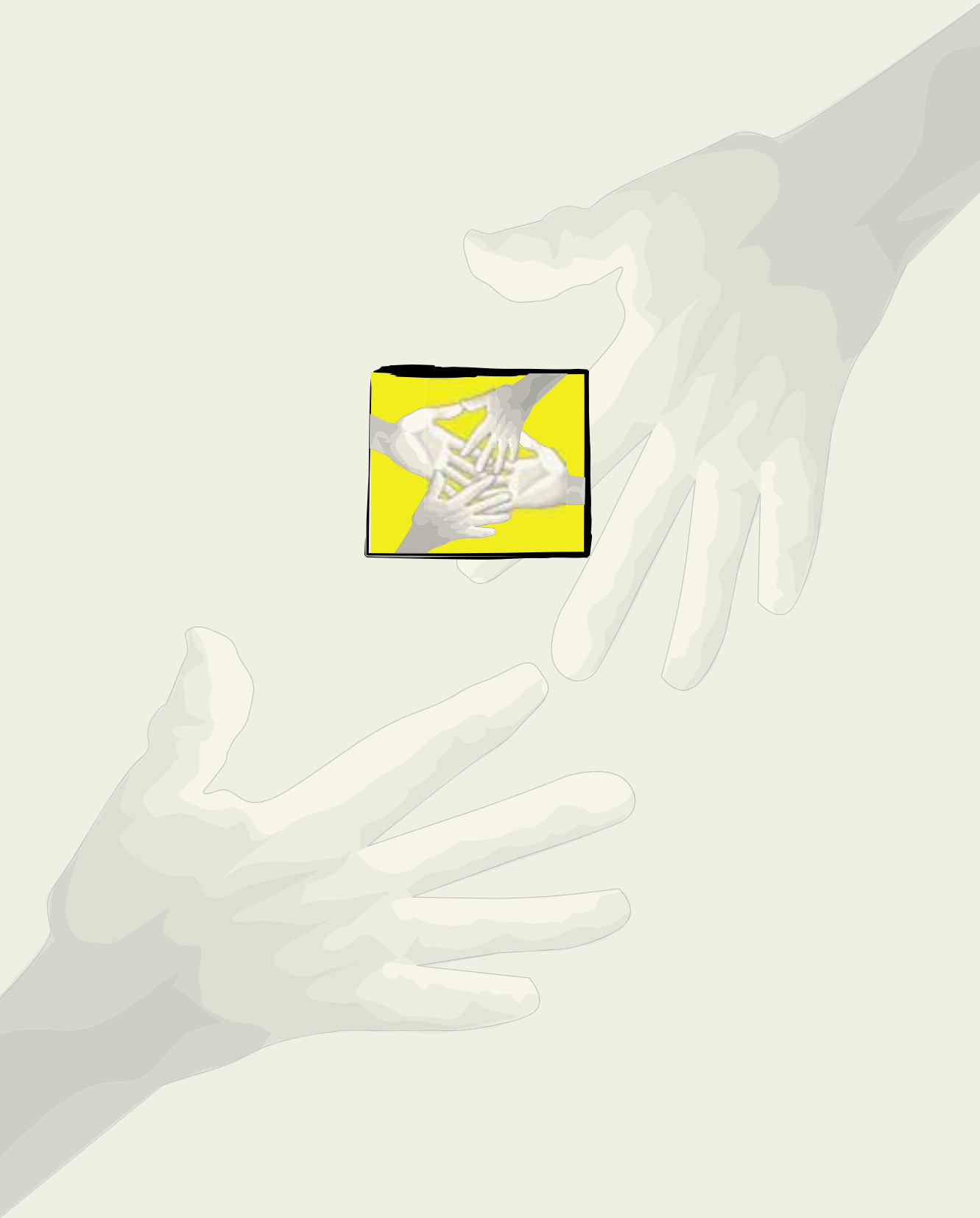
Jessie Bokhoven

on behalf of the management of
SVNV East and Southern Africa



Part 1

The SNV approach



Introduction

Local governance is about how people make decisions to determine how they live and work together in a community or a group of communities. It involves local stakeholders interacting to determine the local development agenda and to manage resources for implementing their development priorities. When positive gains are being seen in livelihoods and welfare, when development initiatives are addressing the most important needs of a whole community, and when local citizens feel in control of these processes, this is usually an indication that local governance is working well.

Most governments, development agencies and civil society organizations nowadays subscribe to the notion that development will work only when it is owned and driven by those whom it is meant to benefit. Effective local governance is clearly a critical part in this. SNV Netherlands Development Organization, which has been working in Africa for four decades, has been striving to find better ways to realize this principle. Its strategies include defining its role as an advisory service to local agencies, rather than as an implementer or financial supporter. It focuses on creating the capacity for development rather than developing capacity, which means strengthening the effectiveness of intermediary or meso-level institutions that take the role of building local skills and institutions.

There is a well-worn perception that 'advice is cheap', or easy. The hard work is finding the money, or the know-how, or the commitment to do the real job on the ground. But in a development tradition where local actors have learned to expect

external agencies to provide the funds, the expertise, and often the moral drive behind development projects, this approach is not at all an easy one. That is why SNV has embarked on an effort to find out how to make advisory service work in a way that truly empowers organizations to take control of their own development. This book looks at how advisory services can be effective in strengthening local governance processes. Companion books look at advisory services with respect to private sector development and organizational and institutional development.

SNV's overall objective

The overall objective of SNV interventions, regardless of subject, is to reduce poverty, defined as a multidimensional problem that encompasses economic, social, political and cultural aspects. Only recently, poverty started to be viewed more systematically from a governance perspective. This perspective links poverty to policy, addressing political factors such as access to power and resources, and pressing for accountable and transparent management of local affairs. It is clear that achieving sustainable development and reducing poverty largely depend on the extent to which local government administrators practise good governance and collaborate with other institutions, such as civil society organizations and the private sector. SNV also pays attention to the economic potentials of an area, which it addresses in the strategy for developing the private sector (booklet forthcoming).

The SNV ‘ways of working’, knowledge management, and the process of building an advisory practice

SNV has been operating in eastern Africa since the end of the 1960s, originally providing technical assistance in development projects. As mentioned, since 2000 SNV has changed its focus to providing advisory services that include supporting meso-level organizations to improve their capabilities and training local capacity builders—with the aim of improving governance and reducing poverty.

Meso-level organizations are intermediate government and non-government organizations, such as local governments, larger community-rooted NGOs and CBOs, umbrella NGOs and networks, decentralized central government departments, regionally organized private sector groups, and similar organizations. SNV focuses on these meso-level groups because they have the potential 1) to provide services and support to strengthen the capacity of communities to effectively pursue sustainable development, and 2) to link experiences and concerns at micro level with the macro level to ensure that central government policies address real needs.

SNV selected three fields in which to work: 1) local governance, 2) natural resource management and 3) private sector development. Its basic strategic framework, Capacity Development Services, consists of four ways of working:

- Diagnosis and learning, to better understand the causes of poverty and ways to deal with them by analysing them
- Organizational development, to support local clients in their strategic planning and strengthen the client organization to perform effectively in its role in development

- Partnership building, to increase the ability to interact with other organizations for mutual benefit
- Institutional change, to be able to influence policy and create an enabling environment for locally driven development

Overall, SNV is committed to such values as social justice and empowerment, gender equity and cultural diversity.

Introducing SNV’s new strategy and ways of working was part of an overall change process. SNV aimed at improving the effectiveness of its interventions in the field, with particular focus on managing knowledge and building an advisory practice as part of its Building Advisory Practice initiative (BAP). (See the SNV website for detailed information: www.snvworld.org/kenya).

Advising as a means of facilitating change

The character of decentralization of government under way in the countries of eastern Africa is complex and multidimensional. It includes reforms in public administration, issues of democratization and governance. The passage from a highly centralized state to a democratic, decentralized one requires fundamental changes in how both state and society are organized. The difficulties encountered in carrying out the reforms are many. Among the most serious are little knowledge and experience (how do you run a democratic, decentralized state?), unawareness of ways to transfer experience and knowledge to those who need it (policy- and decision-makers at all levels) and insufficient understanding of the dynamics of interaction among those who are trying to perform their roles.

Clearly needed are specialists who are able to advise the client organization, through its management institutions and their individual members, in innovative ways of making policy and implementing change while maintaining the focus on reducing poverty. Such advice can help determine which new approaches and solutions are the most effective. It can tap into experience gained by others involved in administrative change—thus avoiding mistakes.

‘Advice’ involves working closely with an organization and continuously providing suggestions, comments, proposals and support as needed to assist the client organization in achieving its objectives. Such assistance may include process guidance, specialist advice, training and coaching, networking and linking, facilitation of access to development information, advocacy and lobbying, and support in managing a programme and its finances. An important characteristic of advice well given is that it leaves the final leadership and control over the change process with the client.

The concept of local governance related to a development strategy

Local governance links the two processes of democratization and decentralization at the subnational (often district) level. It involves local stakeholders interacting to determine the local development agenda and to manage resources for implementing their development priorities. It involves local elected government. It involves deconcentrated government, which entails delegating some implementation responsibilities to local officers while keeping most of the decision-making at the national centre and as such is the local

implementer of national government or line ministries. It also involves NGOs, CBOs, the private sector and local institutions.

There can be various forms of interaction between key people, depending on factors such as the national and regional context and the capability of the people involved. Due to the colonial legacy, the role of local government was not always fully appreciated in the recent past, but a new perspective is gaining prominence, in which local government is increasingly being appreciated as the basic building block upon which the wider local governance agenda is built. Local government has the responsibility of initiating, coordinating and managing local development. It promotes cooperative approaches.

Non-state (non-governmental) institutions are responsible for expressing the voices of the constituencies they represent. They demand accountability from state agencies. They seek to participate in public policy and decision-making and contribute to it, they monitor public sector performance, they provide government with feedback, and they work with it to shape, finance and deliver public services in a variety of ways.

Local governance empowers a community to make decisions affecting its own well-being. It enables the community to plan, gain access to needed resources, and administer and manage those resources.

It is generally accepted that decentralization helps reduce poverty. Strengthened local government results in local plans, programmes and services that are likely to reflect local needs more accurately than do centralized systems of government. In theory, decentralization and the concept of local governance hold great potential for development. However, the link between local governance and

poverty reduction may be indirect; paying attention to local governance does not *automatically* improve the lives of the poorest citizens. Three results can reasonably be expected from an efficient system of local governance:

- basic services—efficiency, sustainability, outcomes oriented to reducing poverty
- natural resource management—improved management and productivity, reduced conflict, higher incomes in the community
- citizen empowerment—relevant information made available, citizens more involved and interact more with each other, perceptions of their own roles improved (Bonfiglioli 2003)

However, the way to success is paved with numerous obstacles. Before effective local governance can emerge, several major problems must be overcome.

First, local government must be given the means to perform in terms of an effective system of financing, human resource management, and planning and budgeting. This involves the vertical transfer of responsibilities and funds from central to local government.

Second, it is crucial that all involved, both state and non-state, establish and adhere to effective mechanisms for transparency and accountability.

Third, civil society should play a more active role concerning the government policies; society should back up its activities on dissemination of government information with mobilization and public advocacy work.

Fourth, mechanisms and structures for integrated and cooperative approaches to development at local level should be developed. This requires efficient and effective national governance to provide direction, shape practices, and regulate new mechanisms and relations between local agencies.

About this booklet

In 2000, SNV adopted a new development strategy that shifted its focus from implementing projects to providing advisory services. This booklet documents and analyses current SNV advisory practices in local governance in five countries of SNV East and South Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda. It is a concrete outcome of the BAP initiative to which SNV has committed itself during the last year, assisted by external consultants. The text explores the new focus that SNV East and Southern Africa now has in offering its clients advisory services, having shifted from working on specific projects. A number of past interventions, however, were advisory in nature, and some interesting cases are already emerging in different countries. This booklet is a way to share experiences with the countries in the SNV eastern Africa region and enable them to learn from each other. It identifies and describes essential characteristics, termed 'characteristics of quality', of successful advisory services. It also looks into the advisory experiences of a number of other international institutions and agencies. This external view allows SNV and its clients to reflect on what characteristics constitute quality, to design learning strategies that will improve performance, and to work with other organizations in setting benchmarks for advisory services for local governance. In this respect, the BAP initiative is an effort for both sharing and learning.

This booklet is the result of a collaborative effort that required considerable time and discussion with SNV advisers, their clients and beneficiaries, and external organizations and experts. SNV eastern Africa region collected extensive data through workshops, interviews and field visits. They analysed it to evaluate experiences and, together with clients

and beneficiaries, to identify the factors leading to success or failure. The efforts for continuous learning and improving do not end with this booklet, however; learning through applying and refining the characteristics of quality should be continuous. Equally, SNV will continue to work with partners in setting benchmarks for advisory services.

The whole process demonstrates SNV's commitment to a continuous learning-by-doing-approach, which has been at the heart of SNV interventions in Africa from its beginning in the 1970s. This booklet offers a thought-provoking insight into the stimulating environment of an organization in transition.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 details SNV's approach to advisory services as applied to local governance clients. The first chapter, 'Local governance and SNV advisory practice', outlines national local government programmes

in the five countries and explains SNV's ways of working and its present approach to local governance in eastern Africa. It explains SNV's shift from being a donor agency to an advisory agency. The second chapter, 'Fostering change', identifies 11 'characteristics of quality' as SNV names them and gives details of each—and what applying these characteristics entails in an advisory service. The chapter 'Analysing the results of SNV's approach' gives output and outcome indicators, useful for measuring the effectiveness of an advisory service. The chapter 'Strengthening practices through sharing models and experience' brings in relevant examples from the experiences of other NGOs. 'Moving ahead', the last chapter in part 1, is a wrap-up that gives lessons learned and points out the way forward. Part 2 is a selection of case studies, presented to show how various characteristics of quality are applied in actual cases.

Local governance and SNV advisory practice

Where and how can we position the SNV advisory practice in the overall pattern of development policies directed at strengthening local governance? Here we identify the main trends that seem to appear in the current approaches of donor agencies towards democracy, decentralization and good governance. Further, we highlight national policies in five countries of SNV East and Southern Africa before elaborating on the SNV approach.

Local governance support approaches

The concept of democratic local governance is becoming an integral part of local development approaches and has provided a basic rationale for donor support to decentralization reforms and building the capability of local governments. Democratic local governance is increasingly seen as a precondition for poverty-reduction strategies, although its links to reducing poverty are not always explicit. It is clear, however, that for donors the area of governance, especially *local* governance, is still new and that ways of addressing it are still being developed. In their programmes for democracy and decentralization, donors still tend to divide funding into that for state and that for non-state agencies. They focus primarily on democratization (mainly political rights) on the one hand and on the participation of civil society (primarily as a tool in planning for the community) on the other. Only a small percentage of the funding is channelled to local elected governments.

Most donors set aside a so-called democracy fund to assist projects and programmes directed at democracy, good governance and human rights. Although donor support in these areas has remained only a small part of overall donor assistance, that support has been the source of funding for activities in the following areas:

- Developing a general policy framework for democratization and good governance.
- Supporting the electoral process through funding for civic education, electoral materials, political dialogue.
- Supporting civil society, mainly organizations dealing with political empowerment, through advocating political and legal rights and through promoting participation of marginalized groups and the poor in decision making.

Civil society organizations have thus been competing with government institutions at different levels for the same limited funds. Rather than stimulating cooperation and intersectoral work, this has resulted in the donors compartmentalizing their support, so that their funding has generally promoted solutions that separate state and non-state agendas. Recent research, however, indicates that the solution lies in cooperative interface of civil society and government. Consequently, funds should be used to develop ways in which state and non-state agencies can interact.

Local government can be envisaged as a laboratory, where one can experiment relatively easily because of its small scale and its closeness to its community. But donors view local government as the

final link in the chain of decentralized administration. At present, local governments are indeed weak institutions that need strengthening through capacity-building programmes and project support. Specific attention to local governance, if it exists at all, is restricted to urban areas and issues such as infrastructure, housing, local taxes and other typical urban problems.

However, new trends in donor policies indicate that attitudes might be changing, albeit slowly. Many donors have, at least in theory, realized the importance of local governance, reflecting as it does the necessity to incorporate political concerns into local development. The shift in thinking from government to governance has resulted in a broader vision as to the essence of policy-making, which is seen as an often disjointed, not fully coherent, partly politicized and multilayered process, with its technocratic aspects representing only a small part. This broader vision should produce more effective development strategies.

The concept of local governance is increasingly put forward to better understand local dynamics and opportunities, because the theoretical framework of decentralization was too limited. Donors are now prepared to look beyond the narrow perspective of legal frameworks and the institution of local government. They see the need to include the variety of formal and informal relationships among the different entities that shape and influence these local political and administrative systems.

It is evident that a better understanding of local governance is growing. Donors acknowledge that local development requires specific institutional and organizational arrangements. This recognition has resulted in focus on a broader range of issues like accountable local leadership, decentralized but

integrated collaborative structures for development, fiscal decentralization and financial management—and a focus on the way these issues are interlinked.

Donors active in the field of local governance in the region

A number of multilateral or bilateral funding programmes are operating in the field of local governance (excluding urban programmes, which are not specifically addressed by SNV). Not all donors have specific experience or expertise in local governance. Most of these programmes provide technical assistance and capacity building, mainly for specific projects. Providing advisory services, the course SNV is taking, is not represented as such in these programmes, although the programmes might create some opportunities for financial support for such services in the future (see list of websites on page 87).

Bilateral donors:

- **CIDA:** The programme supports African networks and institutions working on local governance; national policy development on local governance and decentralization; local municipal capacity to facilitate service delivery in such areas as water, sanitation and health; and public participation and access to government for the poor, the marginalized and women. The intended results are increased effectiveness of decentralization policies; enhanced delivery of municipal services; development of strong management skills; and contribution to research and best practices on African decentralization.
- **GTZ:** The German bilateral development assistance runs a programme on decentralization and

local governance in which promoting local self-government is seen as a crucial factor in political reform. The programme concentrates on citizen participation, service delivery and municipal financial management within the decentralization process of the country concerned.

- **FINNIDA:** Finnish development assistance works with three goals that aim at sustainability, the third being democracy and human rights, a new area of intervention for it. In Tanzania FINNIDA runs a programme for democracy assistance containing a local government reform programme and the Embassy Fund for Local Cooperation.
- **DANIDA:** The Danish Development Agency focuses on good governance and democracy. The priorities in Tanzania are legal assistance, rural participation in the context of local government reform, and integration of district programmes and resources that include budget, auditing, accountability and transparency. The programme in Uganda supports decentralization reform, strengthens local administration and political structures through training, and integrates resources in district budgets.
- **DFID (United Kingdom):** According to DFID's development strategy, several DFID programmes involve partnerships between local government, NGOs and communities. The idea is to promote partnerships, mainly in urban development programmes. Specific attention is paid to public expenditure, for example working with local governments and advising on local public expenditure in Kenya, including financial accountability.
- **USAID:** The agency is active in all five countries of the SNV eastern Africa region. Among its eight fields of activity

are democracy and governance, and several cross-cutting issues such as urban governance. A handbook on decentralization and democratic local governance (2000) provides the general framework for local interventions.

- **DGIS:** The Ministry for Development of the Netherlands highlights an important change in development assistance—the move from sending out development workers to providing management advisers and financial experts. It is seeking international consensus on the criteria for effective advisory practice. A separate department for Good Governance and Policy supports the strengthening of local government capacity as an important contribution to more effective government at central level. For Kenya the Netherlands government has focused on good governance and participation of women, but this programme is being phased out. The programme in Rwanda is still being developed, and in Ethiopia DGIS has no specific local governance emphasis related to SNV's approach. Local government development programmes have been worked out the most in Tanzania and Uganda.
- **DGOS/Belgian Technical Cooperation:** The focus is on strengthening capacity of local authorities within the framework of decentralization policies. The priorities in Rwanda, which is the main focus in eastern Africa, entail civil society, democracy and good governance. One pillar is strengthening the institutional framework for strategic planning to improve the quality of regional development plans.
A growing number of bilateral donors have developed programmes to support one-to-one city links between Northern municipalities and municipalities in the South. Most of these programmes focus on

strengthening the municipalities' capacity to apply good governance principles and, to a lesser extent, the capacity of local entities to manage local governance processes effectively. The countries concerned are Belgium (and the regions of Flanders and Wallonia), Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Multilateral donors:

- **World Bank:** The bank gives its attention to participation, urban development and governance, and public sector reform. In particular it runs a programme for municipal reform under the heading of subnational government administration, with projects in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.
- **European Union:** The larger proportion of EU funding passes through national negotiated programmes within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) countries. This agreement strongly emphasized involving local actors. The idea was to create opportunities to extend cooperation in democratic decentralization and local governance, including by involving local government in dialogue on cooperation strategies. The EU plans to highlight the progress related to involving local government in the upcoming mid-term review of the Cotonou Agreement. The EU has a fund for decentralized cooperation (direct funding of cooperation between local agencies), but its small size and the large number of applicants each year show that the likelihood of funding is low.
- **United Nations Development Programme:** UNDP essentially focuses on supporting national processes of democratic transition. It contains a number of specific campaigns,

programmes and funding channels. One of these channels concerns thematic trust funds, which essentially use UNDP country offices. In particular these funds deal directly with decentralization and local governance. Another UNDP option is the United Nations Capital Development Fund, which recently established a local governance unit. This unit runs local development programmes, develops methods concerning participation, focuses on developing capacity for institutionalizing local planning and financial management systems and maintenance of small-scale infrastructure, provides seed capital for implementing local development plans (including constructing small-scale public infrastructure), and is active in research and in disseminating information on local governance policy. The unit has prepared a set of guidelines and lessons for putting good local governance into operation, based on experience with its local development programmes.

- **United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat):** This programme recently developed a Training and Capacity Building Branch, which is directed to strengthening national competency to respond to training and other capacity-building needs. In 2002 this branch developed a four-year programme, 'Strengthening National Training Capabilities for Better Local Governance'. The main partners to benefit from the programme are local governments and their associations, central and regional government agencies, local development NGOs and community-based organizations. Many training manuals and aids have already been developed.

National local government programmes

Many African countries have adopted local government programmes as part of or alongside their wider decentralization agenda. These centralized programmes generally include capacity development components

aimed at improving the administrative ability of local authorities. They are normally designed to enable local authorities to assume their new roles and responsibilities as defined by decentralization legislation, thus executing plans designed at central level. The concept of local governance does not appear very clear in these programmes—if it appears at all (box 1).

Box 1. Local governments in eastern Africa

To understand the examples and the cases described further, it is helpful to have an understanding about the local government framework in the countries of the SNV eastern Africa region.

Ethiopia

- *Decentralization type:* A combination of devolution and deconcentration. Devolution is more pronounced at regional level.
- *Legislative framework:* Ethiopia adopted a federation form in 1992 in what was referred to as the ‘national cultural linguistic arrangements’. In 1995, a federal constitution was adopted that created nine ethnically based regional states plus two self-governing administrations: Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The Federal Republic of Ethiopia has a parliamentary form of government. The house of people’s representatives is the highest authority of government while the state council is the highest organ of the state authority.
- *Local government programme:* District-level decentralization programme
- *Tiers of local government and numbers:* The new Ethiopian local government structure has four tiers: 9 regional states, 140 zones, 605 woredas, and 50,000 kebeles. In general, kebeles are the lowest administrative unit, although recently sub-kebeles have been formed in some areas. The structures available at each tier are a council; an executive committee; judicial organs; office of the attorney, security and police force; office of economic and social development; and sector offices.
- *Elected government:* Federal, regional, zonal, woreda and kebele councils. Municipalities are also elected governments.
- *Powers of local government:* To implement laws, regulations, policies and directives; to prepare and decide on social services and economic development; to plan within their jurisdictions; to decide their own internal affairs, and to develop their localities.

Kenya

- *Decentralization type*: Combination of deconcentration and devolution to district levels. The two lines—central government departments and local authorities—operate simultaneously. Local authorities, normally headed by the clerk together with an elected chairman, do not have any influence on the departments, which are coordinated through the district commissioner, who is also in charge of the chiefs and subchiefs. Increasingly decisions on plans are decentralized: district roads funds, constituency aids committees, poverty reduction funds, arid lands programme and constituency development funds. For most decision-making separate parallel structures are established.
- *Legislative framework*: District Focus for Rural Development (1983 and revised in 1995) guides planning and implementation, mainly of central government departments. Local authorities were guided by regulation from 1963, which became law: the Local Government Act Cap 265 in 1977. Efforts to prepare a better updated legal framework are sidelined by the ongoing constitutional review, which is more encompassing.
- *Local government programme*: Local Government Reform Programme, Local Authorities Service Delivery Action Plan and Local Authorities Transfer Fund
- *Tiers of local government and numbers*: 8 provinces; 175 local authorities (67 county councils at district level; 108 municipal, town and city councils), below the district is the divisional level, then locational and sublocational levels.
- *Elected government*: Local authorities, councillors are elected.
- *Powers of local government*: Proposals on the devolution of powers in the constitutional review give much power to local authorities, but this is presently the most contentious part of the draft constitution. Presently the local authorities are on the leash of the Minister of Local Government, as the minister employs the senior staff of the local authorities and has the right to hire and fire, and even to dissolve local authorities.

Rwanda

- *Decentralization type*: The first decentralized layer is the district (*afreze*), under which sectors (*umurenge*), now starting to be more operational, are the first public service providers. They are organized in administrative units or cells. Some 6 to 10 districts form a province (*intara*) with a deconcentrated administration headed by an appointed 'prefet'. Unlike the other countries in the region, Rwanda has only one administrative line, the chief of civil servants, who is the executive secretary, recruited by the District Executive Committee with five elected members and coordinated by a mayor.

- *Legislative framework:* Decentralization policy, May 2000; Decentralization Implementation Programme, 2000–2003, Community Development Fund (CDF), 2002.
- *Local government programme:* The national government has included its support to local governments through its decentralization programme. The Royal Netherlands Embassy, UNDP and SALA-IDA (development agency of the Swedish Association of Communities) are the main donors. RALGA is the Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities, supported by SALA-IDA.
- *Tiers of local government:* 12 provinces, 106 districts, 1545 sectors and 10,072 cells.
- *Elected government:* Districts with their lower-layer sectors and cells.
- *Powers of local government:* Provision has been made for large autonomy of the districts . . . 'duties and responsibilities that are assigned to by law and regulation, notably with regard to policy, administration, the economy, the welfare of the population and culture' (article 9 of the presidential decree creating the new administrative entities).

Tanzania

- *Decentralization type:* In theory and current intent the system of local government aspires to be a devolved one with powers resting at two levels: the district or municipal and the village devolved local government. In practice because of central control of taxes and of finances generally and because of public service employment legislation the local government authorities are incapacitated and the system remains with little autonomy. There is a deconcentrated system of central government based at the regional level.
- *Legislative framework:* Principal legislation is the Local Government District Authorities Act No.7 of 1982, the Urban Authorities Act No. 8 of 1982, and the Local Government Finances Act of 1982. The revised and amended editions of these acts are published in Local Government Laws Principal Legislation (rev. ed.) 2000.
- *Local government programme:* The Local Government Reform Programme commenced in 2000 and continues to date. It sets out to strengthen the autonomy and increase the devolved power of local government authorities through changes in legislation, financing, governance practices, and human resource capacity.
- *Tiers of local government:* Two tiers: rural district and urban authorities at the top level, currently 114; village government at the lower level—15,000 villages.
- *Elected government:* Parliament, urban and rural district, village.
- *Powers of local government:* It can levy a limited number of taxes, make bylaws, maintain peace and order, make development plans for its area of Jurisdiction. Most of its powers derive from its duties and responsibilities under the local

government acts and are derived powers rather than powers that stem from its own capacity to make laws.

Uganda

- *Decentralization type*: Mixture between devolution and deconcentration
- *Legislative framework*: Local Government Act 1997, Local Governments Financial and Accounting Regulations (1998).
- *Local government programme*: Local Government Development Programme (2001).
- *Five tiers of subnational government*: village or local council (LC) 1; LC2, parish or ward; LC3, subcounty, town, municipal or city division; LC4, county and municipality; LC5, districts and Kampala city.
LC1, 3, 4, 5 are elected by adult suffrage (all persons above 18 are eligible to vote); LC 2 by an electoral college of LC1; LC3 and LC5 are corporate bodies.
- *Powers of local government*: The Local Government Act gives a far-reaching decentralization of powers to district level. A women's council of five is elected at every tier by women only. They are supported directly by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development.

Ethiopia

The 1995 constitution of Ethiopia instituted radical reforms in governance structures, including devolution of significant resources and responsibilities from central agencies to the nine regional administrations. An explicit goal of the new constitution is to bring government closer to the people through a process of decentralization intended to increase public participation and responsiveness to local needs. A corollary goal is to ensure that Ethiopia's hundreds of identified ethnic groups are formally represented in the country's political and resource allocation processes. Each region has been empowered to establish systems of deconcentrated subregional structures, including zones, *woredas* (districts) and *kebeles* (clusters of villages covering an area of approximately 800 ha). Given

the high degree of centralization under the previous regime, the regional reform processes have understandably taken time and effort, especially in light of inexperience in regional administration. By 2000, it became increasingly clear to a number of regional administrations that to attain the objectives of the decentralization policy it would not be adequate merely to establish deconcentrated regional structures. Therefore, realizing decentralization needs to be taken a step further, several regions have now turned their attention to reviving municipal administrations.

The emerging role of municipalities in Ethiopia's comprehensive development framework is potentially enormous. Central government's strategy is focused on the Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI) initiative. Briefly, this initiative seeks to improve the

productivity of rural areas through key investments in critical infrastructure links. International experience has shown that initiatives such as ADLI will have a greater degree of impact if rural investments are linked to cities and towns that provide market access, services and private investment opportunities. The central government's growing commitment to strengthening municipalities is evident from the following developments.

- In its second five-year plan, the current government has emphasized the importance of urban development and recognized the critical role that municipalities can play in this process.
- The Federal Ministry of Works and Urban Development has prepared draft legislation for strengthening the status of municipalities.
- The regions have been moving ahead with the task of legally recognizing municipalities as autonomous authorities.
- Several regions have initiated preparatory studies as a first step towards drafting state legislation that will redefine municipal roles and status.

Kenya

Through the so-called district Focus for Rural Development, Kenya is supposed to be fully decentralized. However, the role of the provincial administration and the power of the presidency continue to dominate management and decision-making of district development through elected district councils. Although a new government put an end to the rule of the former dominant political party, KANU (Kenya African National Union), this situation has not yet changed. At the moment, citizens, the state, the private sector, political parties and civil society have been involved, for the first time in the history of independent

Kenya in writing a new constitution. The National Constitutional Conference is the most important political development in Kenya since independence. At this time, there is considerable turmoil surrounding the constitution drafted. But the high level of public awareness and concern about the outcome is a pointer to the fast-changing governance landscape in Kenya. It is interesting to note that the original draft constitution that went to the conference had a strong and progressive focus on local governance.

Rwanda

The present decentralization policy was adopted by the government of Rwanda in 2000, with the overall aim of empowering the Rwandan population and of fighting poverty more effectively. A decentralization implementation programme was launched, and the first phase of it ended in 2003. During this first phase many achievements were made, for example increasing democratization and people's empowerment. Local elections have been held and local leaders and the people themselves realize that power belongs to the people. Another remarkable achievement has been the passing of legislation concerning the policy framework that encourages local administration and governance, supported by institutional development. A framework for bottom-up planning has been promoted in which communities decide what their development needs and priorities are, and participate actively in designing and implementing programmes to meet them.

Tanzania

A decentralized Local Government Reform Programme was set up in 2000, which consisted mainly of running training

programmes for different cadres. A more coherent development plan to accompany the decentralization process is emerging; for example zonal reform teams provide extensive training to district councillors and council staff on how to implement decentralization reforms. The objective of the programme is to improve the quality of local government authorities and the public services that they provide. The main policy issues in this regard are 1) political, financial and administrative decentralization and 2) changes in relations between central and local authorities. There is a basic framework to shape local governance processes, and good governance has been given special attention in the reforms. Implementing these reforms entails cooperation among various stakeholders. Guidelines can be found in the national Framework on Good Governance (1999). A specific NGO Act (2002) provides the regulatory framework within which NGOs may operate. Specific provisions include promoting transparency and accountability and strengthening the relations between government and civil society.

Uganda

Decentralization is central to Uganda's mode of governance, as spelled out in the 1995 constitution and the Local Governments Act (1997). Supporting the decentralization process were funds such as the Poverty Action Fund (1998) and funds connected to Uganda's Local Government Development Programme (2001) (LGDP). The Poverty Action Fund was used to accelerate decentralization, and hence most of the funds were channelled directly to the districts as conditional grants. A major aim was to improve efficiency and effectiveness of government programmes, maximizing services to the citizen.

The Local Government Development Programme provides assistance aimed at strengthening institutional capacities related to overall management and administration, procurement, financial management, planning, human resource management, management of information systems, and so on. Activities are backed by the Local Government Act, the Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulation (1998) and the Local Government Tender Board Rules and Regulations (2000). Another objective is to develop a participatory, demand-driven process for planning and implementing delivery of services by local governments. The programme was carried out in 31 districts and 13 municipalities in 2001–2002. Local governments were to fulfil certain obligations indicating improved performance at established points along the way. They were to have functional capacity in development planning, procurement management, financial planning and internal audit; to have drawn up a three-year plan for capacity building, a local revenue enhancement plan; and to have shown how they would implement the Local Government Act and its finance and accounting regulations.

Experience from the initial programme suggests, however, that districts were not necessarily able to define their own needs and that they therefore ended up proposing training courses that met the minimum requirements set by the programme for securing additional resources.

The LGDP provides resources through two conditional grants: the Local Development Grant and the Capacity-Building Grant (CBG). Presently the LGDP grant is but a small part of the total local government grants, and the CBG is only a small part of the total annual LGDP grant.

Current research on local governance

Current research on local governance in African countries is limited, yet appears promising. At least six institutions focus on a number of issues directly connected to the concept of local governance in the wider context of development:

- Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University, USA, involved in a number of studies relating to decentralization reforms, for example, 'Developing a system of intergovernmental grants in Tanzania'
- European Centre for Development Policy Management in Maastricht, Netherlands (ECDPM), has a long tradition of work on local governance that covers aspects of decentralization that includes central-local finance arrangements, institutional strengthening, local politics and accountability, and service delivery. Its geographic scope is wide and has included countries in Africa
- University of Sussex, UK, and its Institute of Development Studies (IDS): for example, a research project on civil society and governance with 22 country studies including Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda
- University of Gent, Faculty of Law (niet-Westerns recht): research project on local and intermediate government in several countries including Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda
- Van Vollenhoven Institute, with a strong focus on law and development
- University of Manchester, Institute for Development Policy and Management with advisory expertise in a broad range of development topics that include social development, environmental management, and human resource

management, for example, review of the Netherlands bilateral aid to Tanzania's district rural development programme

The recent research by these institutes proved to be of great help in analysing the concept of local governance, in particular in understanding local dynamics and the effect that local–central relations have on local development.

Of special interest is the initiative of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in which IDS is involved. It contributes to the exchange of information on issues of governance. The Governance Resource Centre Exchange is managed by IDS and the International Development Department (IDD) of the School of Public Policy at the University of Birmingham. An advisory group drawn from experts at DFID, IDS and IDD underpins the quality of information produced, ensuring that the content reflects the latest academic and practitioner thinking.

The SNV approach to local governance in eastern Africa: current objectives and strategies

SNV's present ways of working are explained in the introduction. However, the SNV focus on governance is not yet fully adapted to the local context in the different countries of eastern Africa. Respective country programmes need to be adapted to local situations, institutional frameworks and existing governance environments. As this is still a work in progress, it is too early to elaborate on the differences among the five countries or on the concrete focus. But we can highlight the common key problems

related to local governance, the principal common objectives for eastern Africa, and their relation to the four ways of working and the values of social justice and empowerment, gender equity and cultural diversity.

These common problems have led SNV to formulate specific objectives (box 2). Each country in the SNV eastern Africa region has drawn up a paper on local governance. These papers identify a number of problems that any effective strategy must address to promote sustainable local development and thereby reduce poverty:

- Mistrust between local organizations and individuals in the community
- Inability of weaker segments of the population to participate in government and relate to its institutions and larger civil society organizations
- Ineffectual decentralization of fiscal and administrative agencies
- Weak human, material and financial capacity of local governments
- Weakness of local democratic structures and inadequate accountability mechanisms
- Domination of local party politics by elite groups, which may be steered from the centre, who try to hijack new local powers coming through decentralization

Clearly, there are connections with other fields SNV has identified, such as private sector development and natural resource management. SNV's involvement in local governance is primarily aimed at helping the community to gain access to local resources and distribute them more evenly. The main purpose for developing the private sector is to create employment and thereby generate income. The sectors of local governance and private sector development are linked through the intersection between these

sectors in two areas: 1) private sector advocacy, to voice the needs of the private sector to local government and to facilitate access of private sector workers to public services; and 2) local economic development strategies aimed at increasing competitiveness in a broader arena.

In decentralization, managing natural resources increasingly becomes the task of local governments. Environmental aspects have to be integrated in all local decision-making to ensure environmental sustainability. Where natural resource management and local governance intersect they need to create favourable conditions in which all local entities and even the poorest people become involved in effectively managing the resources available.

Although countries are still identifying their specific strategies, salient points are emerging from the strategic framework related to the four ways of working and the set of values:

- SNV pursues its own change agenda as much as possible through its client relations.
- SNV staff members are expected to act primarily as advisers but may also perform more specific roles, such as facilitators or technical experts if required.
- The SNV advisers are supposed to work in an advisory team, composed according to the needs of the client.
- SNV opts for longer-term contracts (but not long-term postings of individual advisers) that allow a closer client–adviser relationship to develop. Longer-term contracts offer the opportunity to modify the advisory process according to policy cycles that might occur in local government after elections. The long-term objective to pursue must be clear.
- SNV is mainly interested in an advisory process that promotes an integrated approach. Expert ad hoc interventions

Box 2. Objectives in the field of local governance

SNV's ways of
working & values

Objectives

Overall objective: Foster inclusive decision-making that contributes to equitable distribution of resources locally

Cross-cutting objectives

Values: social
justice and
empowerment,
gender equity and
cultural diversity

- Promote gender mainstreaming in decentralization policies, local governance and service delivery mechanisms
- Identify and redress exclusion mechanisms (based on cultural background, sex, race, religion, region ...)
- Empower the poorest segments of communities
- Integrate environmental considerations

Specific objectives

Diagnosis and
learning

- Ensure that local stakeholders are sensitized about local sustainable development in a decentralized context with all entities concerned, including communities and citizens, focusing on dialogue
- Facilitate independent and reliable sources of information about local governance that are accessible to the people

Organizational
development

- Promote good governance in local governments by focusing on financial management, mechanisms of accountability and leadership, public administration reforms, service delivery, citizen participation in decision-making
- Support strong, representative and accountable civil society organizations with a focus on leadership, accountability, advocacy for more transparency and rule of law concerning citizens civic rights

Partnership
building

- Support democratization, focusing on local participatory planning and consultation mechanisms, rather than concentrating only on civic education
- Promote efficient service delivery and sustainable local development by focusing on decentralized and integrated organizational structures and on joint management of resources
- Support the exchange of information and experience

Institutional
development

- Give a voice to the local perspective on sustainable development to central government
- Contribute to a more conducive environment for local governance

remain an option if they fit into the overall framework of the process. Providing advice envisaged as instigating change sets the tone for the framework of SNV interventions, in which expert interventions and individual coaching might have their place.

- SNV is mainly interested in an advisory process that encompasses the whole organization and the client network. Rather than training individuals, SNV focuses on training teams, emphasizing the skills of cooperation.
- SNV is committed to using its own network of partners and clients for the benefit of the client. It may also do so to directly influence broader institutional change, as a stronger client is not necessarily one who will advocate for the benefit of its constituencies.
- SNV is willing to sacrifice its neutrality as an adviser when necessary (as it has done in the past) to advocate real change and improvement of the lives of the poorest.
- SNV–client relations in the advisory process are based on transparent, results-oriented contracts (memoranda of understanding) in which time management, allocation of personnel and costs involved for both parties are clearly stated.
- SNV does not charge its clients for its advisory services. The client is expected to pay for all the costs connected to the commitment as spelled out in the contract.

- SNV is open to all requests for advisory interventions coming from meso-level organizations. SNV may also proactively identify potential clients for its advisory services. It must consider the overall societal and political system in assessing whether the client has the potential to change and make changes. Not all meso-level organizations can be expected to do this. SNV takes on macro-level clients as a means of facilitating change at the meso-level.

Clients' perspective on local governance

Esther Shena, speaking on behalf of SNV client KWADA, the Kajiado Women's Advocacy and Development Association, a Kenya network: 'Local governance is about people, men and women, being able to make decisions and participate in structures that decide upon development'. Raymond Mutava, a central government official of the Ministry of Livestock, which is also an SNV client, speaking from the ministry's district office in Kajiado: 'Local governance is about the rights of citizens to decide on the way the local resources that are available to them are used for the benefit of the community. Therefore, people should be made aware of their resources and their capacity should be built to ensure that they are the ones to benefit.'

Fostering change: characteristics of quality in local governance advisory services

The reason for offering advisory services is to bring about positive change—change within the client, but in the end, also change in the field or on the ground to improve the lives of the poorest. How do you bring about change, considering that you are external to the client’s organization and that you are no longer involved in project implementation? This was one of the key questions asked by the SNV BAP initiative. Obviously, the input that SNV is making through workshops, training, study visits and the provision of other services does not sufficiently guarantee that change will come about. Not only *what* SNV does but also *how* SNV does it will influence the effect of the SNV interventions. The purpose of BAP was to analyse the quality of input by identifying what the characteristics of quality are, and thus to determine the likelihood of change being effected.

Identifying characteristics of quality

Characteristics of quality in advisory practice are the core conceptual unit on which the BAP process is structured. They are defined as the key contributors to achieving sustainable change in client organizations. SNV advisers offer their services to the client: what is critical about the way in which these services are provided? That is what makes the difference in the quality of the outcome.

In the first stage of the BAP process, teams of advisers in each of the five countries examined a number of programmes and cases to identify the

characteristics of quality that appeared to have been important in achieving good results. It is important to note that SNV did not work with predefined criteria but with empirical data collected in the five countries from advisers and clients through interviews and group forums.

An assessment was made at the regional level comparing the results in different countries, to develop a prioritized list of these characteristics that seemed to be important in a large number of cases. Eleven characteristics were categorized and the list was checked for its relevance with respect to the sector of local governance. The characteristics of quality were related to the core challenges in local governance processes. During a field mission in November, the list was checked through interviews with clients and advisers and then crosschecked with the opinions and experiences of other organizations offering or receiving advisory services.

Box 3 is the result of the validation and crosschecking. The list is limited to 11 characteristics, with the purpose of 1) illustrating how advisory processes work, 2) providing instruments to monitor the performance of SNV advisory practice, and 3) facilitating exchange with other organizations, to share and learn from each other on criteria and methodologies of assessing and strengthening advisory services. The list is to be reviewed and revised regularly, based on experience and lessons learned.

Box 3. Characteristics of quality in advisory services that can foster effective change in local governance

SNV's ways of working & values

Characteristic

Values: social justice and empowerment, gender equity, cultural diversity

1) Put values to the fore in the advisory practice

Diagnosis and learning

- 2) Internalize capacity building—assist the client to form a team of internal capacity builders
- 3) Recognize leadership—identify and work with both formal and informal leaders
- 4) Foster critical thinking and a challenging environment

Organizational development

- 5) Ensure that the client controls the process and the solution
- 6) Ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced
- 7) Provide realistic advice, always taking into account financial capability and the technical and cultural capacity to absorb

Partnership building

- 8) Include all key stakeholders—consider both sides of the equation: public and non-state actors
- 9) Take local dynamics into account—effectively deal with political processes that lack coherence
- 10) Link up networks—build on existing networks for information, cooperation and finding resources

Institutional development

- 11) Connect the micro and the macro—support upward and downward links for effective advocacy and change

The list of characteristics of quality is not exhaustive. Many characteristics do not appear in it, because they are tightly linked to project implementation (for example, the ability to manage results-oriented processes), or because they are related to management of the advisory contract and sequencing of different steps (selection of client, negotiation of contract, joint planning, preparing exit strategy). Although these characteristics add to advisory

quality, we selected the characteristics that are clearly linked to problems and tasks in the local governance sector. Their degree of success can be checked by specific results, such as quality of the facilitation and effect of the exercise on the client organization.

The idea is that while applying these characteristics in the advisory service, the SNV adviser is at the same time addressing core challenges of local governance and

contributing to the quality and success of local governance processes. For example, through creating an environment in which people feel they can speak critically, SNV is preparing the ground in local institutions and organizations to engage in local dialogue and assure its quality. Local dialogue is the key to building trust among local stakeholders and is a precondition for changing the mindset of those involved.

In the following sections, we explain each of these selected characteristics of quality and relate it to one or more problems in local governance. Where relevant and clarifying we use SNV examples, and we illustrate the characteristics in the case studies in part 2.

1) Put values to the fore in the advisory process

Although it is generally accepted that decentralization will lead to development that is responsive to local needs, democratization and inclusion of weaker groups are not automatically achieved through this process. The weaker and marginal segments of the population face many obstacles in trying to get their voices heard by institutions. In particular these are women, ethnic minorities, physically disabled persons, and groups displaced because of conflict, drought or other reasons. The resistance of traditional power structures to share power is one of the main

reasons for the limited participation of the poor in local governance.

Focusing on local governance creates enormous opportunities to redefine and deepen meanings of democracy and to integrate certain values in governance and extend the rights of citizens. But it is important to ensure that this work improves the lives of the poor, provides social justice and guards against co-opting the agenda for less altruistic goals. There is a danger of consolidating or reintroducing often-hidden exclusion mechanisms. An analysis of the power relations that surround and fill new spaces for democratic engagement is therefore necessary.

SNV is committed to a mission in which a rights-based approach plays a key role. Typically weak at the local level is effective and fair law enforcement or respect for civil and political rights. Consequently, each advisory process has to take into account the existing power and gender imbalances in relations between institutions, organizations and people. Values to be considered include others such as accountability, transparency, professional working ethics and the fight against corruption.

The goal is to address these weaknesses and put specific values at the forefront, values that will set out the limits of the advisory practice and the adviser–client relationship and that can contribute positioning a rights-based approach into the mainstream of local development.

Example. Kajiado women work hard to unveil hidden exclusion mechanisms (Kenya)

Although women form 49% of the population of Kajiado District, findings of two studies conducted in 2001 and 2002 revealed that decision-making and control over resources is in the domain of men and that low participation of women in decision-making was a major factor contributing to the poverty of many women.

In September 2002 during a workshop facilitated by SNV, Kajiado programme development stakeholders assessed the status of women in leadership positions in Kajiado District. The workshop confirmed that gender inequity was manifested in many ways including discrimination against women in issuing credit and ownership of resources, discrimination against girls in getting access to education, and limited involvement of women in decision-making. The assessment revealed that few women held positions of leadership. They held no critical positions and the few positions they held had no influence in decision-making within the district. Culture was largely the cause; among traditional Maasai, women's role does not fit in with contemporary western ideals. To change this, women needed to become more involved in community affairs and girls' education needed to be encouraged.

A second workshop was convened in November 2002 in which strategies for achieving active participation of women in leadership positions at all levels were developed. Since Kenya was preparing for the 2002 general elections, the priority strategy 'Improving participation of women in elective positions' was considered the most appropriate starting point. Kajiado Women's Advocacy and Development Association (KWADA) was then established to coordinate and support women to contest elective positions in the local Olkejuado County Council and Kajiado Urban Council.

With SNV-Kenya support, KWADA helped Kajiado women develop and launch a Kajiado Women's Manifesto in December 2002, to put women's issues on the election and development agenda. KWADA managed to mobilize and support seven women to run for councillor posts. One of the seven women aspirants, Ruth Wakapa, came out as a winner and was the first woman to be elected councillor in Kajiado District in 39 years of Kenyan independence. SNV Kajiado targeted KWADA as a client for support in the areas of gender and development, organizational development, and governance. KWADA's major challenge so far is to sustain the interest of women in pursuing key leadership positions and to find funds to implement their proposals for development projects. It is expected that by increasing the number of women in leadership positions and by increasing the participation of women in development, it will be possible to discourage the systems and attitudes that propagate vulnerability of women to poverty and injustice. SNV challenges community and political leaders through inclusive, open discussion, and democratic procedures for new planning structures. When these approaches were combined with serious capacity-building

efforts of the KWADA women, they were able to act as authorities on gender issues. They unveiled hidden local exclusion mechanisms and could fight to get women's contribution in local development recognized.

KWADA appreciated the fact that, when working with local governments or other clients, SNV always sets out the limits of cooperation: *a set of clear values is always clear to the client from the outset of the advisory process and is endorsed by a contract or a memorandum of understanding.*

2) Internalize capacity building—assist the client to form a team of internal capacity builders

Many capacity-building programmes focus on training sessions and workshops for groups of individual trainees. Several evaluation studies described their weak spots: insufficient follow-up, inadequate integration of new skills into the work tasks of the individual trainee, focus on skills rather than on interpersonal relations within an existing team. In most cases, the organizational environment did not encourage trainees to make use of their new skills or to contribute based on their own relevant experience. These programmes did not assess the general needs of a whole sector or region and tended to ignore specific institutional cultures.

The concept of social or collaborative learning uses a different logic and promises better results. The question should not simply be: what should people know and learn to perform their tasks? It should also

be: where do people feel things are going wrong? Social learning promotes learning by exchanging views and stimulating reflection among people who have to work together. It does not make sense to install a team of experts in an organization that will operate as a little island of specialized knowledge. External experts are worth very little if they are not complemented by colleagues within the organization and if they are not committed to engaging in a mutual learning process. The level of expertise of these colleagues should be the starting point for capacity building, not the expertise of the adviser. It is up to this group to reach consensus on the problems of the organization and the roles to be performed in it. This team will become the local capacity builders.

The goal is to make the best use of local knowledge and perspectives within the client organization through social and active learning. This should help show the way out of developmental problems and sustain development efforts.

Example. Team building in the city of Kigali (Rwanda)

It has been said that people are so obsessed with thinking of money—and particularly the lack of it—that they fail to take initiative. In Rwanda, SNV advisers were told by the provincial administration that their offer for capacity building could not be accepted, because there was no money. The example of Kigali, however, demonstrates that you don't need money to do capacity building unless you are thinking of big meeting rooms, meals, training sessions with more than 20 people and payment for allowances or 'sitting fees'. People are so spoiled by traditional capacity-building programmes they cannot imagine other types of services. It took Kigali more than one year to realize this. In 2001 the town and SNV Rwanda signed a contract for improving capacity building and local governance. SNV left it to the town to formulate its needs. Nothing happened for more than a year. After one year Kigali formulated an initial request for 'team building'. The administrative structure was fledgling, the personnel was new and there was no common vision. SNV started with a small group of departmental directors and facilitated an organizational self-assessment. The exercise was then repeated with members of the executive council, only this time the directors facilitated the assessment and presented the conclusions. This advisory process was supported by an informal, parallel capacity-building process and coaching of a small group of local capacity builders. The team building continues. The SNV adviser said, 'I would be happy to see the town able to facilitate its own internal reflection processes, able to formulate its own capacity-building programme, and be committed to regular self-evaluation. I do not think that the town has to master all existing evaluation techniques. However, it should be able to decide upon an evaluation plan and the terms of reference for it: what do we want to evaluate? what should be the output? what do we want to do with the results? If that happens, I think we will have done our advisory job well.'

3) Recognize leadership— identify and work with both formal and informal leaders

One Kajiado adviser stresses the fact that the most difficult clients and organizations to work with are the ones with leadership problems. The problem is common in government structures, with political and

administrative personnel and in NGOs and CBOs. It is unclear who is steering, who is taking decisions and how, and no one seems to accept responsibility or wants to be held accountable. Political leaders tend to be unresponsive to their electorate, acting instead according to ruling party guidelines. People feel their role is diminished, that they are simply to take part in pre-packaged government programmes

or other outside sponsored initiatives or to help mobilize citizens for communal labour on development schemes.

Elected councillors sometimes feel they are representatives of their community, which entails a kind of responsiveness, although likely not a rights-based one. Representation of disadvantaged groups in local governments in Africa is not part of popular political discourse. This in many respects is simply recognition of political realities in systems where patronage networks are deeply entrenched. Many civil society organizations are plagued by the same problem and do not represent the interests of the people, especially the poorest. Their leadership is often authoritarian and not open to divergent views and opinions (Crook 2002).

Some of the cases presented in this booklet clearly demonstrate how SNV advisers allocate time and attention in the advisory process to identify influential people to support change. The goal is to promote accountable and responsive leadership, in addition to other important leadership attributes, such as innovation, creativity, or inspiring trust. But in the context of local governance we focus on accountability and responsiveness. This means urging formal government leaders to open up, to engage in dialogue and to advocate at higher government levels for local needs. It also means encouraging, even forcing, civil society leaders to advocate for the people. Most challenging perhaps is to identify informal leaders: people whom one can expect to contribute towards change but who are not always formally recognized as leaders in the wider community. Some, such as women and pastoralists, have often been ignored 1) because they do not fit in the male-dominated logic of patronage politics or 2) have been neutralized by the urban male monopoly of local power structures.

4) Foster critical thinking and a challenging environment

Local people often have very little information on which to develop a well-rounded view of local development. Local governments succumb under the burden of tasks transferred to them by central government—collect data, provide development plans, execute centrally designed programmes, and so on. Officials may run around trying to comply with central government demands, NGOs are consumed with their day-to-day work, and everyone is trying to make a living under harsh economic conditions. Why would any of these groups or persons be interested in advice given to improve local governance and bring beneficial change into the lives of the poorest? How can they value, capitalize and embed advice on the need for local dialogue that does not contribute immediately to their daily tasks? If local participants are not stimulated to look beyond the limits of their institutional environment, it is hard to interest them in reflecting on local governance and to get them to commit themselves to local dialogue, which is crucial if local governance is to evolve successfully.

What SNV advisers desire is a critical environment that stimulates reflection, making local participants aware of the magnitude of their tasks and opening the way for real change. A critical environment works both ways: clients are able to ask questions, articulate problems and formulate demands, and they are free to question the adviser, even to check on the adviser's professionalism. On the other hand, the adviser has to challenge assumptions and solutions proposed by the client and should encourage leaders to open up. This approach can be threatening for people who are not used to speaking up freely and for leaders without the experience of ever

being challenged by their constituents. Therefore, the critical environment should also be a safe environment where people are not personally criticized but are invited to reflect about the local problems. Advisers should create an environment in which all stakeholders can engage in this critical dialogue without personal rancour. When both adviser and client are given a

clear mandate to challenge each other's opinions and assumptions, it indicates that advisers are genuinely committed to this characteristic of quality in their advisory process.

The goal for SNV advisers is that clients and other stakeholders engage in effective dialogue before they execute specified tasks.

Example. Seed can grow only in fertile soil: preparing the ground in Ethiopia

The North Wollo Zonal Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources approached SNV-Ethiopia to support the establishment of a support unit for natural resource management (NRM) and to provide technical advisory service. This client operates in a typical top-down decision-making setting with predetermined, packaged development programmes. In combination with a dominant donor-driven agenda, this setting makes the Zonal Department less autonomous and visionary to take responsibility for developing itself. In general, organizational changes are made in a mechanistic, top-down manner, 'uprooting and replanting' views, skills and techniques, and leaving little room for natural development based on people's own learning. SNV-Ethiopia risked repeating the same mistake by attaching an adviser with a technical task-focused role: mapping successful NRM practices in the area, piloting and organizing training. It was clear that this approach was not the best in the ongoing decentralization process, which entailed rapid changes in the institutional environment. This realization motivated SNV to move from a task-focused role to encouraging development by building trust and by encouraging all stakeholders to learn by reflecting frequently on the steps they were taking.

The idea was to help those involved locally to see beyond technical and institutional constraints to sustainable NRM by focusing on the potentially positive aspects of the existing cultural and institutional environment and on cooperation at various government levels. The experiences proved that this approach can yield results, even for organizations with little opportunity for influence on local development and little room to decide on their own organizational development strategies. The client as well as the SNV adviser saw that developing an appropriate critical organizational and team culture had greater power than focusing on technical knowledge and a predefined structural set-up.

5) Ensure that the client controls the process and the solution

‘Ownership’ is common jargon nowadays, but what does it mean in practice?

How can it be relevant to an advisory situation dealing with local development? Essentially, it means that the local people feel—and are—responsible for local development, that they understand the problems and work at the solutions, rather than having solutions imposed on them

from outside. Local people need to feel that the solutions for local development problems and local governance are specific for their particular locale.

‘Ownership’ in this advisory situation also means that the client establishes its own mechanisms that will direct the advisory process. In other words, the client must own both the process and the solution.

The goal is to foster genuine commitment to positive change on the part of the local people.

Example. Definition of capacity needs in Arua District, Uganda: from training to policy to strategy

In Arua District, a team of SNV advisers working with the district government operates in an exclusively advisory capacity. Responsibility for implementing district plans and the actual management of funds is the responsibility of the local district government rather than of the advisers. The overall purpose of this technical assistance is to help district authorities provide services according to the district’s development programme. Support is provided through capacity building in different ways and at different administrative levels: for strengthening the specific departments of finance, planning, personnel in the district government and lower-level governments in the district (organizational strengthening); strengthening district administration as a whole (organizational development); and strengthening the relationship among those involved in local governance: local government, civil society and private sector institutional development. In this process, SNV management advisers assist district authorities on strategic management and planning, administrative management and planning, human resource management and planning, and collaboration with other stakeholders.

The general advisory approach taken by SNV allowed Arua District officials to initiate and steer themselves through the necessary change processes. SNV advisers stimulated cross-sectoral discussions to provoke internal reflection, and they made sure that they involved all senior department staff in brainstorming sessions. Arua management officials gradually became more aware of the need to develop a *policy*. The advisers challenged them to draw up their own plan and to establish their own steering mechanisms that would support the development of this capacity-building plan, for example, a task force on training policy. The

progression was from training to policy to strategy—ensuring the strategy was indeed the next step in the process. *SNV advisers always took off from the needs as the client perceived them. Everyone thus felt the time was right to take the next step.* SNV advisers indicated at management meetings that a more comprehensive approach might yield better and more sustainable results with respect to better performance of the district as a whole. Arua District was thus able to identify what was needed to develop its capacity, and district officials were now ready to reflect upon what capacity and performance they sought.

One of the tools for identifying gaps between needs and ambitions is organizational self-assessment (OSA). The officials who were involved in the process accepted that a more in-depth analysis of the way the district council worked internally was a good solution, and they chose members for an OSA steering committee to review the strengths and weaknesses of the council. As the head of the human resources department stated:

This exercise presented every one of us with a better view as to the magnitude of our tasks as district officials. Since 1997, my department has been trying to address the challenges connected to Ugandan decentralization. Decentralization increased the number of staff by 30%; teachers, health workers, engineers were added to the existing staff. Only four people were responsible for managing 7,000 officials and we had to find means and ways to address problems related to equipment, the personnel management system (disciplinary measures, performance assessment, payment of salaries) and staff development. OSA allowed us to come to terms with day-to-day problems and in the overall organogram to see the purpose of our job and the reason for our department. In general, a common understanding emerged among officials about the mission of our district. The task forces and steering committees proved to be innovative and flexible working instruments, cutting through hierarchical and traditional power relations between the district departments and heads of department. The role of the SNV advisers was that of a neutralizing force: their taking part as an external body in committee meetings neutralized often-hidden power relations. Through this process, we have been able to improve our record management, financial management and the quality of our planning. We are considered a good example, and the Ministry of Local Government is directing other districts to us, urging them to come and visit Arua District.'

Arua District officials themselves are now better able to clearly identify areas where they can use external advice, such as harmonizing district approaches to

problems or replicating pilot models for increasing local revenue. The financial staff has formulated its own pilot for increasing revenue and was able to mobilize other districts to write a funding proposal directed to international donors.

The challenge will be to inculcate what was achieved before the next election period in 2006. The human resources department already adheres to the principles of the new training policy, and did so even before it was endorsed by the district council. However, it is clear that the political element in the district is reluctant to take lessons from the OSA experience. Its results and the subsequent analysis were hard for some officials and politicians to handle. They felt the process was too technical and oriented too strongly to public administration, with too little attention being paid to ensuing political repercussions and the effect the process would have on formal and informal power relations in the district.

6) Ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced

Local governance involves different types of stakeholders and different sectors within a given area, calling for a multidisciplinary team. The team should be able to provide both generalist and specialist views and skills that cover the multifaceted aspects and sectors involved in local governance: the political system; the policy, legal and regulatory framework; financial management and human resources management; and planning and budgeting. It requires consensus building and consultation. Local partners—state and non-state—encounter many technical problems before they can effectively engage in local governance processes. It is important to address these problems through various ways of building capacity: study visits, training sessions, workshops, seminars, on-the-job training, and individual coaching. However, the approach needs to be selective. Technical experts must be part

of this team, and given its experience in the region, SNV is valued in particular for its technical expertise: *clients trust that SNV provides state-of-the-art knowledge, techniques and approaches.*

The goal is to incorporate new knowledge, expertise and techniques that will improve the quality of local governance. In particular, the issues of transparency and accountability must be addressed.

7) Provide realistic advice, always taking into account financial capability and the technical and cultural capacity to absorb

In principle, decentralization encompasses fiscal decentralization, including systems to ensure local budgetary autonomy, to levy local taxes, fees and user charges, and to use the income locally. In practice, it is clear that local government officials struggle with a shortage of funds. Decentralization entails a risk of actually minimizing

revenue: local government may not have the experience and ability to mobilize local financial resources or it may be unwilling to do so. Political influence undermines the revenue system in that officials and politicians are reluctant to enforce tax payments and extract charges for water or electricity from people known to them.

Even meso-level organizations of the civil society find themselves short of money. A staff member of a Tanzanian NGO, PAMOJA, which is an SNV client, states: *'the poverty issue hinders full participation and downgrades the willingness to participate in local governance processes. What is necessary is to link advisory practices to the introduction of income-generating activities.'* It is clear that advisory processes must seriously take into account the finances needed to promote change. They must analyse the financial framework and fiscal decentralization, understand annual or pluri-annual financial cycles in local government, and map the resources. For many clients, being involved in a capacity-building process with an external organization entails the promise of funds to implement advice. The problem is to make clear that advice does not always lead to handing out donor funds. The adviser must get the client to manage the finances and allocate resources within the organization. *The adviser needs to be aware of the cost implication of each suggestion proposed to the client.* Although SNV has always been available to help identify potential donors and funds, it proved difficult to adhere to this characteristic of quality. Clearly, a detailed advisory strategy is urgently needed to enable the client to mobilize resources.

The goal is to assist the client in mobilizing resources and in managing finances efficiently and effectively. This need is urgent and must be addressed.

8) Include all key stakeholders—consider both sides of the equation: public and non-state actors

Working on local governance means working on both sides of the equation. That means going beyond 'civil society' or 'state-based' approaches to focus on new forms of participation, responsiveness and accountability where they intersect. Strengthening local government through decentralization should move hand in hand with efforts to mobilize and strengthen civil society structures, the private sector and institutions at a lower level in a manner that would get non-state and subnational authorities to work together and reinforce each other. Depending on the client or the problem, the adviser starts from the perspective of the local state official or from that of civil society. Working on the equation means breaking through patterns of decision-making dominated by traditional views or by closed opinions dictated from a central office; it means creating openness for discussion, influencing formal or hidden centres of power, and refining the present processes of consultation and decision-making, both formal and informal.

Working on the equation promotes a more integrated and territorial view of local development, as it focuses primarily on working with people involved in local development and not on sectors or on central government policies. Many clients find their structures divided into separate sectors to maximize funds, according to the rationale of the donors. A local perspective on development helps to pull all the strings together. In practice, this means that advisers should always consider the interaction of the client with other

local stakeholders in the advisory process and that the adviser will help develop a local perspective. *In the advisory process, the adviser always tries to combine the need for responsive government with community demand.*

The goal is to provide efficient services and encourage sustainable local development, with a focus on decentralizing and integrating organizational structures, setting standards, and arranging for collective, concerted action that responds to local needs.

9) Take local dynamics into account—effectively deal with political processes that lack coherence

The change in donor policies reflects a general trend to incorporate political concerns into local development. The more advisers focus on governance processes, the more they enter the arena of policy-making. What is policy-making? Reflection on the concept of governance results in a broad vision that in essence, policy-making is often disjointed, sometimes cyclic (such as five-year plans), not fully coherent, partly politicized and multilayered. The technical aspects may become a minor consideration in the policy. Consequently, the closer an adviser gets to policy-making the more difficult it becomes to plan the advisory process, to ensure timely provision of advice and to establish sensible, diplomatic ways of giving the advice. The adviser has to navigate through recurrent election periods in a complex political environment, in which far-reaching changes may occur, for example in policy, administrative personnel or the composition of councils.

The arena of politics consists of far more than party politics. Specific expertise

from the local governance adviser is needed to manage the variety of formal and informal relationships between different entities in subnational development that shape and influence the effectiveness of local political and administrative systems. The relationship between officials and elected politicians and their combined action deserves specific attention, as it functions as a laboratory for democratic experiment along principles that are quite different from the interaction between government and non-government.

The goal is to support local democratization through effective policy-making processes and cycles. In countries such as Tanzania, where there is little opportunity for developing local policies, it is crucial to insist on the importance of local policy-making. The case of Keiyo County Council in Kenya (see case studies in part 2) might add to the comprehension of this particular quality characteristic.

10) Link up networks—build on existing networks for information, cooperation and finding resources

Networks are a form of collaboration, designed to handle communication and cooperation between institutions and organizations more efficiently. Given that organizations and societies exist in a complex, fast-changing and highly interconnected world, independent actions and decisions on the part of one may produce unanticipated consequences for all. Literature on collaborative strategies and multi-organizational partnerships introduced the concept of ‘turbulent environments’: problems pile up and individual institutions or organizations cannot unilaterally act to solve them

without encountering constraints imposed by others.

Many people working in local or even meso-level institutions are not yet ready to engage in new forms of partnerships such as networking. They may lack the degree of specialization that is a precondition for successful networking. Only when organizations think about their specific mission and services and compare themselves with other organizations can they consider cooperation. The disadvantages of not engaging in networking are many: the organization continues to work in isolation; it lacks the input of new ideas, new people and new information and experiences; its leverage at higher levels with policy-makers, donors, and so on is sub-optimal; and the effect of its actions may be lower than it could otherwise be.

When a network is well managed, advisers and their organization can use it to link meso-level organizations to new partners. The first task of the advisers is to show their clients that they will benefit from an external focus in their own organization. Therefore, it is important to create opportunities and forums where organizations and potential partners can meet and consider the wider environment in which they have to attain their objectives. Networking is a particular way to alleviate problems connected to the 'turbulent environment'; it can 'invent a future', discover common ground, and develop new and integrated systems to solve development problems. *From the SNV experience, we can conclude that as part of the advisory process, advisers*

and SNV proactively support establishing community-rooted networks and involving local officials.

One example of successful networking is the way SNV linked the Kajiado women's organization KWADA in Kenya to other national and international NGOs dealing with gender issues, government departments, and local people. KWADA even started working for international NGOs after SNV recommended it to other donors and development organizations. Another example is that of Arua District in Uganda, where SNV advisers facilitated contact of local officials with central government ministries. As one official stated: *'they are able to relate well with officials, politicians and line ministries and we can use them to get things moving at a higher level.'* Representative networks are crucial when engaging in joint decision-making processes. They provide the people that can speak for others in all these new committees that are established following decentralization and local government reform.

The SNV network could be more systematically handled to the benefit of clients by organizing management of network contacts, using network opportunities in formulating strategy, considering strategic network alliances, and identifying the specific goals of each networking alliance.

One goal is to stimulate access to and exchange of information as a means to solve common problems. Another is to establish or strengthen meso-level networks and networks of other organizations to ensure external views on development problems.

Example. Networking in Tanzania: TANGO on the road for more systematic and concerted NGO action

Tanzania's Vision 2025 and the various policies and reform programmes (such as the local government reform and the new NGO Act) demand concerted efforts of the three sectors of society: government, private and civil society. According to the Tanzania Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) most local councillors are not yet ready to lead their community into creating its own development agenda. For TANGO this is exactly what the outcome of the local government reform should be if there is a genuine commitment to stimulating local governance. In civil society, the people who are supposed to initiate and monitor the reforms may not have sufficient skills to take advantage of the reforms and to get involved in decision-making processes. They have to be convinced that local governments are their legitimate partners in local development: 'the best way to change something is to talk to your enemy; you should not run away or go behind' (Masswe, TANGO staff member, quoting Nelson Mandela).

Civil society has the obligation to learn about the structure of local government reform, to seek information and to take it to the people. Organized civil society needs to function as an antenna; it has to voice the interests of the communities and it has to present itself as a trustworthy partner to be involved in local decision-making. To this end TANGO helps establish networks that are loosely organized structures or groupings of NGOs and other civil society bodies that have common interests, and that can share information, agree on issues to pursue together and use their resources to achieve their objectives. TANGO itself was established as a network by SNV in 1988. Over the years it evolved from a small informal network to the largest grouping of NGOs in Tanzania (with over 500 members) pursuing its own agenda. TANGO moved from pure service delivery and ad hoc training to more advocacy work, policy analysis, information processing, and sharing and capacity building for effective interaction with the state, the donor community and other stakeholders. As such, TANGO is now a partner of SNV in helping establish networks in several Tanzanian regions, such as Kilimanjaro Region and Dodoma Region.

The idea of networking came from PAMOJA, another SNV client, active in Kilimanjaro Region in the field of local governance. SNV managed its own network of clients and partners to introduce new actions into the districts. The concept of network was brought to the people cautiously, because '*ideas are not material things, you cannot use them as they are*' (Masswe, TANGO). When the concept was introduced, it had to be digested and moulded into the Tanzanian

context by people in the field. For Masswe, the challenge was to facilitate a learning process that essentially is 'learning for change'—gaining the skills and capacities needed to address challenges and problems in a more systematic way.

For TANGO, the concept of a generic network provides the best model. It was developed in several stages:

All NGOs of one region were invited to an 'information day' to exchange ideas and opinions on several issues connected to local government reform and the NGO Act, which among other things centralized the control over NGO activities in a statutory NGO board. They discussed the importance of dialogue and exchange of information, and strategies to influence central government policies. The participants were then invited to come up with suggestions on how to strengthen their impact on policies. These suggestions were used to explain the concept of networking and its advantages. It was emphasized that networking is not about creating a new organization but about systematic and concerted action of independent organizations who find themselves, through networking, in a better position to use their individual advantages and to break out of their isolation.

A series of follow-up meetings took place in the region. TANGO visited several NGOs to ask them what, if anything, had they done with the information they had received. This was aimed at stimulating internal reflection.

Then a first biannual meeting for networks was organized in the region. It was clear that new networks had already started to emerge. During this meeting, networks discussed their progress. Districts were played off against each other to stimulate more initiative where nothing has happened yet. Clearly, 'the word' was spread throughout the country as other districts, such as Iringa and Mbeya were moving to establish their own networks. Importantly, the networks jointly decided during the first biannual meeting that they would cover their own costs for travel and lodging.

In the spirit of the network philosophy, the new networks in the districts do not function as satellites of TANGO but as regional partners that have a crucial role in connecting the national level with the grassroots in a common mission to increase the qualitative and quantitative contribution of the NGO sector to national development.

11) Connect the micro and the macro—support upward and downward links for effective advocacy and change

Developing a local perspective to local development should never ignore the wider central governance agenda. Research about the impact of decentralization on reducing poverty highlights the critical difference between successful and unsuccessful cases. The difference would seem to lie in the kinds of relationships between central and local ruling elites and, more specifically, the political goals of decentralization reforms themselves. Reducing poverty, in other words, is a product of local and central synergy. Poverty-relevant programmes are often implemented with the help of central funding in close cooperation with local governments, led by motivated local staff and political activists.

In many African countries these links between the central government's decentralization scheme and local leaders had an entirely different purpose: the ruling party using decentralized structures to renew or consolidate their power and influence within communities. With such an attitude, it is hard to ensure that local government reform will have any outcome other than one that is conservative and elite based.

Another factor of particular importance in the politics of decentralization in Africa

derives from particular configurations of ethnic and regional pluralism. If a regime is nervous about providing an institutional base for subnational or ethnic political rivals, it will often adopt a decentralization scheme that deliberately fragments potential local power bases into smaller, weaker, politically insignificant units. Conclusion: upward and downward links are key to the success of initiatives and successful advisory services when working in a decentralized context, especially when the prospect is to use decentralized structures and meso-level organizations to promote change and pro-poor governance. More in particular, advisers should make a real effort to strengthen and broaden accountability mechanisms, both horizontal and vertical, both local and national. *Each advisory process should be clearly situated within the wider governance agenda and should ensure links of various kinds with other governance levels and a more effective flow of information.*

The goal reached through addressing this task is not easy: local governance, through local government, should be a force for initiating change both in the immediate area and at the national policy level. The idea is to ensure that policies stemming from practical local experience are translated nationally into policies or laws that enable the strengthening of local governments.

See also the case study of the Moshi District Educational Board, page 71.

Results of SNV's approach

Now that we have looked at the way SNV approaches its work in local governance, we need to see how *well it works*.

How effectively do advisers apply the approaches described above? Does this result in the intended outputs or products? Are the aimed-for outcomes achieved in terms of stronger client organizations? To conduct such an assessment we need a system for measuring. In this section we present a system of indicators to measure how well the characteristics of quality are being applied and whether the intended outputs and outcomes have been achieved. These indicators then provide a basis for analysing the actual results and determining where SNV is strong as well as where it needs to strengthen its approaches. Finally we look at a number of external organizations to see what SNV might learn from others to strengthen its approaches.

Three sorts of indicators are provided for each characteristic of quality: process, output and outcome indicators. We define them as follows:

- Indicators on the level of process—linked to the relationship between adviser and client, these show whether the particular characteristic of quality has been applied effectively
- Indicators on the level of output—these show that the intervention has succeeded in providing the agreed services, such as advice, training, networking, or facilitation, aimed at improving the way the client operates.
- Indicators on the level of outcome—these show whether the application of the particular characteristic of quality has actually resulted in the

desired strengthening of the capacity of the client organization, such as increased performance effectiveness or sustainability

The indicators are not set in stone, they are simply meant as a tool to help us measure the results of the adviser's interaction with the client. Many other indicators would also be possible. In part 2 of this book six case studies are presented that illustrate the application (or not) of the various characteristics of quality. The three types of indicators provide a guide for understanding the assessment made in each case study. But indicators need to be adapted to the particular situation one is trying to measure. For example, the characteristic of quality 'recognize leadership' is illustrated in three of the case studies, but in each of the three a different set of indicators is used to assess that characteristic. In practice, indicators will be updated and adjusted over time on the basis of joint assessments with the client and comparisons with other organizations.

Applying characteristics of quality

We have listed below in the section 'Indicators related to the characteristics of quality' (pages 43–46) appropriate process indicators of characteristics of quality. These have been identified throughout SNV practice and checked against relevant literature and research. The list also gives ways to measure or monitor how the characteristics of quality are being applied in the advisory process. From this table and from discussion with advisers and clients in

the field, we can reach some conclusions.

The following characteristics of quality were generally considered present and strong, in the order listed, in overall SNV advisory practice:

- Ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced (although it was not always provided in a selective manner)
- Internalize capacity building—assist the client to form a team of internal capacity builders
- Ensure that the client controls the process and the solution (this being done more with the solution than the process)
- Include all key stakeholders—consider both sides of the equation: public and non-state actors

Advisers and clients acknowledged that efforts should be made to better integrate the other characteristics of quality or improve their application. The case studies in part 2 show up the weaknesses in application. In most cases the absence or weak application of these characteristics is shown associated with unsuccessful outcomes, although in some instances they were applied successfully. This is the situation, for example, with the characteristic, ‘Take local dynamics into account’, which was not done well in the PLUP case in Kajiado while it was successfully applied in the Keiyo case.

The way clients assess how the characteristics of quality are applied may differ from the way advisers assess them. Accepting this difference might help in adjusting intervention strategies accordingly. We can conclude the following from comparing client perspectives with adviser perspectives. When asked about typical qualities of the way SNV works, clients spontaneously pointed to technical expertise, good relationships (‘nice people’, ‘they

are always there’) and creation of an environment safe for discussion. To a lesser extent, they valued SNV for its close contacts with central government and donor agencies (networking and linking). It is clear, though, that most clients have had very little experience with other organizations that might provide similar advisory services; for example: ‘SNV was always around, they have been here for such a long time.’ When asked why clients would want to continue working with SNV, they refer to the experience of SNV, the fact that they know SNV and its technical expertise from past projects. Clients did not give much concrete input on the characteristics of quality or the SNV values. When specifically asked about values, clients pointed to the fact that SNV tries to include everyone; that is, they were aware of its inclusive and non-discriminative approach, especially concerning gender equality. The advisers, however, strongly emphasized the values issue.

Critical outcomes of the SNV approach to advisory practice

The six specific cases elaborated in part 2 are each different from the others when considering stakeholders involved, level of intervention, and country-specific context. These cases illustrate SNV interventions in the local governance sector. Their commonality lies in their explicit attention to the interface between stakeholders involved in local development. The interface envisaged is characterized as a partnership between organizations and individuals who each have their social identity and who all operate within a common legal framework that assigns specific roles and responsibilities to each. Throughout the cases, SNV’s intent to link people to the institutions and to link non-

state organizations to local government institutions and structures is evident. The case experiences cite specific mechanisms and instruments to create dialogue and to rebuild relations (interface mechanisms, joint action, networking, new institutional arrangements), and they also highlight the attention SNV advisers pay to the quality of the dialogue and the relationships.

SNV interventions in local governance contributed overall to the objectives of different local governance strategies (described in box 2, page 20), although the outcome was not equally strong for all objectives. Generally speaking, SNV's interventions contributed to the first three cross-cutting objectives: 1) placing gender in the mainstream, 2) addressing social exclusion mechanisms, and 3) empowering the poor as measured by responsiveness of government and the amount and effectiveness of participation of the poor. If the issue of values had appeared more explicitly on the agenda it might have affected the outcomes more strongly. SNV integrated a number of specific values in its mission statement as general guiding principles: social justice and empowerment, gender equity, and cultural diversity. Until now, how to integrate these values, in cooperation with clients, is not yet clearly articulated.

We conclude that many organizations and individuals directly involved in SNV projects demonstrate a clear change of mindset when they consider the problems of sustainable local development and solutions for them. They now accept that part of the solution to these local problems is in their hands and that some of these solutions are within their reach now. The change mainly came about as they experienced the SNV approach in dealing with clients and target groups. Continual effort to create a group of local capacity builders was key to this approach. In

the cases of Arua District Council, Keiyo County Council and Kigali, officials keenly understood the magnitude of their tasks and the mission of their local government institution. Better results could have been obtained in other cases if the characteristic of identifying and supporting the local leaders had been more consciously and systematically applied.

From a technical point of view, the objectives of promoting good governance and stronger civil society organizations have been largely achieved. SNV introduced new techniques and approaches, such as OSA (organizational self-assessment), participatory planning, and human resources and financial management, and it fostered local ownership of the processes of capacity building and organizational development and change. By working on both sides of the equation, SNV made a start towards achieving the objectives of local democratization and of efficient and effective delivery of services. More progress could have been achieved, however, had the political process and the practice of government and civil society cooperatively producing public policies been better mastered.

SNV's networking is still a fledgling practice. Networking is understood as the voluntary exchange of information between autonomous organizations. It is closely connected to how organizations manage their information systems. SNV suggests that networking is an instrument to help client organizations achieve their goals. SNV interventions supported the exchange of information and experience, mainly through specifically designed activities and initiatives such as workshops and regional meetings. SNV also used contacts with former clients and donors to start initiatives or to link their clients to donor money. The effect could have been

more far-reaching in addressing the tasks of local governance, however, if networking had been developed as a deliberate strategy, if it had been connected to an organizational information system and not restricted to projects or clients.

Far less obvious is the effect of SNV interventions in developing a more comprehensive framework for local governance or in voicing the local perspective to central government. Clearly, the democratic decentralization systems in eastern Africa do not yet function well, which makes SNV's job far more complicated. The critical factor in this respect is to apply the characteristic of creating and supporting upward and downward links. We pay particular attention to local–central relationships, or in other words, relationships between central and local ruling elites and the political goals of decentralization reforms themselves.

As research on cases in Africa, Latin America and Asia has indicated, pro-poor development outcomes are a product of the synergy between local and central factors: poverty-relevant programmes often implemented with the help of central funding in cooperation with local governments, and given a strong ideological and organizational impetus at the local level from the commitment of local employees and political activists. A particular impetus comes from the political motivations of a strong political party intent on mobilizing electoral coalitions in favour of such policies, or from 'counter-elites' who, in the process of competition, see the policies as a way of constructing a new political base. In most of the African cases, the link between the central government's decentralization scheme and local leaders has an entirely different purpose. Therefore, even where the interests of underprivileged groups and of the rural poor have achieved

some representation through democratic decentralization, accountability mechanisms are in general not strong enough to ensure that these interests are represented effectively in policy-making. Any prospect of using decentralized governance to develop more pro-poor policies for a start must depend upon a real effort being undertaken to strengthen and broaden accountability mechanisms, both horizontal and vertical, at both local and national levels (Crook 2002).

The weaker SNV experience in networking and managing central–local relations might also explain why the record on facilitating independent and reliable sources of information is not remarkable.

Output and outcome indicators of a forward-looking perspective

Analysing the outcome of SNV's advisory practices was hampered by the fact that SNV advisers have not worked with predefined indicators to measure their performance. Consequently, the characteristics of quality were not noted but were often taken for granted in daily contacts with clients. Identifying indicators should make it possible in future advisory practice to apply the characteristics of quality in a more conscious way and actually measure the application, output and outcome of those characteristics.

We list here the process indicators and the indicators related to outcome and output for local governance, all of which are aimed to measure the quality of the advisory process. The indicators selected are not the only ones that could be chosen; people working in the field might consider others more relevant or important. Yet we feel that they provide a starting point

for monitoring the quality of the advisory process and for comparing it with the experience of other organizations working within countries in the eastern Africa region in which SNV works. Moreover, we believe these indicators can be easily used in the short term.

As mentioned above, for each characteristic of quality we have identified three types of indicators: process, output and outcome. Each type is linked to another level of relationships from the client's point of view:

- Process indicators—link adviser and client, through effective application of particular characteristics of quality
- Output indicators—link adviser and client's operational system, through provision of specific capacity-strengthening services
- Outcome indicators—link client and the wider operational environment, through strengthened performance effectiveness or sustainability

We assume that the characteristics of quality listed are the ones SNV advisers apply as they give advice. But how can advisers measure or check that they are really applying them? The process indicators are for advisers to use to monitor and measure their own practice. The next question is: when working in the advisory process, what output and outcome can one expect? Hence indicators are listed here for these as well.

Indicators related to the characteristics of quality

1) Put values to the fore in the advisory process

Process indicator: gender and value-based audit is done jointly between client and adviser for each important step in the advisory process, or a set of ethical

standards that is clear to the client sets out the limits of the cooperation, which is the indicator present in actual SNV practice

- *Means of verification:* presence of audit results and report; verification for the second indicator: agreement, contract, memorandum of understanding

Output indicator: general feeling of trust is present in the people involved in the advisory process (positive attitude)

- *Means of verification:* interviews and question lists

Outcome indicator: relatively higher percentage of women and the poorest groups are taking part in local governance structures, as compared with other municipalities or districts

- *Means of verification:* outcome of elections for governance structures

2) Internalize capacity building—assist the client to form a team of internal capacity builders

Process indicator: the advisory process is always supported by a parallel capacity-building process by a group of local capacity builders—either from within the client organization or by an external service provider—which includes coaching

- *Means of verification:* description of capacity-building strategy and principles of coaching for local capacity builders

Output indicator: a team on client's staff is formally identified and members are recognized as capacity builders

- *Means of verification:* council decision; human resources department describes tasks and time allocated

Outcome indicator: an increasing number of local organizations in the area of intervention formulate their proper strategy and terms of reference for capacity building for local sustainable development

- *Means of verification:* report, strategy of the client

3) Recognize leadership—identify and work with both formal and informal leaders

Process indicator: time and attention in the advisory process is allocated to identify influential people, internally or externally, to support change (change agents)

- *Means of verification:* record of participation—with SNV’s encouragement—by local leaders in external public events and decision-making processes

Output indicator: leadership qualities of particular people are recognized and rewarded

- *Means of verification:* strengthening of the position of newly recognized leaders in the organizational organogram of clients

Outcome indicator: a considerable rise in the number of advocacy actions, instigated by leaders openly taking position to defend the interests of their local constituencies

- *Means of verification:* written positions endorsed by councils and boards of organizations

4) Foster critical thinking and a challenging environment

Process indicator: both parties, adviser and client, are given an equal and clear mandate and duty to challenge each other’s opinions, assumptions and performance, and both are provided with the instruments and capacity to do so

- *Means of verification:* description of expectations and instruments in the contract, description of monitoring and evaluation scheme, working with client, satisfaction index

Output indicator: a number of neutral (‘safe’) forums are created where stakeholders of the client’s programme are involved in consensus building and developing new perspectives

- *Means of verification:* description of rules of procedures for steering mechanisms, task forces or committees within the advisory process

Outcome indicator: the number and variety of opportunities and mechanisms to raise questions towards the representative organization (council, NGO board, and so on) increases considerably

- *Means of verification:* description of instruments and rules of procedures in formal documents and the results of their application (yearly reports, development plans)

5) Ensure that the client controls the process and the solution

Process indicator: the adviser always starts from the needs and solutions as the client perceives them

- *Means of verification:* report of ‘intake’ meeting, report of joint analysis and adjustment of client’s needs in the course of the process

Output indicator: client and client’s staff are able to formulate client’s needs properly, such as the need for advisers and others to become engaged locally in following up the advisory process

- *Means of verification:* clients present their own terms of reference for follow-up

Outcome indicator: evidence of genuine commitment to adhere to good governance (focus on accountability, transparency, participation and consultation) and of people taking their roles and tasks more seriously

- *Means of verification:* increased voluntary formation of task groups or committees to address new issues, active participation in them and results achieved

6) Ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced

Process indicator: the adviser guarantees the delivery of state-of-the-art knowledge, techniques and approaches

- *Means of verification:* monitoring and evaluation of the professional performance of advisers

Output indicator: technical skills to install and manage mechanisms of transparency and accountability are in place in the client's system

- *Means of verification:* statutes of organizations, access of the public to information on government decisions and information on financial management and expenditure

Outcome indicator: performance of the organizations and institutions related to good governance increased (focus on accountability, transparency, participation and consultation)

- *Means of verification:* government reports and statistics, specific evaluation, higher income from tax collection

7) Provide realistic advice, always taking into account financial capability and the technical and cultural capacity to absorb

Process indicator: the resource implication on the client's budget and staffing of each proposed activity resulting from the advisory process is clearly identified

- *Means of verification:* reports of advisory process

Output indicator: client's capacity to combine planning and budgeting increased

- *Means of verification:* feasible and realistic 'business plans' for projects and programmes within the client's organization

Outcome indicator: local persons are able to articulate confidently the rationale and feasibility of plans to local stakeholders

and external donors, and to convince them to support the plans

- *Means of verification:* success in obtaining needed resources both locally and externally

8) Include all key stakeholders— consider both sides of the equation: state and non-state bodies

Process indicator: the adviser always combines the needs for responsive government and community demand in the advisory process

- *Means of verification:* reports of the advisory process, analysis in the beginning of the process, indicating participation of client's clients in needs identification and planning processes

Output indicator: officials, politicians and civil society are working together to develop an integrated view on local development

- *Means of verification:* a description of the mission and way of working of jointly productive decentralized 'centres' of decision-making, planning and implementation

Outcome indicator: evidence of more efficient and effective service delivery in the area of intervention

- *Means of verification:* government statistics, evaluations

9) Take local dynamics into account— effectively deal with political processes that lack coherence

Process indicator: adviser is flexible in planning and sequencing steps, resulting from an understanding of a process that is not linear, multisectoral or developed in a politicized context

- *Means of verification:* description of advisory process, decisions of task forces or steering committees of the advisory process

Output indicator: more effective management of policy-making process, especially for the combined action between officials, civil society leaders and politicians

– *Means of verification:* evaluation

Outcome indicator: local democratization is supported; evidence that a new culture of local policy-making is emerging, following other principles than the traditional central government-steered processes

– *Means of verification:* evaluation

10) Link up networks—build on existing networks for information, cooperation and finding resources

Process indicator: the advisers deliberately involve community-rooted or representative local or national networks in the advisory process

– *Means of verification:* description of advisory process

Output indicator: local organizations are more involved in regional initiatives for exchange of information and feel able to participate in existing networks or establish new ones

– *Means of verification:* reports of network activities, participants' lists of activities

Outcome indicator: evidence that local governance analysis happened and that problems faced are addressed on the basis of broader and informed analysis

– *Means of verification:* evaluation, reports and texts

11) Connect the micro and the macro—support upward and downward links for effective advocacy and change

Process indicator: the advisory process is clearly situated within the wider governance agenda and ensures different links with other governance levels, both micro and macro, and more effective information flow

– *Means of verification:* activity plan within the advisory process, analysis of the wider governance context

Output indicator: development of regular consultative mechanisms between local and national levels; the client is able to translate central government policies to local development needs and justify this vis-à-vis central government

– *Means of verification:* development plans connect measures with central government guidelines or programmes

Outcome indicator: development of evidence that central government encourages and accepts contributions (to policy-making) coming out of local governance processes

– *Means of verification:* central government documents

Strengthening practices through sharing models and experience

Benchmarking strategies in advisory services

SNV plans to integrate benchmarking (see glossary) into its learning strategies to improve the quality of its advisory processes. SNV wants to compare its advisory services with those of other organizations, learn about what they do and improve its practice. This should strengthen the performance and sustainability of intermediary institutions involved in local governance.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the idea behind benchmarking is quite simple: find an organization that is good—preferably the best—at what your own organization does, study carefully how it does so well, make plans to raise your own performance to that level, implement the plans and monitor the results. The process is continuous, linked with quality management efforts in a particular organization.

To practise benchmarking, however, is much more complicated. This was proven by the first benchmarking exercise that ACE Europe, the writers of this study, carried out to validate the characteristics of quality for advisory practice and to set benchmarks for improving this practice. The BAP initiative provided the starting point for this benchmarking. BAP reference groups defined the goal and subject of benchmarking and tried to find consensus on characteristics of quality for advisory practice and the type of indicators and benchmarks to be formulated. The exercise was clearly exploratory, trying to understand the opportunities for learning in the future.

Non-SNV programme approaches from which SNV can learn

ACE Europe later requested 17 external organizations to join in and to comment on the characteristics of quality with reference to their own practices. These organizations were selected on the basis of two main criteria: they had to be involved in advisory practice and they had to work in the sector of local governance. The group of 17 comprised associations of local authorities, international institutions (donors), bilateral cooperation agencies (donors), international NGOs, and universities (research institutes). With email questionnaires and telephone interviews, it was possible to refine the set of characteristics of quality and to formulate specific indicators. These first steps also indicated the limits of benchmarking and showed the ways that other organizations intervene in local governance in the South. Some remarks in this respect:

Few organizations are involved in an internal reflection and learning process about the way they assist client institutions to become stronger. Mostly, organizations are monitoring *what* they are doing, not *how* they are doing it. It is therefore not easy to get them to reflect on something that is not connected to their daily work. Several organizations of interest to SNV participated in the benchmarking exercise but then pulled out because of time constraints; these included GTZ-Kenya, Community Development Resource Network–Kampala, and VECO-Uganda and Tanzania.

SNV as a development organization is different: it is not now a donor, it does not work on a commercial basis (like for example VNG International, the independent branch of the Association of Dutch Municipalities) and it has branches in 26 countries. It was impossible to find similar organizations—delivering advisory practices that are not connected to an externally funded development programme and at the same time being active in the field rather than operating from abroad while using other organizations or consultants to do the job. Most organizations also focus on only one side of the equation—working either with government, as does VNG International or with civil society. Taking on board both sides is still quite a challenge for most development organizations and some do not consider it feasible.

Benchmarking requires a certain amount of openness: organizations should provide each other with data on their

performance. Even between non-profit and development organizations, this type of cooperation is clearly not evident.

Throughout this exploratory benchmarking, despite the limits described above, we came across interesting experiences from external organizations, gathered through the email questionnaires and the telephone interviews (more information can be found on their websites, listed in the appendix). What is there to learn from these?

We analysed three examples in detail: 1) experiences of VNG International advising the Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA), 2) experiences of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) with a project on governance policy and leadership in Zimbabwe, and 3) experiences of a local NGO in Brazil, CTA-ZM, assisting local communities to develop and implement participatory municipal development plans. This is described in the following example.

Example from Brazil

In Brazil, recent years have seen the growth of the municipal level as a critical focus for action—by both civil society and government. Representing the lowest level of elected government, municipal level initiatives and partnerships are increasingly the focus of investment by federal and state government policies and programmes and the arena of NGO action. One organization that has been at the forefront of this development at a practical level is a local NGO, CTA-ZM, working (among other things) on a ‘Programme for Local Development’ that aims to develop municipal rural development plans in three municipalities of Minas Gerais. The mission of this NGO is to strengthen small farmer organizations, to promote equity of social relations and to promote public debate about conserving natural resources, sustainable agriculture and local development in ways that influence public policy formulation and implementation, by developing and disseminating experiences (processes, methods and technologies).

The programme for local development is based on a deep-rooted political vision of rights, the value of societal debate, environmental sustainability and the

urgency of practical options for smallholders. Working initially with participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and farmer participatory research methods to facilitate understanding and to plan and develop innovations, they soon perceive a ceiling to the impact they were having. Waiting for ‘the right’ political party to win elections became a problematic strategy for scaling up impact. This, added to an excessive workload for a limited number of dedicated farmer trade union activists, led to formalizing the idea of ‘municipal rural development plans’, based on wider partnerships. This marked the start of a diverse range of ‘spaces for reflection’ to enable local governance, negotiation and conflict management that drives concrete municipal action. Today, this initiative has developed into an elaborate process of continual consultation and strategic realignment in which the PRA is but one of many processes critical for participatory development. . . .

The key impacts can hardly be overestimated when looking to the challenges of local governance and the promises it entails for more democratic and effective local policy-making and service delivery. The impacts to date include enhanced political maturity, making viable what were hitherto unlikely partnerships, making the municipal council accountable, developing a collective vision, and increasing the scope of community level action, next to concrete changes in the field of agrochemical-free products. . . . All three municipalities continue to deal with three types of challenges: political, organizational/institutional and financial. However, they now recognize these challenges as shared responsibilities between previously divergent partners.

Source: Guijt, I. and Florisbello, G.R. Participatory municipal development plans in Brazil: divergent partners constructing common futures. Final draft, prepared for the ECDPM-ACE Europe Seminar on MIC and Local Governance, February 2004.

How did the NGO govern this process to achieve this impact? What we noted to be key was the importance attached to the learning and capacity-building strategy used to create a broader partnership and a collective vision on rural development. In three different perspectives: 1) the sequence of capacity-building steps, 2) the participants involved, 3) the skills transferred.

Sequence of steps. Because the municipal planning processes were a novel strategy, CTA-ZM and the

partners found it important to draw lessons from the first experiences. Accidental learning happens all the time but it was considered not the most efficient way to learn nor would it necessarily lead to improved actions. Learning, however, can be improved by conscious processes to systematize experiences with those involved. The learning would then offer the opportunity to construct a collective clarity on all the issues connected to rural planning. The second step was to analyse the consequences for

planning, also by creating opportunities for strategic analysis by local leaders. Thus enough time was dedicated to collective reflection with municipal councillors and other local leaders to develop a shared sense of what local development planning represents (which should be more than an artificial construction to obtain resources for short-term development). This collective construction was a way of valuing the unique differences of each process, and thereby avoiding the idea that there is a single formula or model that can be followed. Once the lessons learned were identified, workshops were organized to discuss the conclusions with the stakeholders. The NGO and its partners actually came back to the stakeholders to involve them in feedback sessions. Through this process, the challenges became clearer and this triggered the stakeholders (state and non-state) to become involved in municipal planning.

Participants involved. In the beginning, the focus was strongly on capacity building for leadership. Only later was the circle enlarged. Training the leaders increased the participation of their organization in the process.

Skills transferred. The capacity building was not skill or issue specific. It was specifically focused on public policy issues: building partnerships, dealing with conflicts, appraisals and planning. This training built the political and methodological capacities of participants.

The VNG International project is ongoing and will take three years. It is part of a larger programme of SALA-IDA (the development agency of the Swedish Association of Communities) and consists of delivering advisory services to RALGA on organizational development, backup and on-the-job-training of RALGA staff. The objective is to strengthen the government association and its position in Rwanda. In

both cases the local government institution is their client. VNG International works on a commercial basis with contracts defining its tasks, performance and output. The FCM experience is derived from a project that ran from 1992 to 1999 between the Rural District of Nyanga in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe and the Canadian town of Rossland, British Columbia. It focused on improving municipal management and services.

What comes out of these two cases is that both organizations recognize all the characteristics of quality identified from the SNV practice, but they would rank them somewhat differently.

Managing political processes. The importance of being able to navigate well in a complex political environment: local governments have to operate in a complex, multilayered political system where different people frequently make different decisions that do not mesh with each other or may even be diametrically opposed. For advisers who have not experienced local government ways of working, it is difficult to understand the dynamics. Therefore, practitioner's knowledge is a critically important element of the intervention strategy: working with advisers who are or who have been part of local government somewhere else in the world, as politicians or officials. These peer-to-peer exchanges inspire confidence and openness between colleagues. The setting does not become advisers versus clients. The more you are involved in policy processes, the more seniority you require in your advisory team. Because of the complexity of these political processes, VNG International suggests that advisers need to specialize—be advisers for state agencies or for non-state organizations. Including the state–non-state equation in the advisory practice is important, but the adviser must choose a starting point. Both organizations must make

sure not to bypass the local government as the legitimate institutional framework, even when it is difficult not to do so. For VNG, this means that every step or change in the advisory process is endorsed by political commitment. In highly politicized environments, situations can change rapidly. Arrangements must be flexible but the client should always remain as the controlling organization. Both VNG and FCM also pay a lot of attention to involving the local government association even when this organization is still weak. The challenge is to create a local government movement that transcends party lines.

Identifying and supporting formal and informal leadership. Make leaders work together. Advisers must acknowledge and respect the institutional framework including the formal leadership in place. In both formal and informal cases, this is the point of departure. However, it is not always easy to identify accountable local leadership. What you need, according to VNG International, is ‘a mayor that feels responsible for the development of the whole municipality and is willing to be held responsible for that’. However, change agents are not necessarily linked to the formal and public arena. When departing from a collaborative view on policy-making, make sure that all change agents, formal and informal, work together and that they acknowledge each other’s contribution in the process.

Creating links for change. Vertical links sustain changes in local governance processes. Integrate vertical links into the advisory process that connects the local level to higher government levels. As FCM

states, ‘No change can be sustainable unless it leads to some policy changes and when needed, is supported by the country legal framework. We try to ensure that policies stemming from the local level practical experience are translated at the national level by policies or laws that are enabling for municipal governments.’

Building a team of local capacity builders. In both cases, the practitioners are external to the client’s organization. However, we recognize in the Canadian organization the concern to develop a group of local capacity builders to replicate the initiative. When we look at the particular project, we notice that 40 Zimbabwean instructors were selected from district councils to go out and provide new insights to local governance policies and leadership. FCM departs greatly from the typical partnership model that supports direct cooperation between municipalities from the North and the South.

Creating a critical environment. Trigger critical reflection and create a critical environment. Weak organizations tend to absorb any idea or suggestion coming from the outside as a solution to their problems. Especially VNG International identified a critical environment as one of the main characteristics of quality they try to pursue in their advisory practice. Such an environment should stimulate clients to formulate for themselves their objectives instead of considering only their needs and shortcomings. FCM is more inclined to accompany the client in trying to find the best way out of problems, because this contributes to client ownership.

Moving ahead

Lessons learned for better advisory practice

Where was SNV successful and how do we integrate the successes in future practice? SNV advisers are much appreciated in the field because of their personal qualities and their technical knowledge. Qualities named and admired were openness, ability to listen, flexibility, kindness. Human resources management systems acknowledge these strengths but integrating the rich human capital into the new ways of working proves to be difficult. The multidisciplinary skills of SNV staff are a strength in advisory practice. Staff members work as a team, pooling their skills effectively to complement each other. As a team, they can influence policy at various levels.

A gap still exists between experience and commitment and the new ambitions—a gap that needs to be filled to make the jump from the rhetoric on new advisory practices to real practice. Not all SNV staff members will be good advisers, but they can still play an important role in technical back-up to the advisory process.

This remark brings us to a second strong feature of SNV: its commitment to learning, and in particular, learning with the client. Until now, however, there have been no clear strategies or modes of activity to support this desire to learn with the client. Little evidence is collected and analysed on how clients learn. New instruments can be considered to acquaint advisers with the ways of working of their clients' organizations, particularly government institutions, as a basis for fostering

organizational learning within the client, within SNV, and for the two together.

A third feature that appears in the case studies of stronger institutions was the understanding of the specificity of the local level. At local level, development efforts are confronted with dynamics and cross-sectoral relations, with priorities and challenges that are different from those at the central level. Consequently, approaches and instruments should be specific.

The following learning areas have been identified throughout the BAP reference groups and discussions with individual advisers and clients. These learning areas are connected to the characteristics of quality:

Developing clear modalities for integrating SNV values into the advisory practice. For example, on gender there is a need to consider in more detail the implications for women and for relations between men and women of democratic decentralization within the local governance context. Evidence on the effect of decentralization on gender issues is limited and scattered. More practical research could be done in this field.

Analysing the general local governance context. Advisers should be especially aware of the governance processes in their area. Such awareness requires formal and documented diagnosis of interactions between governance organizations. A better insight into the environment will provide SNV and its clients with more relevant indicators for monitoring change with regard to governance issues. Further, this should become part of a strategy to improve the access of local organizations to reliable information.

Addressing central–local links in the context of decentralization. Much more attention should be paid in the advisory process to refining instruments and mechanisms to promote accountability at all levels and in both state and non-state organizations.

Understanding and managing political processes. How can SNV advisers help refine the formal and informal processes of decision-making to meet the need for more democratization?

Being selective with the input of technical expertise. Clients recognize the technical knowledge of SNV more than anything else it offers. The learning issue here is how to instil technical expertise while investing more in non-technical expertise connected with the advisory process and the learning capacity of the client.

Managing networks. The concept of networking is quite popular in the different SNV countries but theoretical analysis on how networks function needs strengthening to reach an effect beyond a scattered exchange of information. This point relates to the SNV network as well as to using networks in the advisory practice itself. Effective networking is crucial when trying to build strategic alliances to better articulate SNV values, to advocate change, to stimulate a transparent information flow, to improve access to information, and so on.

Emphasizing the importance of critical dialogue to give the advice added value (see section ‘Internalize capacity building’, page 26). More attention should be given to evaluating and monitoring together with the client.

Learning modalities of the client. SNV is known as a learning organization; it was therefore surprising to conclude that little research is being done on learning methods and strategies for the client. Most advisers have no particular idea as to how their clients learn.

The cases and the field mission raised additional unresolved issues that instigate thoughtful reflection on how SNV positions itself vis-à-vis its clients in its advisory services on local governance. These issues relate to the following:

Focus on meso-level organizations. There is a clear rationale behind SNV’s choice to focus on meso-level organizations. This focus should not be exclusive; from the cases and the characteristics of quality it becomes clear that organizations providing a critical environment for advisory services can be equally good partners in achieving change in local governance issues.

Profile of SNV as an advocacy organization. To what extent should SNV be involved in regional and national advocacy campaigns? The official policy is that SNV should not do advocacy work directly, but rather through clients (potentially with SNV capacity-building support); however, internally opinions are not yet fully aligned.

Considering that SNV pursues better understanding and cooperation through its local governance agenda between state and non-state organizations, advocacy campaigns might obstruct efforts to strengthen the interface. Explicit attention to the interface between local stakeholders is new for SNV. Of course, in SNV’s former way of working, people did meet and collaborate, but such meetings cannot be compared with the idea of stakeholder partnership within local governance processes.

Selection of clients. Should SNV be more proactive in selecting its clients and to what extent will this choice be determined by the agenda of SNV’s own change?

Building of advisory teams. From the cases, we can conclude that an adviser is much more than a facilitator or a technical expert. An adviser can perform tasks, when requested by the client, that assume facilitating or technical capacities. However,

the Keiyo County Council case clearly demonstrates the difference between an adviser and a facilitator or technical expert. In this case, the adviser asked colleagues to come in to perform facilitating or technical tasks. The conclusion is that different roles may be needed in an advisory process, but that the adviser is in fact the 'motor'.

Link between private sector development and economic development. It will prove useful to explore and exploit the links between local governance and the private sector. Looking to the characteristic 6, ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced, it is clear that generating income will always be present as a critical feature in advisory processes.

Development of new areas of expertise. New areas, for example, are accountability systems and law enforcement, which is one of the key building blocks of good governance. The lack of law enforcement was identified as one of the root causes of poverty in the areas where SNV works. Typically, local law enforcement faces particular obstacles, such as insufficient knowledge of local laws, difference in interpretation between regions, inadequate information flows and access to information for lower government levels, links with traditional law systems, and lack of resources.

Development of links with academic and research institutions. These links can update the knowledge of the advisers but will also provide academics with information on developments in the field and insights gained from local practice. Research institutes can contribute to the capacity of advisers to integrate new research techniques in their advisory process.

Access to funds. SNV should not engage in competition over funds with potential clients or national meso-level organizations. This is an important issue for debate as SNV is increasingly forced to look for external funding to finance its own interventions.

The way forward

How to develop the materials and indicators into performance measures and learning instruments?

The list with indicators provides a good starting point towards the way forward. Within the broader aim of measuring and strengthening the quality of SNV's performance as an advisory service, they can be incorporated into an institutionalized learning system. To conclude this section, we provide ideas for addressing larger issues involved in taking that next step.

Importance of information management. An efficient management information system including descriptions of experiences and cases is a precondition for successful benchmarking.

Benefit of internal benchmarking. It makes sense to invest first in benchmarking within the SNV countries and even within one country. This will definitely contribute to improvement of the advisory practice. Actually, all SNV advisers are working to find their way in the new SNV strategies for advisory services. As the case studies point out, they can learn a lot from each other. Internal benchmarking will also lead to a refined set of indicators that can be used as a starting point for more in-depth benchmarking with external organizations.

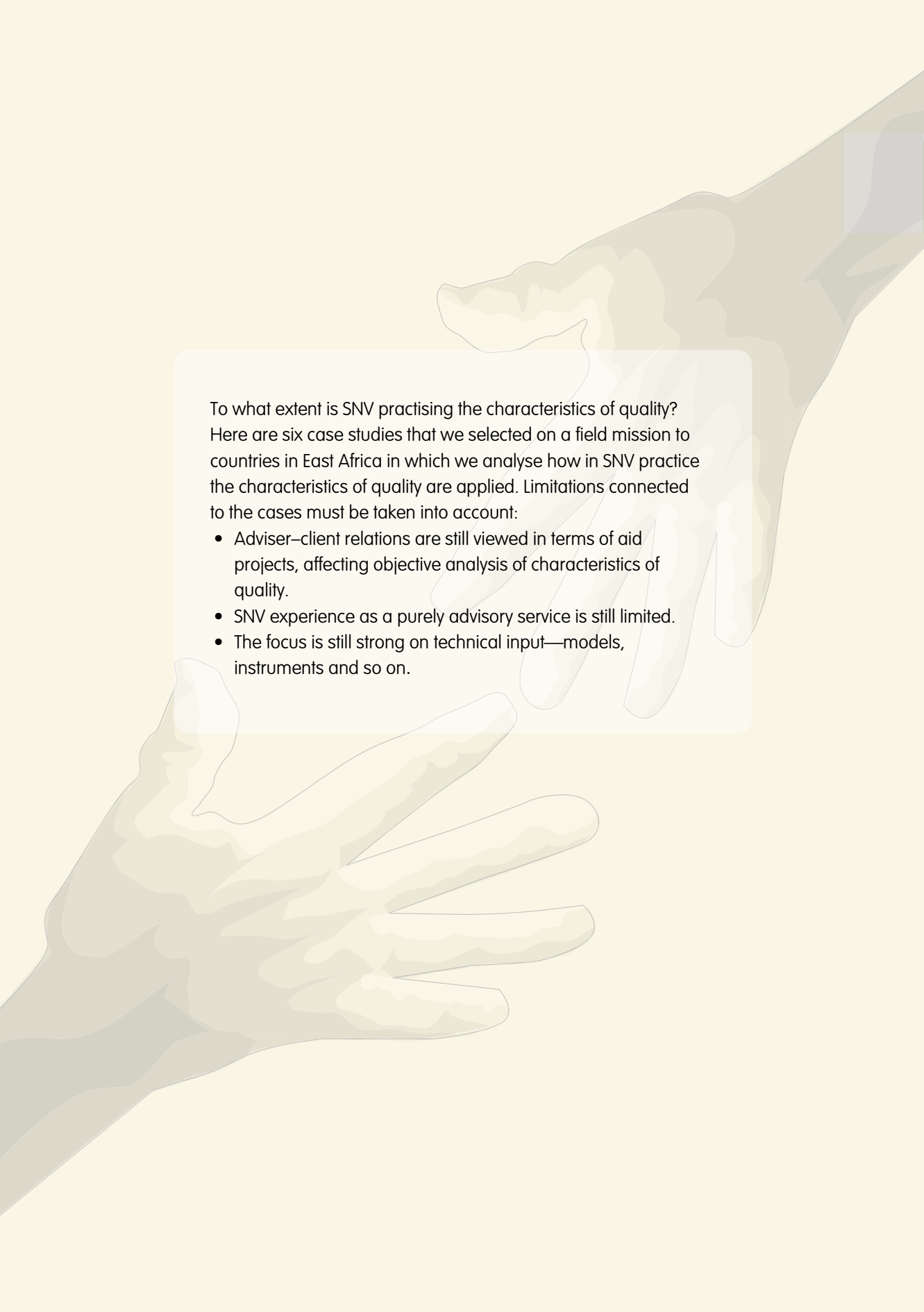
Management of network. The better SNV is able to manage its network of partners (national and international) the easier it will be to engage external organizations in the benchmarking.

Strategic positioning should set the benchmark priorities. SNV is strengthening its strategic positioning. When it finishes, it can decide which benchmarks to focus on. For example, SNV countries can agree to benchmark only one or a specific number of characteristics of quality during one year.



Part 2

Case studies



To what extent is SNV practising the characteristics of quality?
Here are six case studies that we selected on a field mission to countries in East Africa in which we analyse how in SNV practice the characteristics of quality are applied. Limitations connected to the cases must be taken into account:

- Adviser–client relations are still viewed in terms of aid projects, affecting objective analysis of characteristics of quality.
- SNV experience as a purely advisory service is still limited.
- The focus is still strong on technical input—models, instruments and so on.

Kenya: Internal factors of improved service delivery—Keiyo County Council

The Keiyo County Council case study illustrates the obstacles advisers faced in trying to get the client over expecting donor funding from SNV and rather to appreciate the benefits of the advisory service. Overall, however, the service was a success story. Through the expertise SNV provided, the council became aware of its image in the community and worked to deliver the services the community wanted from it. Local dynamics began to come into balance. Rewarding was the fact that the community and neighbouring councils noted and appreciated the improved performance.

We should not underestimate the problems that local governments face as decentralization turns responsibility for local development over to them. In Kenya, the serious problems that exist within local councils are partly due to decentralization. The Kenyan Local Government Act stipulates that county councils are to provide residents with services such as promoting and regulating business, funding capital projects to provide water, building and maintaining roads, and providing education. A council draws its funds from two main sources: the Local Authority Transfer Fund, allocated through the Ministry of Local Government, and the revenue it collects locally.

Keiyo County Council is just one example of a struggling local government. Keiyo District is inhabited by the Keiyo community, a Kalenjin subtribe. The district, in Rift Valley Province, occupies an area of approximately 1500 km² with a population of about 150,000 and population density of about 100 persons/km². The council's ability to manage was inadequate; its staff was poorly motivated; and it felt squeezed by the central government's urgency to implement national plans, locked in by

rigid bureaucratic procedures, frustrated by lacking the necessary money to operate on, and resented by discontented residents.

The Keiyo County Council knew that its citizens had little regard for it, but it was only after a survey was conducted in 2002 that they realized residents often did not get the services that the council should have provided. Even its own staff was dissatisfied, leading to a general strike that attracted the attention of the whole nation. Change was needed, but where to start? SNV, which had a tradition of working in the district, proposed that the council start with itself. This was the first time that SNV advisers in this district were to test their new way of working—that is, giving advice, not funds. SNV started working with it in November 2002.

Keiyo County Council consists of elected councillors headed by the chair and executive officers with employees under the supervision of the clerk, some of whom are posted by central government. The council has 28 councillors and 46 staff members. The council is responsible for making local policy. The challenge was to get the entire council to reflect on the quality and effectiveness of its services.

Sequence of events

Assessment of the ‘popularity and quality of service delivery’: four people from the council staff conducted a survey among residents and the staff to find out what was lacking in council performance.

- Workshop 1, to review the assessment, brought together 20 staff for three days to ponder the question: How can we improve service delivery to the residents? The outcome was to be used to generate a strategic plan for reorganizing the council.
 - Workshop 2, for four days with the same participants, examined the internal organization of the county council and way the council works.
 - Workshop 3 started drawing up a strategic plan to address the problems.
- The consensus was that change within the organization was needed. The council realized that an internal team was necessary with team members selected on merit and available time rather than on clan, as had happened previously. The most urgent issue to solve was to determine what the council stood for and for whom it was doing the self-assessment.
- Workshop 4 was intensive training for members of the new self-assessment team, consisting of three councillors and three senior staff members.
 - Interviews and staff analysis were carried out to ascertain the level of performance of staff in relation to their work and to recommend measures to raise the quality of performance (see box 4). Analysis concluded that revenue collection was

Box 4. Findings and recommendations from the survey

Findings	Recommendations
Unskilled in collecting revenue	Staff to be trained in revenue collection skills
Staff suspicious about the internal reflection process	Promote interaction between councillors and council staff through social activities; hold joint workshops for councillors and staff
Some staff overworked, some underworked and not motivated	Balance workload among staff and improve working conditions
Duties duplicated	Outline proper job descriptions
Poor flow of information among staff	Increase training in communication and social skills for all staff; train accounts and secretarial staff in information technology
Staff aware of poor performance, attributed to lack of facilities	
High expectation for SNV financial aid	

the first issue to work on. A number of workshops have already been organized involving revenue collectors.

The process

The full council became committed to the process. Staff and councillors became increasingly involved, and once they started, there was no stopping them. Even after national and local elections in December 2002, the new council decided to go on. SNV advisers stayed in the background but provided knowledge and training at the participants' request.

What can we conclude from the outcome? Can we analyse the successes and shortcomings of SNV advisory practice as measured by its characteristics of quality?

Outcome:

Ongoing struggle with financial constraints

At the end of the process, unfortunately, councillors and council staff are now back to their original plea, asking for money and facilities (offices and computers) to put into practice what they have learned. The frustrating point is not that the council still thinks it needs financial resources—because it does—but that it still sees SNV as a donor agency and wants to rely on it to provide external funds.

Characteristics of quality:

7) Provide realistic advice; 11) connect the micro and the macro

SNV advisers acknowledge that they need to learn more about the guidelines for collecting national revenue to better

understand the overall framework of fiscal decentralization. Tangible incentives are critical for drawing in wider participation and commitment. Where change in routines is called for and where risks and threats to entrenched power and authority are likely, participants from all sides must be convinced that they will benefit.

Outcome:

Improved quality of dialogue within the council and with the public

Many of the SNV team efforts, however, had a distinctly positive outcome. Much had to do with getting the council to look objectively at its performance.

'Before we were involved in the process, it never came to our mind that we had to go out of our office and talk to people, explain to them what we are doing for them and ask them for their opinion. Some communities did not even know that money from the council was going to them for infrastructure or social services.'
[a leader of the self-assessment team]

Characteristics of quality:

4) Foster critical thinking and a challenging environment; 6) ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced

The parameters of the problem being considered were set by using a specific analytical model and keeping key issues within its framework. Initial distrust turned to finding a way out of the problem. When workshop participants felt their opinion was taken into account, they gained confidence and were more ready to talk. Councillors, staff and members of the self-assessment

team increased their communication skills: 'We saw how SNV was interviewing people, showing genuine interest in their opinions and trying to understand these opinions without feeling personally criticized.' SNV advisers remained neutral, trying to determine what were the delicate issues.

Outcome: Better understanding about the role of the county council

The council now better understands that the public genuinely desires to have an efficient county council that deals with their socio-economic problems. Originally, the council

focused only on financial issues and members said, 'We have no money and no facilities and therefore we cannot provide services'. But on internal reflection the council was able to appreciate its role: creating a district in which an adequate infrastructure network, safe water, a healthy environment and human security abounds within a decentralized, gender-sensitive political system.

Characteristic of quality: 9) Take local dynamics into account

The SNV local government adviser deliberately minimized the technical part of the process (see the example following).

Example. Joseph Langat, SNV local government adviser, on using models in advisory practice

I never impose concepts and models on clients and I do not overwhelm them with a bunch of new words, acronyms or abbreviations. Nevertheless, some models such as the organization self-assessment and the integrated organization model are useful for achieving a positive result. Facilitating people to use certain models helps them simplify the confusing reality. Asking such questions can lead them beyond symptoms and help them discover and grasp the real issues. People learn they can find answers to difficult questions by asking the right questions. In doing so, they can appreciate themselves as positive factors in the process. Through the process people, who are the heart of the organization, start to grow. While they grow, the chaos becomes organized and the main lines to follow start to appear. You notice that 'change leaders' gradually take up responsibility and start mobilizing other people; because they understand the benefit of the process and the models, they can explain it to others and gain confidence as they do so.

The full county council accepted the process unanimously, including costs and time involvement of its staff. If they had not gone through part of the diagnosis phase together this would not have happened. To reach this stage, people need to learn to listen to each other, recognize different opinions without feeling threatened by them, and learn that the biggest part of the solution is within and among themselves. I feel my task was successfully done because the client now knows itself well and can present itself to the outside world.

SNV was also selective about when and how to bring in its advisers. Training sessions were specific, such as for revenue collectors and for the self-assessment team members. The adviser well knew that although the council wanted to address shortcomings in service delivery, he wanted to bring about change in the way the council dealt with its tasks. But the adviser never followed a strict timetable with set consecutive steps. Local government advisers must accept that the process is not linear; thoughts change constantly, and people come to conclusions when they are ready to do so.

Outcome: Better performance

Neighbouring councils noticed that Keiyo District County Council was markedly improving its performance. Staff attendance in the office improved, job descriptions were better respected, staff wages were paid on time and in a transparent manner,

the Local Authority Transfer Fund was disbursed in an accountable manner, and more revenue was collected. Tax collectors took their work more seriously and became more accountable. As a consequence, another council in the district committed itself to a comparable exercise with SNV.

Characteristic of quality: 5) Ensure that the client controls the process and the solution

SNV advisers used the council's determination to change for the better as a starting point. SNV never contradicted what the client felt was important but used client views as an opportunity to promote beneficial change. Without forcing an agenda, the adviser took every opportunity to commit councillors and staff to the process. In the end, council members felt that they were working on concrete solutions to pressing problems and that they always controlled the process.

Kenya: Community support for participatory land-use planning in Kajiado District

Participatory land-use planning was the technique SNV introduced in Kajiado District for managing resources locally. The divisional community development organizations set up were still weak as the SNV project ended and were not yet fully capable of handling the power politics from above. However, trained local capacity builders had evolved into technical advisers, with the result that the district markedly improved its performance in local development.

SARDEP was the Semi-Arid Rural Development Programme, which started in 1999. It helped build and strengthen hundreds of community-rooted organizations in four districts of Kenya

including Kajiado District. Kajiado is a pastoral and agro-pastoral district in the southern part of Kenya characterized by frequent droughts and irregular rainfall. Covering 21,105 km², it borders Nairobi

to the north and Tanzania to the south. According to the 1999 population census, it has a population of 406,054.

A principal land use is extensive livestock production. Also important is tourism as Amboseli National Park is located in the district, and initiatives are under way to exploit Kajiado's tourism potential.

Limited community participation in development as well as limited benefits to community from exploitation of key natural resources, mainly wildlife and minerals, have been concerns for years. Degradation of the district's natural resources is a problem. Focusing on natural resource management the community formed a group in which local residents analysed their resource-based problems and planned solutions that they could implement themselves, using a new planning technique that SNV introduced—participatory land-use planning or PLUP.

PLUP was chosen as a strategy for poverty reduction, also in line with the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process in which the district was actively involved. Key pillars are *people* and the *natural resources* from which they derive their livelihood. PLUP sought to address development challenges that included degradation of natural resources, limited community participation in development and gender inequity, mainly from a community perspective. Everyone involved with PLUP agreed that it was a promising way to promote more effective resource management. SNV also promoted establishing community development committees, which then took over PLUP initiatives.

The challenge: create community demand and responsive local government

PLUP aimed to bring to the surface the real needs of the community, to urge local government to be more responsive, and to get civil society to advocate citizens' needs. 'Local government' in this case refers both to county councils (the lowest democratic structure within the government system) and to the central government units working in the districts and divisions. All government officials in the line ministry departments are paid by the central government. In a county council, only the clerk is a central government official—but is paid by the county council. By 1992, the Kenyan government had decided to decentralize planning work to lower government levels, but in reality this policy was not activated for a long time.

The PLUP objective was quite a challenge. Until recently, the decentralization programme did not have a great reputation as being responsive to citizens' needs. Expectations are now high from the new government, installed in the beginning of 2003, and from the promised new constitution. However, it remains to be seen if decentralization policies will produce more democratization and if community participation will increase. Additionally challenging for SNV was the fact that it had had little experience in working with county councils.

Stakeholders

A broad spectrum of stakeholders was involved in PLUP:

- Social Services Department of the Olkejuado County Council

- District divisions of the ministries of Agriculture, Education, Livestock, and Water Resources Development in three divisions
- Community leaders
- Communities in three pilot areas
- NGOs such as KWADA—the Kajiado Women’s Advocacy and Development Association, which grew out of previous SNV interventions in the region, and which concentrates on lobbying and advocacy to increase women’s active participation in governance (see also example on p. 24–26)
- Team of SNV advisers
In its training, SNV specifically involved women through a separate programme for KWADA.

Steps taken

SNV advisory practice took place in four phases: 1) preparing the ground, 2) focusing on institutional framework, 3) focusing on raising awareness, and 4) maintaining the process.

Preparing the ground: working with people and structures in place

- Three ad hoc teams were established to introduce the participatory technique in each division: 1) staff and elected people from county councils, 2) central government divisional and district staff, 3) NGOs and SNV advisers. The primary purpose of these teams of local capacity builders was to help introduce PLUP in sub-locations, with backup from SNV advisers.
- The local capacity builders were trained to facilitate sub-locational PLUP, advise other government staff on how to work with the community, and assist community members in formulating sub-locational plans.

Focusing on institutional framework: preparing the ground for a new decentralized structure

- Democratic elections of divisional and sub-locational community committees were held. The primary purpose of the committees was to mobilize communities to implement the PLUP sub-locational community plans. The sub-locational committees and the divisional teams helped set up community committees, named divisional community development organizations or DCDOs, to stimulate community action. Community members elected their representatives and agreed to establish their DCDO as an NGO. Each DCDO has several hundred members, who work as volunteers. Seven DCDOs are now established, one in each division of Kajiado District.
- In establishing the DCDOs, women leaders were encouraged to take a more active role.
- As members of the DCDOs had no specific technical background, the local capacity builders helped them update sub-locational plans with the community and later, to ‘shadow’ government officials to facilitate DCDO activities.

Focusing on raising awareness: trying to influence power relations

- County council members requested a training workshop on participatory approaches. The local capacity builders used this opportunity to raise awareness on the importance of participatory planning.
- It was crucial to convince community members that they could move forward without external funds. In the end, communities accepted the structure of

the DCDO as a way to facilitate and to some extent manage community interactions with government officials, donors and other external development organizations.

Maintaining the process

- All those involved adhered to a strict code of implementing roles and responsibilities without external interference, which greatly helped maintain PLUP. Through DCDOs, the communities control the process and choose when to update their plans. DCDOs mobilize resources including funding and technical support. Local capacity builders and SNV staff respond quickly to DCDO requests because these fall within their normal services.

Participatory land-use planning creating more responsive local government

Efforts to embed the PLUP technique in existing government structures and in the community brought concrete results. In four years five divisional plans were formulated, local capacity builders published PLUP guidelines, and seven DCDOs were established. The strong emphasis on people in the PLUP process, however, brought about the most important result—it stimulated initiative and built capacity.

What can we conclude in terms of outcome? Let us look in detail at SNV advisory practice as measured by its characteristics of quality.

Outcome:

Sustainability not fully ensured

A number of measures were taken towards ensuring that stakeholders would continue the activities:

- All government officials used as local capacity builders had long-term service contracts. They worked on contract with and for SNV, having permission from their superiors to do so
- All plans and steps were documented
- The DCDOs were incorporated as NGOs
- The DCDOs are still weak and do not know how to move on. They are under immense pressure to deal with increased community demand but their local government counterpart is not yet ready to work with them. The local capacity builders were not granted the permission from their line ministries to continue their work. SNV has made several efforts to connect DCDOs and their plans to potential donors, but this attempt was clearly not sufficient to guarantee the financial sustainability. At present, only KWADA has attracted external funds for future initiatives. People, however, are becoming increasingly impatient to see concrete results of their PLUP involvement.

Characteristics of quality:

- 9) Take local dynamics into account;
- 11) connect the micro and the macro

Whether PLUP becomes a success is solidly in the hands of the DCDOs and the community. However, there is no evidence that the PLUP initiative has put institutional change (for example downward accountability by government on planning issues) on the agenda. The participatory

approach has not yet become policy. But ultimately, community participation can become effective and financially sustainable only if it engages with issues of institutional change. The effectiveness of participation is a question of accountability and of changes in organizational behaviour and planning processes within local government bureaucracies.

The way forward is for an active civil society to express citizen demands to a government that can deliver needed public services. External organizations and advisers need to be ready to address any arising tensions. However, the road to institutional responsiveness (the congruence between community preferences, public policies, and local budgets) contains more than one stumbling block; one such is the politics involved in local and central relations. Kenya has a long history of the elite taking over local power structures, and only a serious effort to strengthen accountability at all government levels will alter this state of affairs.

Outcome:
Increased capacity to use participatory land-use planning techniques

Many people at different levels saw the concept of ‘participation’ put into practice as they used the PLUP technique. Government officials could grow into their new role as technical advisers in planning and resource management, knowing they were at the fore among the districts. They now understood why their top-down way of working from the past was not always successful: it lacked clear appreciation of existing local resources—human, financial

and natural. Efforts to ensure that PLUP would be inclusive of all groups gave opportunity to women and volunteer community members.

Characteristic of quality:
2) Internalize capacity building

Introducing the PLUP technique was a matter of teamwork. The core team consisted of SNV staff and local capacity builders. Local capacity builders conceived the details of the capacity-building strategy to ensure that participatory techniques were embedded in the cooperation between local government and communities; SNV provided the technical expertise and backup. Quality control, refinement of methods, constant checks and balances, and planning—all were collective team efforts. Building capacity started slowly with workshops, then small pilots using a learning-by-doing approach in which local capacity builders gradually gained experience. They were free to practise what they had learned, calling on SNV help when needed, and they could change their approach when something did not work. Regular meetings to discuss experiences boosted confidence as the capacity builders evolved from trainees to technical advisers.

Outcome:
Increased awareness about the magnitude of local development

‘We take our day-to-day work much more seriously than before’, stated one of the women leaders. Government officials became more aware that although things may be decided at central level, changes

are brought about locally; the challenge is to identify who is at the local centre and who or what makes things move or change. Some even stated that more scope for local policy-making would improve local development—an opinion that elected officials did not necessarily share. Although not all officials are convinced, many are now requesting the communities to draw up their own local planning documents. Male local capacity builders have even become advocates for increasing women's participation, and they are definitely more gender sensitive than their colleagues.

The increased involvement of women in planning and management committees, thanks to the efforts of KWADA that supported their leadership, contributed to a higher appreciation of involving women in planning issues. The change dynamics were evident not only in the social relations but also in processes and results. For instance, men gave utmost consideration to ideas that women proposed and adopted them on merit, sessions and venues for planning were adjusted to allow women to participate, men started insisting that key and strategic positions in committees prone to abuse be taken up by women leaders, simpler and realistic plans were developed, and committees that women managed demonstrated superior results.

Characteristics of quality:

3) Recognize leadership; 5) ensure that the client controls the process and the solution

To make people understand the magnitude of the challenges and the opportunities for local development, local capacity builders championed the participatory approach. They got colleagues and community members involved in the process. It became clear how important it was to

identify local informal leaders, urge them to take up responsibility, and support them in their task. Women's organizations proved to be easier to work with.

Transparent elections motivated people to elect the best leaders, although local chiefs tended not to become involved, which obstructed the DCDOs somewhat.

Outcome:

Contribution to a more effective framework for local governance

Cooperation and participation among all parties concerned are at the heart of local governance. Participatory techniques to collect and analyse data are essential for better planning for use of the resources available. Because of the interaction and discussions involved, community members became more critical about what the local government was supplying them. They now had their own priorities. Their task was to translate community need into concrete requests to local government for public services. Increased clarity on who played what role contributed to better understanding between state and non-state participants.

PLUP also created links within local government institutions, raising many questions and forcing government officials to involve other organizations and other departments—illustrating that an integrated approach to development had real merit.

Characteristic of quality:

8) Include all key stakeholders

The SNV approach entailed clear efforts to rebuild relationships between citizens and their local governments by trying to

work on both sides of the equation, that is, by going beyond 'civil society' or 'state-based' approaches to focus on where they came together, creating new forms of participation. Introducing PLUP created opportunity for interaction between civil society, government officials, elected people and the community. The SNV advisers needed special skills to handle the

resulting tensions and resistance. Overall, SNV interventions were not drastic: community participation in planning was primarily to collect and analyse data on local resources. The issues of decision-making, policy development, implementation and evaluation were not at stake.

Tanzania: Dialogue as a first step to joint action—Monduli

This study is about bringing the private sector and civil society into efforts to decentralize government services. Much of the change was brought about through dialogue. SNV advisers were successful in getting acknowledged the importance of local leadership. They demonstrated their expertise in fostering a critical and challenging environment that could help bring about change.

Tanzania adopted new legislation in the late 1990s aimed at devolving significant powers to locally elected urban and rural councils to provide basic services and promote local economic development. The central government, however, retained control of regional administration. The purpose of decentralization is to improve service delivery as well as to improve local democratic governance. To this end, local authorities have been authorized to oversee the work force, generate revenue, plan and budget. The Local Government Reform Programme (1997) is a base on which this decentralization is built.

Doubts, however, exist. Is there genuine political commitment to it, or are the important decisions, including setting priorities in funding, still made at the centre? A dilemma for civil society is whether it should now participate in local governance or if its involvement in community affairs should continue to be in providing services. There are interesting examples of local partnership developing between

district councils and civil society organizations, as for example in Same District. The Monduli case described in this study was partly inspired by the Same experience. In 1998 Same District established a district advisory committee to improve development cooperation in the district. This led to the establishment of the district education board, which brought a range of public and private sector actors together to focus on the specific issue of education. SNV-Tanzania, involved in both cases, used the Same experience to introduce the concept of dialogue and joint action among local government, business and civil society in Monduli District. SNV intervention coincided with the end of a traditional SNV-funded project with the Monduli District Council. This study focuses mainly on efforts to get civil society and private sectors to talk with local government, specifically on concerns of the business community. One of the Same-inspired bodies, the district advisory committee, plays a role in bringing together both the business

community and civil society for dialogue on a range of development issues.

Monduli District is one of five districts in Arusha Region. The district headquarters is 46 km west of Arusha Municipality. The last population census in the district (2002) recorded 185,237 people. The district is divided into six divisions, each division divided into wards and villages; there are 20 wards and 73 registered villages in total. The main economic activities in the district are livestock keeping, crop production and wildlife management. More than 90% of the population is engaged in the first two.

Establishing a district advisory committee is an effort whose purpose is to set up an institutionalized political process that brings local development organizations to participate in structured dialogue and decision-making within a district. Monduli set out to build new partnerships between business, the community and local authorities, with emphasis given to working jointly to solve problems. The approach was to build onto existing decision- and policy-making structures of local government, rather than to create parallel structures. This proved to be much more difficult in Monduli than in Same, which remains an exception in Tanzania. Same District has a strong tradition of self-help and is comparatively prosperous. In Monduli the history is of antagonism and lack of cooperation with the government. During the period of socialism, the private sector had no room to develop, and the result is that throughout the country it is weak as compared with the public sector. There are misconceptions about the role of the private sector, and sharp contrast between political will in the central government and local reluctance to support the private sector.

Partners involved

- For public and private sector dialogue: a number of private agencies, Monduli Chamber of Commerce (district branch of TCCIA—the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture), the executive director of the district and several heads of department in Monduli District
- For the district advisory committee: Monduli Chamber of Commerce, NGOs and community-based organizations (represented by the district NGO network MONET), the district executive director, the district commissioner (as chairperson), members of parliament, the district planning officer, and the district administrative secretary from central government
- An SNV adviser

Steps taken

- Strengthening the private sector
- Establishing TCCIA in Monduli in 2000
- Setting up in 2001 a formal system for holding dialogue between the district government and TCCIA
- Establishing the district advisory committee in October 2003

How effective was this programme? Can we explain successes and failures by looking in detail at SNV advisory practice, using its characteristics of quality?



Outcome:

A local perspective to development—the difficult road from rhetoric to awareness

Launching the district advisory committee was a small step but a significant one. It was the first time that the district council took an initiative that was not ordered by the central government or supported by an external donor. The launch was a legal act of the district council, acting as an autonomous and legitimate local government institution. The idea that district offices were not merely extensions of the line ministries widened the perspective on local development. It presented the opportunity for a more integrated development approach, where cooperation with civil society and business is valued. As one councillor stated:

‘Dialogue is important to make councillors see the other side on issues. The private sector and civil society are more advanced on particular issues, such as HIV and gender, and they can keep the government looking forward.’



Characteristic of quality:

1) Connect the micro and the macro

The district commissioner, who is part of central government, having taken part in workshops and a study tour to Same, was one of the first to see the relevance of the district advisory committee. He used his position to bring together a steering group with state and non-state participants. This helped the private sector and civil society feel they were on a par with local government. Yet the momentum is running

down. The district council and its officials are not optimistic and feel their colleagues in Same are ‘much better off’. The district has not yet experienced benefits from the council’s efforts to engage in more dialogue. This point should be addressed by looking at relations between central and local agencies and offices. Where few or no funds have been earmarked by central government, local government has little incentive to engage with local NGOs and the private sector. Why engage in dialogue to plan the development of a district when decisions over funding priorities have already been taken at the centre?



Outcome:

Representative non-state partners for dialogue identified and strengthened

Significant progress has been made in Monduli in strengthening the private sector (and civil society to a lesser extent), which is now in a better position to participate in inter-sectoral governance. SNV helped establish two umbrella organizations, both of which have a seat in the district advisory committee, as detailed below. Setting up a representative institution for local business especially represented a significant step forward.

Local businesses have established a Monduli branch of TCCIA, which they chose to establish as a voluntary organization. Throughout the training programme that SNV helped organize, TCCIA was able to identify and clearly develop its purpose. TCCIA even achieved a certain degree of financial sustainability through a savings and credit fund, which provides the organization with income, in addition to the membership fees that

pay for office and electricity. The 80 members realize and acknowledge that TCCIA has no interest of its own and that its only objective is to represent and assist them. TCCIA is now advising the district council on how to encourage private sector development, indicating that the past communication breakdown is gradually being mended.

Civil society, however, did not succeed in working together to establish a representative organization. Although the umbrella organization that was established in 2002 exists it is not functioning. Lack of funds and facilities for a secretariat are said to be the main problem.

Characteristics of quality:

3) Recognize leadership; 8) include all key stakeholders

SNV advisers allocated considerable time to identifying influential people in the community and talking with people from civil society and business. They made good progress with business people, who quickly saw TCCIA as an asset. From the start, the demand from the private sector was clear for organizational advice and for proper representation to engage in dialogue with the district government. The fact that TCCIA is on speaking terms with government and tries to improve the general business environment puts it in a strong position to encourage cooperation. Although the executive committee of the civil society umbrella organization started strong after the organization was set up, local groups did not succeed in putting forward leaders to champion collaboration and joint action. Self-interest frustrated efforts to build a common platform. SNV acting alone is limited in the change it can bring about. Working cooperatively was exactly the strength of TCCIA in Monduli.

Outcome:

Formal dialogue and institutional framework in place although still fragile

A district advisory committee was installed in October 2003 to give business and community representatives the opportunity to discuss matters with councillors and to advise the district council. However, to date no formal has taken place. The status of dialogue between public and private sectors and TCCIA is not promising either. The mechanism for formal dialogue was agreed in mid-2001, but only one meeting has been held, in September 2001. The public partner has postponed or cancelled all subsequent meetings.

Characteristic of quality:

6) Ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced

SNV advisers clearly demonstrated their knowledge and experience with various types of consultation. Much effort was put into capacity building in organizational development. That the committee and the dialogue are not working is due to the reluctance of the district council (in particular of a small number of leading persons) to give dialogue an opportunity.

Outcome:

Opening up decision-making processes—only at the start

For district-level dialogue, both TCCIA and the civil society umbrella organization depend greatly on district government

leadership. Until now, it had not been possible to get the district executive director, who is in strong control of the local government agenda, to cooperate. In general, decision-making structures and processes remain unclear and thus hamper further development of the district advisory committee. Much needs to be done to promote administrative and political transparency and accountability, both upward to the central government and the donor community and downward. The district council is not convinced that an advisory committee is a good idea.

Characteristic of quality:

4) Foster a critical and challenging environment

Even before SNV prepared to intervene in Monduli, relations between SNV and the district council were not smooth. There is a long and complicated history of tension since 1995, which arose out of SNV moving from functioning as a food aid programme to a development programme, and there were subsequent differences around control of programme funds combined with mixed messages about the role of SNV during the transition from administering a programme to handing it over and moving into the advisory role.

In addition, the council resented the fact that SNV had pulled out from direct funding. SNV was trying to start a new process while the council felt the previous cooperative task had not yet been finished. It was especially hard for the council to accept that funding would no longer be available.

SNV proposed a platform for dialogue within the district council. After running into resistance to this idea, SNV increased training for the business and civil society sectors to encourage discussion and to convince the district to formulate new initiatives. This step resulted in establishing the district advisory committee, but it did not stimulate the key figures within the district council to open up. A solution that SNV then tried was to support a core group of committed staff within the district council to such an extent that the demand for dialogue could no longer be ignored.

The frustration of this experience points out that it is not always possible to replicate what were successful processes or projects in one place in another with a different history of cooperation and different stakeholders. Rather, we must try to understand the current stakeholders' point of view and start from it. And the outcome of the process may be markedly different. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, but sometimes a wheel is not what is needed at a particular time.

Tanzania: Setting up effective interface mechanisms—Moshi District Education Board

Decentralization of education and training called for new guidelines, which the central government did not provide. Moshi established its own independent education board and realized that it was needed to give central government policy a local component. The district commissioner, representing the central government, worked to make the connection. SNV advisers identified local leaders in the business community. However, the board's principal constituents and stakeholders, the parents and the students, have yet to be included in board deliberations.

Focus on districts in the decentralization process

In 1995 the Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Culture issued its education and training policy, which stated that districts, towns and municipalities had to establish their own education and training boards, which were to be responsible for all formal education and training within their given territory.

This move was one of the concrete results in the educational sector of the intertwined processes of decentralization and liberalization. The idea was that government would pass on its responsibilities to communities and community organizations. Consequently, the number of NGOs, CBOs and private institutions complementing the government effort in providing education increased. With the 1997 Local Government Reform Programme, a large number of social services and educational activities and responsibilities became concentrated in the districts. District governments faced two challenges: 1) coordinate the growing number of private and community organizations involved in educational services and 2) manage the new tasks and powers efficiently.

Decentralized policies, requiring local input and initiative

The ministry produced the idea of an education board, but it did not produce the essential guidelines on how to establish these boards, and what should be their structure and working procedures. Yet education boards were established in a number of districts, such as Monduli, Moshi, Rombo and Same. In 2000, Same District was the first to set up a district education board, with a mandate to manage and promote development of education at all levels in the district. It was an innovative precedent, because 1) it was done voluntarily as there were no directives from the centre, and 2) people had to devise their own solutions because there were no clear guidelines.

The positive results of this first pilot, supported by SNV, motivated other districts such as Moshi to follow. Moshi understood that cooperation between government and NGOs was essential.

PAMOJA, an SNV project from 2000 to 2002 and an independent NGO from January 2003 to date, helped establish education boards in five districts of Kilimanjaro Region, in close collaboration with SNV. The five districts are Hai, Moshi,

Mwanga, Rombo and Same. In 1967, the region had 35 primary schools; by 2000, the number had grown to 721.

This case study describes the PAMOJA-SNV intervention, involving the Moshi Rural Council. Moshi District has two independent and autonomous local authorities: Moshi Municipality and Moshi Rural Council, both working under one district commissioner. Each has its own administrative structure and education board. Moshi Rural District counts 78,407 pupils in 194 primary schools with boys and girls in approximately equal numbers.

The central government prepares the education policy and mobilizes resources. The regional educational office advises the immediate lower level, the district education office, which is thus the implementer. It translates information from the national and regional offices for the local situation. The district ensures that information flows to the wards through the ward education officer and to the schools through the head teachers. Planning starts from the bottom; schools and school committees prepare their development plan and take it to the village council for inclusion in the village development plan. The district receives national funds and allocates appropriate amounts to the school accounts.

Stakeholders involved

- District government: in the district a council representative, usually from the Social Service Commission (dealing with education, water and health), represented the local government on the education board
- Civil society, represented by the teachers' trade union, headmasters' organization, teachers' resource centre, school committees. These categories differ from one district to another

- Private sector, represented by the chamber of commerce, private educational and teacher training institutions
- Representatives from central government: chief district school inspectors
- SNV and PAMOJA advisers

Steps taken

- Stakeholders took the following steps:
- Established task forces to support and promote joint activities in the education sector
- Made an inventory of stakeholders and held a meeting with them to sensitize people on the importance of having an education board
- Established a steering committee
- Established an education board, whose status could be either independent or part of the district council; this meant coordinating and collaborating with PAMOJA
- Held self-assessment workshops to identify capacity needs
- Trained board members in the following fields: external relations, strategy (vision and mission, role definition, capital investment requirements), advocacy, systems and procedures
- Assisted in identifying problems on which boards should focus

The case of Moshi Rural District is still new. The district education board was established in 2002, was launched in December 2003, and now holds regular meetings. The expectations are high, inspired by the success of Same District in setting up its own education board. The board wants to raise educational standards and improve the quality of teachers, school infrastructure, and academic performance. It is too early to comment on the wider

influence of the initiative, although the results of the national competition for pupils finishing secondary school definitely illustrated an improved academic performance for Moshi Rural District.

Outcome:

Change of attitude limited to the inner circle

People had become too accustomed to a one-way system in which the central government was expected to pay for all services and infrastructure. Now most of those on the education board understand that cooperation is key to success and that it is crucial therefore to mobilize the whole community through their representatives on the board. However, a gap still remains between politicians, the community and the district education board. Local support and understanding are still low, not all the board members play their representative role, and the board has not yet been able to devise concrete plans that mobilize the community. Low local support means that the board is struggling to raise funds from within the community.

Because they do not fully understand what the board is about, some stakeholders fear that party politics will dominate its further development and that some councillors might misuse the board for other goals. Nor have they yet developed transparent ways for selecting board members. These issues represent a serious threat to the sustainability of the education board as a genuine instrument for change. Only one NGO is dealing with education. It is an umbrella organization for all the CBOs involved in the sector, but these CBOs do not share a common understanding. Many of the schools have parent committees but no umbrella organization represents the different committees.

And vitally important—although the board realizes that parents and students are their constituents, the step towards including them is yet to be taken.

Characteristics of quality:

2) Internalize capacity building; 8) include all key stakeholders; 10) link up networks

The SNV team came to Moshi bringing the Same experience. The education board in Same District was in fact the result of the efforts of a good working district advisory committee, which involved all relevant stakeholders in overall planning for district development. The initiative in Moshi was less comprehensive. No overall strategy was embedded in it, and less time was taken to carry out the strategy. This might explain why the SNV intervention in Moshi mainly affected only those directly involved. The inner circle has benefited from the whole process and learned much from the SNV way of working, referred to by the board members as the 'PAMOJA philosophy'. They listen and discuss; they are ready to volunteer and to work through blockages; they are able to change approaches if necessary. Working with the advisers in a team clearly influenced the way of thinking of several board members.

Little or nothing was done, however, to set up representative organizations in the local community, as for example, by establishing parent and student associations. This might have helped close the gap between the board and the people. The set of values SNV uses may need to include active citizenship. Democratization has two sides: 1) the right to participate and 2) the practice of active citizenship, which encompasses much more than asserting political rights. Active citizenship means that people act as

responsible citizens, and they may need to be supported to do so.

Outcome:

An emerging local perspective to development in the education sector

The idea that developing educational policy is a principal task of local government is still new in Tanzania and there is little experience in it. Formulating educational policy in broad terms is left to the ministry. It comes to the board to develop the local content that makes it relevant to the specific district. Board members are obliged to think of local needs. The experience builds self-confidence as it is local government in its own right. Developing a local perspective to education policies can cause healthy competition among districts and lead to a high standard of education. The local perspective challenges the central government to bring forth suitable measures to support local initiative.

‘Obviously national plans will continue to be prescribed from the centre but should be drawn up only in the form of skeleton guidelines, which would have to be complemented by the district education boards according to their specific situation.’ [chairman of the district education board for Same District in an issue paper of PAMOJA, February 2002]

The central government only recently finally responded to the challenge. Cumulative districts’ efforts to form education boards forced the government to draw up draft guidelines, issued in October 2003, almost eight years after it had taken the first step. These guidelines could systematize the structure and working procedures of education boards throughout the country.

Characteristics of quality:

8) Include all key stakeholders; 11) connect the micro and the macro

The SNV team and PAMOJA made sure that the ministry became aware of the positive developments in Moshi District and elsewhere in Kilimanjaro Region by inviting the ministry to follow-up workshops in the region. The concept is to work together to make policy. The advisers made district officials and politicians aware that they could find their own way to translate national policies in their localities. Following efforts to link the local level to the central level, the advisers sought to link local people to government institutions through their representation on the board. The same concept of cooperative policy-making was also the impetus for promoting cooperation between state and non-state local agencies. However, Moshi is not yet ready to formulate a strategic education plan. At present, the board is not able to see beyond the problem of mobilizing its resources.

Outcome:

Institutional framework: establishing a coordinating institution

The Moshi District Education Board functions as an independent board. The model is broad based with all factions involved in education represented in a joint committee of 17 members, who meet once a year. The executive committee, comprising the district executive director, the chair of the social services committee (a councillor), the district education officer, the chair of the board, the executive

secretary of the board, the board treasurer and one appointed member from the board, meets four times a year. Recently a separate committee was formed to raise funds, which has been identified as the most difficult problem. The chair is appointed by the district authority rather than by the membership. The board will employ an executive secretary, but until funds are found the secretary is still employed by the district council. Establishing its education board was Moshi's first experience in intersectoral cooperation. The council is supportive of the board; they saw that it brought a certain prestige to the district, and by having the board they meet central government directives.



Characteristics of quality:

5) Ensure that the client controls the process and the solution; 10) link up networks

Board members believe that their board that involves all stakeholders is a good solution because, as one member said: 'it gives us the opportunity to sit down,

point out problems and generate ideas' to improve the quality of education services in the district. That the district council is willing to temporarily pay for the executive secretary demonstrates this belief. Board members also feel that they mainly organized themselves. Several training sessions prepared its members to take up their tasks:

- Supervising the implementation of a district education and training policy
- Bringing in others involved in educational development to plan together
- Coordinating planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities
- Mobilizing resources for education activities

Key in promoting this feeling of ownership was the success story of the Same District education board, because it showed the district council that success was within reach. The opportunity to exchange information and experiences with other boards through initiatives that PAMOJA organized strengthened this feeling.

Rwanda: Preparing for more structured development planning and management—Gitarama Province

SNV used a previously established community development programme, PADEC, to help Gitarama Province structure its decentralization plans. Although accountability and transparency remained poor, training in planning and management increased local capability. A joint action forum was established, comprising NGOs and others in civil society; It allows for communication among the various member groups and has created a framework for coordinated development.

SNV has been involved in Rwanda for more than 20 years. After the genocide, it was a principal external agency assisting in efforts to reconcile people and rehabilitate them. This case study looks at specific SNV interventions between the years 2000 and 2002 in Gitarama Province. These interventions aimed to prepare provincial and district authorities and civil society to take responsibility for managing development in the province.

In May 2000, the government of Rwanda adopted a decentralization policy with the overall aim of empowering the Rwandan population and fighting poverty more efficiently. The Decentralization Implementation Programme of 2000–2003 increased the capability of local authorities; organized local elections, which took place in 2001; developed a comprehensive gender policy and legislation; and created youth and women's organizations, to involve them in local development. The programme also provided for transferring financial resources and responsibilities to decentralized units. A coordinating mechanism, the Common Development Fund (CDF), was set up to enable local authorities to plan and implement various service delivery programmes. For access to

CDF money, local authorities had to draw up a district development plan following central government guidelines.

Since this policy presented major problems for inexperienced local authorities and civil society groups, SNV focused on building the capacity of all those involved in local development. An existing community development programme with roots going back to the late 1970s, *Projet d'Appui au Développement Communautaire (PADEC)*, which focused on five districts of Gitarama Province under funding by the Royal Netherlands Embassy, was remodelled. Project funding through PADEC was scheduled to end in 2003. SNV expected that capacity building would help sustain and make best use of the results of the PADEC programme in the provinces and the districts.

Gitarama Province is situated in central Rwanda. It has a population of almost 900,000 people and is divided into 10 districts, two of which are urban—Ruhango and Gitarama Urban. These districts are further divided into 166 sectors and 1,072 cells. In this case study we focus only on SNV interventions concerning planning and fund management directed to the district of Ruhango and on the NGOs

concerned with coordinating development in the province. We also look at the SNV decision to attach a full-time SNV adviser to Gitarama Province—a direct consequence of remodelling the PADEC programme. The plan was to reinforce the province’s role and presence in supporting and monitoring district development undertakings, especially those done within PADEC. It took into consideration the funds anticipated from donor agencies.

Stakeholders

This effort was SNV-Rwanda’s first in providing advisory services. The relevant PADEC stakeholders involved in this case were the following:

- At province level: the prefect (overall head), the district executive secretary (head of administration and technical units), directors and division chiefs of the directorate for political affairs and territorial administration, the directorate of economic infrastructure, plus others such as those involved with gender, health, social affairs, youth programmes, and agriculture and livestock programmes
- At district level: the district council and the district executive committee (mayor and vice mayors)
- NGOs: Centre de service au cooperatives and others
- Team of SNV advisers and animators


Activities

- Capacity-building programmes: training, study visits
- Gender training: SNV conducted training in gender and local governance, and exposed district officials and members of the council to gender audit—examining the current state in gender affairs as indicated, for example

by the percentage of women employed and in official positions, the percentage of girl children in schools. For gender training, SNV advisers could tap from their experience in countrywide programmes: SNV-Rwanda has been active with women’s NGOs since 1996

- Transfer of PADEC project funds to the district councils in 2001 and assistance in managing the funds with proper accounting and auditing
- Appointment of a full-time SNV adviser for the province. Advisers were available daily, facilitated workshops, introduced new techniques (organizational and institutional analysis) and concepts (decentralization, good governance), analysed use of information technology, organized site visits (for example to Same District in Tanzania) and helped create initiatives for joint action

What can we say about the results and how are they related to the characteristics of quality?



Outcome: Poor accountability and transparency

A 2003 review of the Rwandan decentralization process observed that the effectiveness of relocating administrative structures to provincial offices, including human resources, decision-making and relations with the elected district council and lower councils, is not yet fully clear. There is no evidence to date that the vertical relations between different government levels in Gitarama Province improved beyond the first experience of participatory planning in the PADEC programme.



Characteristics of quality:

1) Put values to the fore in the advisory practice; 11) connect the macro and the micro

Integrating values of accountability and transparency in managing the PADEC programme received much attention. However, as these values were strongly linked to implementing the project, they did not become incorporated into district and provincial ways of working. The SNV advisers did not sufficiently address relationships among subnational government agencies. In particular, information flows among the different government agencies proved far from perfect.



Outcome:

Insufficient sustainability

SNV noticed that many of the results of the PADEC programme were not taken up by provincial administration, notwithstanding its effort to prepare the province for continuing with the programme. Provincial stakeholders complain that funds to implement plans are lacking and that no other donor agencies are active in the region to substitute for SNV's former involvement as a donor.



Characteristics of quality:

2) Internalize capacity building; 3) recognize leadership; 4) foster a critical and challenging environment

Insufficient sustainability was clearly linked to the perception of SNV as a donor organization. Although SNV was no longer

donating funds, local organizations still expected it to bring along donor money. Discussion with stakeholders and SNV advisers revealed weak points in the final phases when SNV was leaving the PADEC programme. Ownership over the solution and the process was not really lacking; the problem was poor leadership in the districts and at the grassroots. In preparing to hand over the programme insufficient attention was given to training local capacity builders or to supporting local leadership. The project mode simply did not foster leadership.

In addition, there were many comprehensive institutional changes—for example decentralization, including financial decentralization. Local elections brought many new people into local governments, and the provincial prefect left. At the same time, there was the typical end-of-project rush to finish the development plans that would give access to central government funds and potential donor money. SNV's decision at this stage to integrate government agencies in a community development project proved to have been made too early.

Although the decision to attach a part-time adviser to Gitarama Province was premature, installing the joint forum was definitely a positive outcome of the adviser's intervention. The adviser took many other initiatives and to some extent became part of the team, 'as he was always there and available'. However, it proved almost impossible to create a concrete demand in the provincial administration for advisory services, and soon the advisory position was neutralized. The stakeholders continued to perceive SNV as a donor. PADEC was ending and the prefect's priority was to be the first province to submit a development plan. In such a non-critical environment a workable client advisory relationship was hard to establish.

SNV-Rwanda learned useful lessons from this experience, as illustrated by a new advisory relationship developed with the city council of Kigali (see example page 27). There, advisers took a more distant approach, trying to stimulate an environment open to change before jumping in with techniques and expertise.

Outcome: Increased planning and management capacity at district and provincial level

Local organizations concluded overall that compared with other areas, Gitarama Province was advanced in decentralized management of its public affairs. The number of development plans and strategies was proof. The process resulted in 10 district development plans, the first in the country, and all other districts copied the participatory methodology tested in Gitarama. The dynamics in decision-making within districts and provinces was a second proof. Gitarama government officials are quite aware of the framework for local development and their responsibilities for local development. Although the existing regulatory framework is explicit about organizing teamwork, the evidence is that different district councils in Gitarama Province really practised teamwork. Especially at the provincial level, the support of SNV advisers resulted in a more effective team of directors, more coordination of activities, and more efficient use of their resources.

Characteristics of quality:

5) Ensure that the client controls the process and the solution; 6) ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced

All stakeholders acknowledge that participatory development planning is important for effective local development. They see it as a guide for planning interventions ('we now know where we are going'). Experience from PADEC enabled the Gitarama provincial administration to be one of the first provinces to draw up a development plan. These provincial officials realize they are ahead of their colleagues in other provinces. SNV put in much technical expertise, such as in collecting data and introducing various new techniques and skills, transparent project reporting, formulating plans and prioritizing issues. Key in increasing district capability was that much responsibility was transferred to the districts, for example in managing project funds. SNV advisers and PADEC animators worked with local personnel daily.

Outcome: A framework for coordinating development interventions installed and working

A joint action forum was officially established in May 2002. By the end of 2003, after a slow start the forum was working although not at full capacity. In the beginning, the forum secretariat was housed in the provincial office, which made non-state agencies hesitant to accept it. Only when the secretariat moved to an NGO office did it begin to take off. The

forum represents all non-state development agencies in the province—local and international NGOs, the private sector, community development committees and churches. It functions autonomously from the districts and the province. The forum’s general assembly exchanges views and opinions, organizes training sessions on leadership, and will be involved in resource mobilization as one of its primary tasks. The key persons in the forum, for example the elected chair, understand that its early stages are critical. The main task is to get ongoing commitment from all participants, such as getting them to come to meetings. The forum is still fragile, and any loss of commitment might mean the end of joint action in the province for a long time.

Yet all participants and the province acknowledge the advantages of this forum. More coordinated interventions in the region are possible; different participants are starting to communicate; local authorities feel they have a representative partner for negotiation, making relations with civil society more effective and efficient (‘we are no longer obliged to run after each organization’); and a start has been made to clarify the roles of state and non-state agencies.

The achievement in setting up this forum for joint action should not be underestimated. In Rwanda there are few examples of partnership between civil society and government structures at any level—local, regional or national. Many NGOs have their own agenda, often heavily influenced by their donors, and they are not eager to add or integrate new activities. The Gitarama forum for joint action is the only such in the country.



Characteristics of quality:

- 6) Ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced;
- 8) include all key stakeholders; 9) take local dynamics into account

All stakeholders acknowledge the ability of SNV advisers to ‘manage misunderstandings’ between local agencies. Although it was difficult at times to set up constructive dialogue, the continuous effort of SNV advisers to promote local-to-local contacts stimulated all stakeholders to consider local problems together. They plan to use this autonomous forum to complement government efforts in planning development. The PADEC experience demonstrated that scaling up participatory planning approaches from projects to policies inevitably brings non-state organizations into government arenas and puts them at the centre of activities. But their participation can become effective only if it deals with institutional change, such as by creating new institutions like the joint action forum.

Uganda: Technical support units in West Nile

The central government set up technical support units to help districts design and implement functional programmes for developing a rural water supply. Although the sustainability of their actions is not assured, these units increased local capability through training and mobilized the communities in which they worked. The units, in providing assistance, worked to include all stakeholders. Getting committed involvement from the directorate, however, remains a challenge.

Improving access to water and basic sanitation services was a key component in the Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan, which in 1997 set out the strategy aiming to eradicate poverty by 2017. With the Poverty Action Fund of 1998, the government allocated significant funds to water and sanitation—funds that were largely disbursed to the districts as conditional grants within the District Water Supply and Sanitation Programme. Many districts, however, were not able to develop or implement an effective programme. To address this shortage of district competence, the Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment set up technical support units. Improving access to water and basic sanitation services was a key component in the Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan, which in 1997 set out the strategy aiming to eradicate poverty by 2017. With the Poverty Action Fund of 1998, the government allocated significant funds to water and sanitation—funds that were largely disbursed to the districts as conditional grants under the District Water Supply and Sanitation Programme. Many districts, however, were not initially able to implement an effective programme and successfully absorb the funds. To address these weaknesses in district capacities, the Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment

set up technical support units (TSUs) to help the districts for a period of five years. The Directorate of Water Development (DWD), the main central government agency for rural water supply, approached SNV in 2001 for assistance. A team of SNV advisers became involved in setting up TSUs in West Nile and Western Regions, sited at Arua and Fort Portal. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by both parties stipulated what SNV would do and the modalities for its cooperation with the directorate—for example, joint monitoring and evaluation. SNV has worked with the Ugandan water sector since 1990 and directly with DWD since 1993.

The MoU of 2001 stipulated the intervention levels for SNV: 1) At TSU level, SNV would provide technical support in developing the capacity of district local governments, NGOs and the private sector; 2) At the national level, SNV would provide technical assistance tailored to needs that DWD identified. SNV provided expertise in gender issues, financial management, organizational strengthening and community development. It provided five advisers, who became part of the two TSU teams. These teams contributed to increasing the ability of local governments to implement the District Water Supply and Sanitation Programme. This case study

focuses on the TSU, based in Arua, that covers the West Nile districts of Adjumani, Arua, Moyo, Nebbi and Yumbe.

SNV support in the West Nile region links well with a larger programme within which SNV is providing advisory services in development planning, administration and management, accountability and transparency, public private sector partnerships, and human resource management to all district local governments of the West Nile Region under the Local Government Support Programme II, funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy. This programme has addressed weaknesses affecting effective and efficient delivery of services arising from new roles that districts play, as stipulated throughout the Ugandan decentralization process. It also addressed the preconditions for fiscal decentralization, such as formulating district plans and formulating an annual capacity-building plan. The Ugandan Local Government Development Programme I and II, started in 2001 provides the basic framework for these interventions. Within this programme, districts could tap funds from the Capacity-Building Grant, meant for functional human resource development and technical and institutional support. Local governments are required to prepare a comprehensive annual capacity-building plan on the basis of a needs assessment, which may be undertaken by local government staff or by an external consultant.

The key task for a team of SNV advisers under the TSU programme was to make officials and technicians realize that effective and sustainable water programmes require more than technical solutions. Therefore, the advisers paid considerable attention to mobilizing the community and involving NGOs for providing services.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders involved were the following:

- Directorate of Water Development, as client and beneficiary
- TSU staff and TSU team leader, provided by DWD
- Districts and lower government levels, particularly district water officials, as the primary group being assisted
- NGOs, as the secondary groups to be assisted
- Private sector representatives, also as secondary groups
- SNV advisers attached to the TSU team and any other advisers made available according to specific demand under new portfolio arrangements

Steps taken

After TSU staff and equipment were installed, the TSU team started working, undertaking the following activities to build the TSU team and set its tasks, advising and assisting districts in the following ways:

- Preparing quarterly reports for submission to DWD for approval and transmission of budget request to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
- Defining clear annual work plans and appropriate budgets primarily to be facilitated under the conditional grants as well as other sector programmes
- Preparing tender documents for consulting services in water development and construction of water and sanitation facilities, managing contracts and evaluating proposals
- Developing capacity-building plans including introducing organizational self-assessment tools
- Facilitating operationalization of the bottom-up planning processes at district and subcounty levels

- Facilitating biannual interdistrict meetings to share experiences and disseminate information about sector development to stakeholders
- Orienting new district staff and coaching staff members in specialized areas as identified
- Organizing training workshops for water officers and tender board staff on effective procurement of services and evaluation of tenders and offering back-up support, especially as regards interpreting documents and developing bid documents adapted to local situations
- Holding workshops to improve relations between line departments in the districts and NGOs, CBOs, the private sector and international NGOs
- Strengthening internal coordination mechanisms of the water department towards smooth running and promotion of teamwork, by clarifying different roles, functions and outputs, outlining areas of collaboration, defining planning and reporting mechanisms, lining up back-up support, and so on
- Carrying out activities to improve overall coordination in the water and sanitation sector for example by introducing systems for monitoring and supervising
- Participating in district initiatives on private sector orientation to train contractors and NGOs in tendering and marketing
- Integrating community participation, gender and environmental issues in implementing the Water Supply and Sanitation Programme by developing appropriate approaches, strategies and tools at both district and national levels, such as a training curriculum and tools, software activity guide, training in participatory rural appraisal, supervision of support and review meetings, field

visits to check the level of adoption, and participation in national task forces

- Raising awareness about national sector policies and development and the need for mobilizing communities, directed to district local governments
- Training district staff in GIS (geographic information system) use and providing back-up support in data collection and database management
- Supporting development of strategies for operating and maintaining facilities

In analysing TSU results in Arua District, by using the SNV characteristics of quality we came to the following conclusions.

Outcome: Sustainability not ensured

Sustainability of the results of the TSU interventions is not assured. As yet there is no job security of some district water office staff and the government TSU staff, and it is not clear how the skills and expertise of local capacity builders will be used in the future. Although local government shared its scarce resources to develop these skills, this step alone is clearly not sufficient.

Characteristic of quality: 1) Connect the micro and the macro

Although a better understanding of local community and district local government issues emerged at DWD, little was done in practice to address the real problems or to support TSUs more effectively. The directorate did not pay TSUs regular visits to check on their performance nor did it set targets for them to meet. The directorate did not provide proper office accommodation and was unable to fulfil

its staff obligations, although it did agree to place social scientists on the TSU teams. Financial support for operational costs and feedback on issues mentioned in the TSU reports were not timely. This frustrated TSU staff and district water staff, who had come to realize that local governance processes could be used to make changes happen quickly but were constrained by slow communication and disbursement of money. Little can be noticed, however, of real commitment to change at the central level, although efforts were made to involve the TSU in designing nationwide policies and operational guidelines for the water sector. DWD is committed to effective delivery of services, but it is not engaging local governance approaches as a way to improve effectiveness.

Nevertheless, the joint evaluation by SNV and DWD did partially remedy this situation. It created an opportunity for people to speak up and to discuss issues. The evaluation exercise helped clarify the roles of central and decentralized structures, such as the TSUs. The report, however, pointed to another challenge when stating the following:

'It is important to begin to think about how initiatives started by NGOs and other partners in the sector will be picked up by the national level. DWD should be proactive in causing the various interventions to be taken up at the national level so that policies can be developed on the subject. The development of a national framework for organization and management by DWD should allow harmonizing approaches, taking into account lessons learned at the local level.'


Outcome: Community mobilization vs. responsive government

One of the expected results of the TSU intervention was that community ownership would make the new water and sanitation facilities sustainable. Concrete steps were taken to support stakeholder partnership in the water and sanitation sector, linking the government to NGOs, CBOs and private sector partners. For example, DWD prepared tendering procedures that made it possible for NGOs to bid. However, there was no evidence of institutionalizing regular meetings with community NGOs and CBOs in drawing up such procedures. Participatory planning was clearly limited to the stage of consultation and to gathering data necessary for district development plans. The concept of collaborating with civil society and the private sector as a way to discuss issues in depth, to analyse assumptions and discover common ground, and to develop integrated systems for solving local problems simply was improved by taking into account community ideas and requests but has not yet been entirely realized.

Characteristic of quality: 8) Include all key stakeholders

TSU advisers have facilitated district officials to take concrete measures to involve the community in planning and management of water. The advisers even went beyond their technical mandate in this attempt. Mainly, individual advisers sought to establish good informal relationships with water officials and the

council. Strictly, they did not have to report to the district, as they were accountable only to the directorate, which was strongly focused on 'getting things done'. As the district was not forced to involve itself with civil society and the private sector to provide its services, it paid little attention to this type of partnership. As with the NGOs, the challenge is still to build a local and skilled private sector and promote real dialogue and partnership. Community involvement in Uganda tends to be donor driven; it is not generally understood as a way to create a local dynamic, although this situation is improving. The fact that methods for cooperation are still embryonic helps explain why there is no real cooperation among all those involved in the water sector. Although TSU advisers did much to foster working relations with all stakeholders, they could not institutionalize genuine stakeholder partnership.



Outcome: Improved planning and monitoring of water and sanitation programmes

The district's ability to manage its water and sanitation programmes improved, procurement planning and management improved and became more transparent, coordination and collaboration among local government departments in the water and sanitation sector increased, and planning with emphasis on bottom-up approaches was of better quality. TSU interventions definitely played a major role in these improvements. TSU strength was linked to its multidisciplinary approach, which combined technical and 'software' expertise by getting engineers and social scientists to work together, and to TSU's

close collaboration with the district water office staff. The TSU advisers introduced specific methods that contributed to planning and monitoring quality.

For example, through increased capacity in GIS and database management, use of supervision formats and follow up, district officers and lower local governments are in a better position to guide interventions. Problems are more efficiently reported to the relevant authorities for correction or repair.

District councils are now able to use national guidelines for procuring and evaluating tenders, which has contributed to procurement transparency and contract management efficiency. Local government officials understood that it was within their reach to solve some problems without waiting for central government. They also understood that part of the solution to water problems lay within the community. They have managed to internalise and adapt central government technical guidelines to address their specific problems on site and requested help from TSU community consultation advisers. In the end, the decentralized staff valued community participation. Further, individual TSU advisers created links with other departments, striving to ensure ownership and effective participation of all departments in solving problems jointly.



Characteristics of quality:

2) Internalize capacity building; 6) ensure that the high-quality expertise provided is well timed and balanced; 9) take local dynamics into account

SNV and DWD, working through the TSU, formed a group of local capacity builders. Soon the TSU staff of DWD was clearly taking the lead, feeling confident in many TSU activities, particularly in

facilitation, after having been coached by SNV advisers. TSU staff learned to work as a team. The government TSU staff, for example, did not have a lot of experience with mobilizing a community but nevertheless encouraged more community participation.

The TSU made it possible for the district water office to consult quickly and easily with the directorate. The district staff appreciated the TSU way of working and the technical expertise that it provided. In particular they appreciated the cost-effectiveness, timely plans, gender aggregation, and introduction of

participatory approaches. Because the TSU team was continuously reviewing the complex governance environment, the district council and officials soon accepted its effective assistance in achieving water sector objectives.

District staff members are now able to guide local government extension staff. They are becoming mentors. An obstacle is that much of the conditional grant fund and the capacity-building grant is controlled at the district, which limits the amount of control that local government personnel and the community have over processes.

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Belgian Cooperation	http://www.dgdc.be/nl/index.html
	http://www.btcctb.org
CIDA	http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/canadafundforafrica
DANIDA	http://www.um.dk/danida/
DFID	http://www.dfid.gov.uk/
GTZ	http://www.gtz.de/themen/english/
Sida	http://www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=107
The Netherlands	http://www.minbuza.nl/
UNCDF	http://www.uncdf.org/english/index.html
UNDP	http://www.undp.org/governance/index.htm
UN-Habitat	www.unhabitat.org/programmes/tcbb/
USAID	http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2001/fs011107.html
Worldbank	http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/ http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/index.cfm

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Glossary

advisory service	The concrete ways in which advice is actually provided to strengthen the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of an organization
benchmarking	Measuring own performance against that of another organization or intervention known to be of high quality in a similar line of work, with an aim to learn from that organization how to raise one's own performance to that level
characteristic of quality	As used here, a specific characteristic of an advisory activity that is key to achieving a successful outcome
civil society	Non-state actors and organizations aimed at promoting the public interest rather than private
decentralization	Delegation of major decision-making for central government services to provincial or district level offices
deconcentration	Distribution of administration of central government services to provincial or district level offices while keeping major decision-making centralized
gender audit	Examination of the current state in gender affairs tallied by such indicators as the percentage of women employed and in official positions, the percentage of girl children in schools
meso-level organization	The broad range of organizations positioned just above the micro-level (communities, village development committees, field extension units, village water committees) and just below the macro-level (organizations with national or international interests and mandates)
outcome indicator	Linked to the relationship between client and the wider institutional environment, such indicators show whether the application of the particular characteristic of quality has led to a desired strengthening of the client organization
output indicator	Linked to the relationship between client and client's operational system, such indicators show that the intervention has succeeded in changing the way the client carries on its activities
private sector	Non-state actors and organizations motivated by commercial profit or by private and individual interest
process indicator	Linked to the relationship between adviser and client, such indicators show whether the particular characteristic of quality has been applied effectively

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Connecting People's Capacities

SNV is dedicated to a society in which all people enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. Our advisers contribute to this by strengthening the capacity of local organizations.

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