

Dutch Municipalities Supporting the Millennium Development Goals
A VNG campaign explained

Colophon

This is a publication of VNG, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, November 2008.

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Printing

Drukkerij Excelsior, The Hague
Printed on FSC-certified paper

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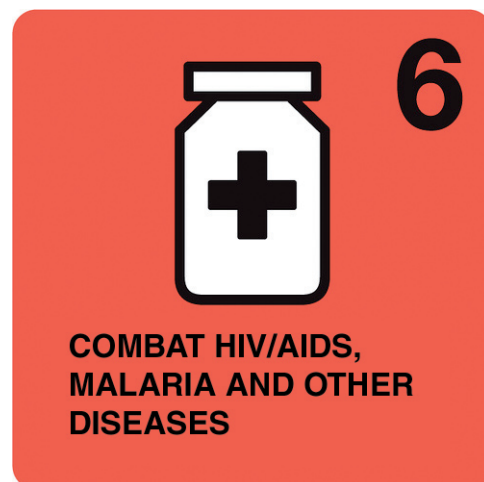
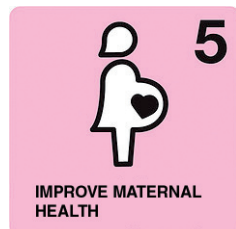




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The Millennium Development Goals





Foreword

All over the world, including through UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), local authorities are committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is crucial because without local authorities, important basic amenities would be inaccessible for many people, and government would seem even more remote to the poor. In the spirit of UCLG's 'Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign', the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) launched its 'Millennium Municipality' – or in Dutch 'Millennium Gemeente' – campaign in 2007.

Already, at the end of 2008, more than 80 Dutch local authorities have declared themselves to be 'Millennium Municipalities'. To put that title into practice, the local authorities are collaborating actively on achieving the UN Development Goals. The 'Millennium Municipality' campaign is attracting widespread support. Local authorities, large and small, in rural areas and in cities, with council majorities of all political persuasions are taking part. Together, they represent one-third of the Dutch population. Some of these local authorities have had an active policy for international cooperation for some time; others are taking their first steps in this field.

In participating local authorities, the campaign is unleashing a lot of energy and creativity. People who have never had anything to do with development cooperation before are getting involved and organizations that have never previously worked together are joining forces. It is estimated that the number of participating Dutch local authorities will grow to around 150 in 2009. More and more new ideas are also being developed to have a role in implementing the campaign. A network of young councillors has been set up, initially in the Netherlands, but since expanded to include Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and Sri Lanka - and more countries are expected to follow.

Various people have asked VNG: 'How do you make it work? How is the campaign organized?' In response, VNG decided to publish this brochure – to explain how the campaign was set up because it would be wonderful if this kind of dynamic could be created in other countries. It looks at questions

such as: Why do local authorities sign up, and what do they do? What support does VNG offer? What lessons can be learned from the experience so far? We are not saying that the Dutch 'Millennium Municipality' concept can serve as a blueprint for other countries, but a lot can be learned from our experience. We especially hope that its success proves stimulating and inspiring!

We hope this brochure stimulates you to set up a 'Millennium Municipality' campaign in your own country. VNG is willing to share the Dutch experience with you, and not only through this brochure. It is my sincere hope that we can take new steps together.



*Ms Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebbink
President of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)*



1 Introduction

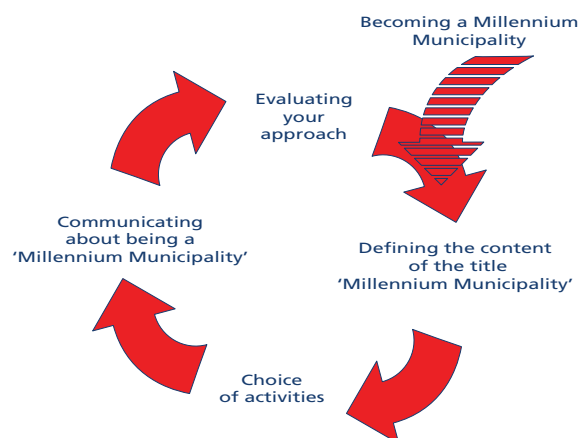
VNG's Millennium Municipality campaign is not an isolated event. In the UCLG context, we have the Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign (see www.cities-localgovernments.org). Although the VNG campaign is connected with the UCLG campaign, it has a very specific approach. Participating local authorities can choose how they interpret the campaign, while benefiting from a common, recognizable banner. 'But what does becoming a Millennium Municipality involve in practice?' is a question that many councillors ask. What 'requirements' are imposed? And how do you come up with an interpretation? Who can you cooperate with, and what sources of funding are available? The VNG campaign helps local authorities to find tailor-made answers to these respective questions. In the support and the campaign material, a distinction is made between four phases:

Phase 1. The political decision to become a Millennium Municipality.

Phase 2. The process defining how to add content to the Millennium Municipality title.

Phase 3. Selecting activities.

Phase 4. Communication about being a Millennium Municipality.



In practice, these phases cannot be distinguished this clearly. It is a cyclical process rather than linear phasing. Nevertheless, each phase raises specific types of questions. Here, the Millennium Municipality campaign can help municipalities with concrete assistance for each of the phases: information, mutual referrals, formulas to maintain the collective spirit of the campaign, and incentives to challenge the municipalities to remain active and be creative in finding new interpretations.

Campaign brochures, meetings and the website (www.millenniumgemeente.nl, unfortunately only in Dutch) promote the sharing of experiences. The site provides an up-to-date picture of participation in the campaign, the latest news from the municipalities and videos of activities. It also facilitates the exchange of ideas and feedback.



As part of this campaign, we endeavour to forge strong ties with other spheres of government in the Netherlands. A number of provinces and water boards have already expressed their interest in joining the campaign. We have also built up a very fruitful partnership with the Dutch national government (refer to the box on page 12).

We also closely cooperate with NCDO, the National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development, which co-finances the campaign. Further, we coordinate our efforts with the regional centres for development education (COSsen), which cover the whole of the Netherlands.

Our objective

Through the Millennium Municipality campaign, VNG is making the statement that local authorities can contribute towards meeting the MDGs. VNG hopes that as many municipalities as possible take the deliberate decision to work towards this aim because the UN, national governments and local authorities all complement each other in this field. As Smangalis Mkhats-hwa, then Member of the UCLG Presidency and Mayor of Tshwane (Pretoria), South Africa said in 2005: 'We are working to make the Millennium Development Goals more than UN targets. We want them to become the citizen's goals and it is through local government that this can become a reality'.



2 Becoming a Millennium Municipality

Why should local governments support the MDGs? Are they not the exclusive preserve of the UN, national governments and institutions like the World Bank? You will not be surprised that this question comes up quite often in local political debates, and that can only be good for the quality of decision-making. It is important that a local authority administration knows what it wants to contribute as a Millennium Municipality.

The campaign material provides a number of arguments that local councillors can use in discussions about whether or not to become a Millennium Municipality. Essentially, these arguments come under three headings:

Why are the Millennium Goals important?

- A life without poverty and one with freedom of choice are among the universal human rights. However, today, too many people are still living below the poverty line. The UN Millennium Goals were drawn up to set targets so that everyone's basic requirements for a decent existence can be met. If these goals are not achieved, it will have consequences for all of us.
- The Millennium Goals offer momentum. Around the globe, heads of government have committed themselves to the goals and, worldwide, people can join in this shared endeavour. Developing countries cannot do it all on their own, but together we do have sufficient capacity and resources to achieve the goals. Now is the time: the solution is within our reach.

Why local government? / What do local authorities have to do with it?

- In a meeting with a delegation of local government representatives, on 10 September 2005, Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated: 'Cities and local authorities have a critical role to play. (...) Ultimately it is in the streets of your cities and towns that the value of what is decided here will be tested. While our Goals are global, they can most effectively be achieved through action

at local level.(...) A state which treats local authorities as partners, and allows public tasks to be carried out by those closest to the citizens, will be stronger, not weaker. (...) Strong local democracy can be a key factor enabling a country to thrive’.

- At a Special Meeting held by Local and Regional Authorities on 24 September 2008 at UN Headquarters in New York, the Deputy UN Secretary-General, Asha Rose Migiro, put it as follows: ‘Local governments are critical because of their proximity to the very people who are the beneficiaries of the MDGs.’ Calling for the necessary financial and technical support to be made available, she added, ‘Indeed, local authorities have a major role to play (...) in the running of primary health and educational facilities, and the provision of basic services such as water and sanitation’.
- VNG shares this vision. We see in many countries that local authorities need greater support in living up to their important responsibilities. VNG International is working towards this through projects and programmes. Dutch municipalities are taking part in these, and some also have their own international partnerships. Municipalities in developing countries are calling for these partnerships to be expanded.

The Millennium Municipality and its citizens

- Many citizens already feel involved in social issues beyond their own borders, and want to turn that conviction into concrete action. Usually this is done through local voluntary groups and organizations. Many of these groups find it both stimulating and useful if the local authority supports their work.
- In so many ways, people in the richer parts of the world can draw inspiration from experience in developing countries, creating global solidarity and world citizenship.
- The municipality’s global policy can enthuse people at the local level about the benefits of cooperation, and this can contribute to social cohesion in their own municipality.

A political decision

To become a Millennium Municipality involves a municipality taking a political decision, preferably by the Council. That helps to boost engagement and support within the Municipality. Naturally, a Council can word its decision as it thinks appropriate. However, the website of the Millennium Municipality Campaign does offer a downloadable model text, and a number of examples of Council decisions already taken are included.

Municipalities who decide to become Millennium Municipalities can register through the website, by email or by phone. To avoid the risk of false registrations, VNG always checks new registrations before putting the information on the web.

Within two weeks of confirming its enrolment, a new Millennium Municipality receives a set of action materials which we expect the municipality to use in its campaigns (refer to box on page 11).

Since a Council decision can inspire other municipalities, we always request a municipality to send us a copy of the text.



Deputy Mayor Jan Rozema and Chair of the local Working Group for Development Cooperation, Ms. Geke van Boekel-Bergsma (photo by E. Joustra)

Our support: Model Council Decision

It is up to your council, if it decides to adopt a decision in which it declares that it wants to be a Millennium Municipality, how this is worded. From our experience, and that in other councils, the following elements are suggested for possible inclusion:

- Since all governments, including the Dutch government, signed up to the Millennium Goals in 2000, aimed at eradicating poverty;
- While over one billion people have less than 1 euro per day to live on;
- Since the former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has stated that the support and commitment of cities and local authorities are essential to achieve the Millennium Goals;
- Given that our municipality and our community are in a position to make a contribution to the fight against poverty and inequality;
- It supports the UN campaign for the Millennium Goals;
- It calls on national and international donors to increase the involvement of local authorities in developing countries in development cooperation;
- It commits itself to achieving the Millennium Goals in developing countries, with specific resources and in collaboration with its own population;
- It will make a portion of the local authority budget available for activities that support (international) cooperation aimed at achieving the Millennium Goals;
- It appoints Millennium Municipality ambassadors; and
- The Council calls on our Municipality to become a designated Millennium Municipality.

Our experience: the campaign appeals to Councillors

The campaign has seen active engagement by Councillors. This is noteworthy because, generally speaking, Dutch local elected representatives have not shown a great interest in decentralized cooperation over the last ten years or so. A VNG study on the situation in the field of international development cooperation by local authorities in 2005 confirmed this impression: where local authorities were paying increasing attention to international cooperation, this was rarely seen as being attributable to the elected Council's attitude. Moreover, where there was a decreasing interest in international cooperation, the blame for this was laid first and foremost at the door of the Council. However, with the Millennium Municipality campaign, it is often the Council itself which is taking the initiative to become a Millennium Municipality. This seems to be happening because the MDGs are concrete and appealing, and Councillors see them as an opportunity to involve a large number of people.

Our support: the starter pack

Approximately two weeks after a municipality registers as a Millennium Municipality, it will receive a Millennium Municipality action pack. Participating municipalities are expected to use the products in the pack. The action pack's contents include:

- four aluminium signs that can be displayed at the municipality's boundary;
- ten 'signboards' which can be displayed on the windows at the town hall or other municipal locations proudly announcing the title Millennium Municipality;
- 2000 cards which bear a certain resemblance to a National Identity Card. These cards, listing the eight Millennium Development Goals, can be distributed to local authority employees, or left on the counter of the municipal civil affairs office for the public to take;
- Various digital items, including a website button, a downloadable 'countdown' clock counting the time left until 2015.
- A model press release and a model text for publication in free newspapers.



The 'Schokland Accord'

In order to canvass widespread support for the Millennium Goals among the Dutch population, the Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation organized the public signature of the 'Schokland Accord'. At the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Schokland in the Municipality of Noordoostpolder, over 50 accords were signed on 30 June 2007. In the accords, companies, private individuals, NGOs, associations and cultural organizations specified their concrete contributions to achieving the Millennium Goals. The Mayor of Almere, and member of VNG Board, Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebbink and Mayor Ridder

Van Rappard of host municipality Noordoostpolder signed an Accord on behalf of VNG which, after an introductory text, continued as follows:

'(...) Today, precisely one week before 07/07/07, the date when half the time allotted to achieve the goals of the UN Millennium campaign will have expired, VNG declares that it is committed to ensuring that:

- by 1 January 2008, 50 of its members will have declared that they are Millennium Municipalities. This effort will reach 25% of the Dutch population.
- after 1 January 2008, as many Dutch municipalities will be involved in the campaign as possible.
- participating municipalities will receive active support in making a practical contribution to achieving the UN Millennium Goals.
- attention at every level is drawn to a way of fighting poverty where local authorities and their citizens can make the biggest possible contribution.'



Mayor of Almere and former VNG Executive Committee member, Ms. Annemarie Jorritsma, and Mayor of Noordoostpolder, Mr. Ridder van Rappard, signing the Schokland Accord on behalf of VNG.



3 Defining the content of the title 'Millennium Municipality'

The political decision to become a Millennium Municipality is an important first step. However, nobody sits around waiting for 'political symbolism'. Therefore, the next step is even more important: defining how the municipality is going to contribute to achieving the MDGs. This process in itself appears a good opportunity to mobilize people and broaden the group involved.

In some cases, the Council decision is formulated in such a way that implementation can start immediately without further elaboration. In other cases, especially in municipalities that have not been active in international cooperation before, there is the need to elaborate some form of policy framework. This may be demanded in the Council decision but, even if that is not the case, such a policy framework can prove useful for all stakeholders. Elaborating the policy framework helps in making clear choices regarding the objectives, expected results, success indicators and, also important, the budget.

The Campaign encourages Millennium Municipalities to form a support group or advisory committee, which can be of great help during this process. While leaving the political leadership and responsibility with the municipality, such a group or committee, ideally with a broad composition, perhaps including representatives from the Council, local volunteer groups, the business sector, schools etc., can provide advice and ensure coordination with the community.

The strength of the Millennium Municipality campaign is that it invites municipalities to add coherence and meaning to existing international activities. It also provides an opportunity to develop a certain profile for a municipality's international cooperation policy. While it is a nationwide or even a global initiative, each municipality can choose its own approach: one that fits the character of the municipality and its population.

In their responses to a survey, the first 60 Millennium Municipalities gave a number of recommendations, based on their experiences, for devising the policy:

- Find out which council staff have experience of international cooperation and involve them in the process.
- Find out which organisations within your municipality's boundaries work on international issues.
- Facilitate connections between initiatives.
- Have a clear, concise message on what you want to achieve as a Millennium Municipality.
- Choose your approach: 'in-depth', with a focus on one of the MDGs, or 'overall', with a broader focus, or one that shifts from year to year to a new MDG.
- Use your existing twinnings or partnerships to define joint activities with your partner municipality.
- Define realistic goals and a realistic time-frame, as well as a corresponding communications plan.

Our decision: the choice not to prescribe

The question is often asked whether the campaign should not lay down clearer criteria that municipalities must meet in order to be able to call themselves a Millennium Municipality. Based on our wide experience, we have chosen not to prescribe the way that local authorities should interpret the term because:

- in many respects, municipalities are very diverse, not just in terms of size and character, but also in their experiences with international cooperation;
- there are countless ways of supporting the MDGs, and we want to leave scope for creativity and initiative;
- we are not afraid of local authorities not being committed: a municipality that calls itself a Millennium Municipality but does nothing to put that into practice will be held accountable by its people, the local media etc.



4 Choice of activities

Once the policy framework has been formulated, it is then a matter of implementation. Some municipalities have a substantial track record in the field of local authority international cooperation and can implement ambitious activities. Less experienced municipalities can choose small-scale activities that are still very challenging and inspiring.

Suggestions from the campaign

Municipalities often ask us to propose concrete actions. The VNG campaign has therefore devised a range of activities in the form of brochures and on the campaign website. If asked, we can also give municipalities advice on specific areas.

The eight MDGs combine to express possibilities for the action that is required for a structural fight against poverty in both developing countries and rich countries. Similarly, some of the activities proposed by the campaign – especially those targeted towards meeting Millennium Goals 7 and 8 (Ensuring environmental sustainability and Developing a global partnership for development) - involve change in our own consumption behaviour, whilst others are directed at making a concrete contribution to achieving one or more of the MDGs in developing countries.

The Millennium Municipality campaign makes concrete suggestions for actions by participating municipalities in five categories:

Responsible consumption

Besides being an administrative organization, a municipality is also a consumer. As such, the municipality has an influence on the conditions under which the products and services it procures are made.

- Various Dutch municipalities have decided wherever possible to use only wood and paper bearing the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label, thereby contributing to a sustainable environment and protecting tropical forests (see box on page 17)

- Many municipalities also buy products with the Fair Trade label, including coffee, tea and wine. Local groups can encourage local cafés, restaurants, shops and supermarkets to ensure that Fair Trade products are widely available. We are trying to link the Millennium Municipality campaign with the 'Fair Trade Municipality' campaign. The latter is already quite successful in Belgium and the United Kingdom.
- Socially responsible or ethical banking is another option in this context. The legal and regulatory frameworks vary from one country to another but, within the limits set by the law, Dutch municipalities can opt for ethical savings accounts, investment products and insurance.

Contribute to promoting environmental sustainability

A sustainable environment requires global efforts. The Millennium Municipality Campaign tries to link the need for change in its own municipalities to that elsewhere in the world.

- The campaign encourages municipalities to play an active role in VNG's wider activities focused on reducing CO₂ emissions by energy saving, traffic policy etc. and on sustainability in general. Here, VNG has developed various instruments, including benchmarks, collections of best practices etc. The suggestions in this category offer an excellent opportunity to actively involve citizens in concrete actions.

Help raise local funds to support projects in developing countries

In every Dutch municipality, private organizations (voluntary groups, schools and increasingly also companies) are supporting projects in developing countries. Many of these projects have a direct link with achieving some of the MDGs.

- The Millennium Municipality campaign provides suggestions to local authority administrators and councillors on ways to support fund-raising campaigns. They can generate publicity for such campaigns, and increase the motivation of volunteers. A local authority's information apparatus can support collection campaigns with its professional know-how and contacts.
- Many municipalities have developed a formula to increase the proceeds of local collections with their own contribution ('matching donations'). Often a condition is attached that the fund-raising must go hand in hand with informative or educational activities. Such arrangements have also been developed at national level in the Netherlands. This also provides an incentive for volunteers to get involved.

Transfer knowledge and experience to local governments in developing countries

There is a need to build the capacity of local governments in developing countries given their important role in realizing the MDGs. Local governments with greater experience can contribute to this through well-structured exchanges of experience.

- For this, Dutch municipalities and their partners can make use of the LOGO South programme, managed by VNG International. Some 40 Dutch municipalities participate in this programme which co-finances experience exchanges through municipal partnerships. For details, please refer to www.vng-international.nl/html/ourworkvervolg.html. Similar programmes for such municipal international cooperation exist in several other countries.

Increasing citizen support for the MDGs.

In our experience, municipalities can contribute significantly to creating an increased awareness of the MDGs among the public.

- This can be done directly by the Millennium Municipality itself through, for instance, its website, having exhibitions in the town hall, or through participation in international actions, such as the ones taking place each year on 17 October – the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
- It can also be done indirectly. A Millennium Municipality can for instance subsidize the initiatives of local groups, or facilitate the forming of a local MDG platform. Or councillors can be jury members for an MDG debating competition among young students. And there are so many more possibilities.



Spontaneous initiatives

While VNG is often asked to propose concrete activities, the campaign's experience is that a lot of creativity can be unleashed locally once the initial activities have been organized. In our view, this is how it should be. Take the example of a transport company which offered the local committee the sides of one of its trucks to publicize the MDGs. Getting such an eye-catching form of free publicity was the result of connections between people. The driver of the truck, who had never heard of the MDGs before, is now an ambassador for the campaign and always has some information brochures in his cabin.

Another example is connected with the tradition in many Dutch municipalities of having walking events, often in the early summer, in which hundreds, sometimes thousands, of families and schoolchildren participate. In one of the Millennium Municipalities, the water bottles for the walkers were sponsored, and the labels explained the importance of one of the targets under MDG 7: to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population lacking sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Through this initiative, new people became informed, and some went on to become involved in the campaign. Together with an NGO, we are now considering transforming this idea into an activity which could be implemented in many other Millennium Municipalities as well.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

FSC is an independent, non-governmental, not for profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. FSC has offices in more than 46 countries around the world. It offers standards setting, trademark assurance and accreditation services for companies and organizations interested in responsible forestry. Timber and non-timber forest products carrying the FSC label are independently certified to assure consumers that they come from forests that are managed in a way that meets the social, economic and ecological needs of present and future generations. FSC is the fastest growing forest certification system in the world (UN FAO, 2007). For more information: www.fsc.org

Our support: Netherlands - Uganda twinning arrangements for the MDGs

Of the Millennium Municipalities with limited or no experience in decentralized cooperation, several expressed the wish to start a partnership with a local government in a developing country provided VNG could offer support and guidance. After thorough consideration, VNG International decided to meet this request within the framework of the LOGO South programme. In close consultation with the Urban Authorities Association of Uganda (UAAU) and the Uganda Local Government Association (ULGA), we have developed a programme which promotes and supports the forming of new partnerships between Dutch and Ugandan Local Governments.

Initially for a period of two years, six Ugandan districts and six Dutch municipalities will start partnerships in which not only the municipalities themselves, but also community organizations, businesses, schools and individuals will be linked. They will jointly define the activities they will undertake to increase the capacity of the Ugandan districts to contribute to achieving the MDGs, and the specific activities that will be developed by the various partners within the Ugandan and Dutch communities. Individual partnerships can call on the support of VNG and the Ugandan associations, who will facilitate the matchmaking and communication between the partners, information exchange between the partnerships and further coordination.

Our experience: others want to jump on board

Not surprisingly, NGOs and other organizations want to be part of this successful campaign and link it to their own programmes and approaches. This could offer attractive opportunities for Millennium Municipalities, although it also brings the danger that Millennium Municipalities might become overburdened. Especially the smaller ones, with only limited staff, can become overwhelmed if too many initiatives are proposed from outside. Some municipalities have already complained that national organizations approach them simply for fund-raising activities rather than to contribute through developing active partnerships.

VNG has therefore developed a fairly selective approach. We are only interested in pursuing those initiatives where there is a clear link with the tasks of the municipalities in the Netherlands, or between the situation 'here' and 'there'. For instance, the efforts by local authorities to reduce CO2 emissions may result in lower energy bills; if the money saved is reinvested in a sustainable energy project in a developing country this will make double sense. In a different way, the role of Dutch municipalities in the vaccination programmes for young children in the Netherlands is a useful entry point for involving young parents in MDGs 4 and 5. This is a well-defined target group, and one which is constantly renewed, that can be reached in the framework of the day-to-day work of the municipality.

Another link we are now expanding upon is the one between investments made in the construction of sewage systems and the effects on hygiene and public health. The efforts made by Dutch municipalities in the early 20th century led to a rapid decline in epidemic diseases and to a substantial increase in life expectancy. Almost a century later, hardly anybody is aware of these developments, and there are municipalities in developing countries still facing enormous challenges in this field. Why not include with the annual tax invoice a letter or brochure to inform the citizens on this parallel and ask for a voluntary contribution to support the realisation of MDGs 6 and 7 in particular? Such links are, in our view, a logical ground for well-directed cooperation with selected development NGOs.



5 Communicating about being a 'Millennium Municipality'

The key message of the Millennium Municipality campaign is that development cooperation is not the exclusive domain of central governments, but a field in which other actors, including local authorities, can play a very useful and complementary role.

Municipalities and communities in the Netherlands – and the richer parts of the world in general – have a lot to offer.

The campaign also stresses that being a successful Millennium Municipality rests on two pillars. The first one is undertaking concrete activities and achieving results. The second is communication: showing what is being done and what the results are.

Good communication can lead to greater awareness among the citizens and this, in turn, can lead to new initiatives and increase the citizens' support for the local authority's efforts to promote the MDGs. We encourage municipalities to develop a systematic approach in their communication strategy, in terms of the target groups, the message, the communication channels and the timing. We emphasize the importance of including the municipality's own staff and elected representatives in the target groups.

To support the communication efforts of the Millennium Municipalities, the campaign offers a free-of-charge 'starter pack' containing several communication materials (refer to the box on page 11). These include four aluminium signs that can be displayed at the municipality's boundary. The act of placing this sign by the Mayor almost guarantees a photo and an article in the local paper. In addition, it encourages other municipalities to join the campaign.

Another way of mobilizing new Millennium Municipalities, and supporting their communication efforts at the same time, is to create 'competition'. The simplest form is in terms of "X has become the first

Millennium Municipality in province Y” or “Z has just signed up as the 50th Millennium Municipality” etc. Further, we have also introduced an award for the ‘Most inspiring Millennium Municipality of the Year’.

Competitions are also organized in individual Millennium Municipalities. Projects undertaken by volunteers or volunteer groups can compete for a local ‘Millennium Award’, with a regional TV station broadcasting video presentations of the nominated projects and perhaps with the audience voting through a website.



Hardenberg was elected “Most Inspiring Millennium Municipality of 2007”. Councillor Anja van den Dolder here receives the cup from VNG President Annemarie Jorritsma.

Our experience: suggestions made by Millennium Municipalities

We asked Millennium Municipalities to make suggestions for an effective communication strategy to promote the MDGs. Here are some of their ideas:

- involve the communications department in defining and implementing the communication strategy;
- produce and distribute a quarterly ‘newspaper’ or ‘magazine’;
- use the website of the municipality;
- mention being a Millennium Municipality in the disclaimer at the end of all the outgoing emails from the municipality (if not on a permanent basis then, for instance, during an action week);
- include a presentation of the MDGs in the local papers;
- introduce an activity about being a Millennium Municipality in already planned public events;
- appoint famous and popular inhabitants as ambassadors of the Millennium Municipality;
- plan activities on World Poverty Day (17 October).



The Dutch Minister for development co-operation Mr. Bert Koenders, the Mayor of Wassenaar Mr. Jan Hoekema, and Deputy Mayor Pim van der Locht, in a discussion with pupils from Wassenaar schools.

Our support: Millennium Municipalities TV

Millennium Municipalities TV (MMTV) is an internet-based ‘TV station’ which can be visited through the campaign’s website. It offers municipalities an opportunity to show off the ways in which they are contributing to achieving the MDGs. Short documentaries and films of activities in the own, or in the partner, municipality, of both professional and ‘homevideo’ quality, can be placed on MMTV. Through this medium, citizens from their own municipality can be mobilized to participate in the activities, and colleagues from other municipalities can learn from the experiences shown.

A VNG colleague can help with the technicalities, and VNG can also refer you to professional film-makers. Also refer to www.millenniumgemeente.nl, from January 2009.





6 International Network of Young Councillors

On 1 October 2007, during the International World Habitat Day conference in The Hague, more than 20 young councillors of Dutch Millennium Municipalities gathered together. They offered Anna Tibaijuka – Executive Director of UN Habitat and under-Secretary General of the United Nations – a declaration and a ‘time capsule’. In the declaration they expressed their support for achieving the MDGs. In addition, the ‘time capsule’ contained personal documents of the various councillors, in which they described what they expected to have contributed themselves to achieving the MDGs by 2015.

The (inter)national dignitaries attending the conference – including the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation, Bert Koenders; the Netherlands Minister for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Integration, Ella Vogelaar; the South African Minister for Housing, Lindiwe Sisulu; and the former Mayor of The Hague and president of the VNG, Wim Deetman – responded very positively to the initiative of the ‘Young Millennium Councillors’. In response to the presentations by the young councillors, Anna Tibaijuka remarked: “Indeed, we need the support of everybody, but young people have the future and their ambitions as decision makers for the future are of utmost importance.” In addition, she expressed the wish that the initiative would be taken over by councillors from other countries.

Partly because of these positive reactions to the first meeting of the ‘Young Millennium Councillors’, but particularly from the perspective that young local politicians want to and should have their voices heard in the area of municipal (international) cooperation, we decided to give the initiative a follow-up with the Netherlands Platform of Young Councillors supporting the MDGs. However, since worldwide local government support is crucial in order to meet the MDGs, it was also decided to assist in the creation of national platforms of young councillors supporting the MDGs in other countries.

National platforms of young councillors are currently being erected in countries throughout the world. For socio-political reasons, the maximum age of entry to the platforms differs per country. To date, platforms have been set up in Sri Lanka, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and The Netherlands. All platforms

have a close link with their national association of local authorities. In fact, associations of local authorities are in a natural position to take the initiative to start the platforms.

In these national platforms, young councillors meet several times per year. For the councillors of the platforms of developing countries, the central question will be what they (and their municipalities) can do themselves to help achieve the MDGs in their respective countries. For their counterparts in the richer parts of the world, the question is what can be done to create more public awareness for the MDGs, and what can be done to make their respective municipalities develop effective practical (international) action aimed at contributing to the global MDG campaign.



Dutch young Councillors on World Habitat Day 2007, with a.o. the Dutch minister for Development Cooperation, Mr. Bert Koenders; UN Habitat Secretary-General Ms. Anna Tibajuka; Dutch Minister of Housing, Ms. Ella Vogelaar; and former Mayor of The Hague and president of the VNG, Mr. Wim Deetman.

Together, the members of the various national platforms make up an international Network. This Network was formally set up in Nanjing, China, on the 5th of November of 2008, during the fourth session of the World Urban Forum. Young councillors from Sri Lanka, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and The Netherlands participated in the founding ceremony. In the Network, young councillors from all over the world can find inspiration, share observations, exchange opinions and prepare recommendations (directed to UCLG and relevant UN Agencies), all related to creating a better enabling environment for local authorities around the world to help achieve the MDGs.



Launch of the 'International Network of Young Councillors supporting the MDGs' in Nanjing on 5 November 2008

The International Network will meet once a year to discuss local government approaches to development. The MDGs are the guiding agenda. Annually the Network presents its views and recommendations to UN Habitat. In uneven years, this will be done on World Habitat Day, in even years, this will be done at the World Urban Forum (organised by UN Habitat). In order to guarantee high quality recommendations, the Network can commission research. The national platforms will annually delegate two members to the International Network. Gender balance is observed. A plenary meeting of the Network takes place every year. The board of the Network can meet more often. The Executive Secretariat of the International Network is hosted by VNG International in The Hague.

For more information please contact Chris van der Valk of the Executive Secretariat of the International Network of Young Councillors: chris.vandervalk@vng.nl or tel. + 31 70 3738437.



7 Further information

VNG and VNG International

VNG is the Association of Netherlands Municipalities. All 443 Dutch municipalities are voluntary members of VNG. Please refer to www.vng.nl



Association of
Netherlands Municipalities



International

VNG's Millennium Municipality campaign is managed by VNG International - the International Cooperation Agency of VNG. VNG International provides support to VNG members in the field of international cooperation and contributes to the strengthening of democratic local government worldwide. The latter is achieved through a range of capacity building initiatives in some 40 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Please refer to www.vng-international.nl

NCDO

The Millennium Municipality campaign is co-financed by NCDO, the National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development. NCDO involves people in the Netherlands in international cooperation and supports them with information, subsidies and advice. The MDGs provide the point of reference for all these activities. Please refer to www.ncdo.nl



UCLG

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) represents and defends the interests of local governments on the world stage, regardless of the size of the communities they serve. Headquartered in Barcelona, the organization's stated mission is:

To be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community.

Present in 127 of the 191 UN member states, in seven world regions, UCLG's members



United Cities
and Local
Governments

include individual cities and national associations of local governments.

The UCLG Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign is an opportunity for local governments to show their commitment to the MDGs. The Working Group on the Millennium Development Goals, chaired by Gianni Alemanno, Mayor of Rome, aims to raise awareness among local governments of the Millennium Development Goals and their relevance to actions at the local level, and to promote local government commitment to the Goals. Please refer to www.cities-localgovernments.org

UN Millennium Campaign

Various UN agencies are contributing to achieving the

MDGs. For more details, reports, events etc. please refer to the 'Gateway to the UN System's Work on the MDGs' www.un.org/millenniumgoals

