



The Role of
Associations in
Strengthening
Local
Government

A Look at CMAG

City Managers'
Association
Gujarat, India



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As the world's largest democracy enters the 21st century, the critical role that local governments must play in eradicating poverty and fostering environmentally and economically sustainable growth is increasingly evident. Working with a growing number of city manager associations, urban managers in the state of Gujarat—and across India—are striving to empower local governments with the skills, tools and resources they need to improve urban service delivery and respond to the needs of their citizens more transparently and effectively. Improved financial and environmental management and enhanced opportunities for citizen participation in the local government decision-making process are but a few of the areas where the impact of professional associations for urban managers is making itself felt.

INTRODUCTION

The City Managers' Association, Gujarat (CMAG) is the professional association of urban local bodies in the state of Gujarat, India. CMAG was founded in September 1997 with support from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The establishment of this first urban management association in India was a groundbreaking event, reflecting a growing recognition in Indian government spheres of the need to improve and professionalize local government management to effectively address the challenges of growth and rapid urbanization in the world's largest democracy.

Today, CMAG's institutional members include all six municipal corporations in the state of Gujarat, all six urban development authorities, all municipalities with populations over 50,000, and a number of public and private institutions and NGOs involved in urban management, research and training related activities. CMAG's individual members include municipal commissioners (MCs) and deputy/assistant MCs; department heads, and Class I and II officers working in urban local bodies or authorities. In addition, municipalities with less than 50,000 population, public and private sector professionals involved in urban planning, management, design, or other urban governance issues, and students of urban planning, design, and management may join CMAG as non-voting associates.

CMAG's activities focus on three key areas:

- Information exchange and dissemination
- Advocacy
- Training and capacity building for professional development

The establishment of CMAG has served as a model for other states in India, which have looked to the organization for technical assistance in forming their own city manager associations (CMAs). To date, CMAs have been created in eight additional states¹ with support from USAID, ICMA, CMAG, and the US-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP). In the near future, it is anticipated that an all-India CMA will be founded to enable more effective advocacy of local government interests at the national government level, and to facilitate networking and information exchange amongst urban managers across India. The rapid growth of these associations demonstrates an appreciation of the growing importance of local government in addressing the urban development and management challenges India faces.

Local Government Worldwide

For centuries, many countries have maintained a centralized political system, whether military or civilian, democratic or authoritarian. In practice, control remained at the center and local governments served as arms of the state without a major say in their destiny. Without financial resources, decision-making power, or a voice, what happened at the local level depended almost entirely on whim and political intrigue.

However, the last decade has witnessed a global trend towards democratic government and the decentralization of authority. Local government is increasingly recognized for its potential contribution to the economic development and the socio-political stability of a country. In the developing world and countries in transition from centralized, communist governmental and economic systems to democratic, market-based ones, national and state governments have increased the autonomy and responsibility of local governments. Instilled

with the opportunity to make decisions, local leaders with the political will and leadership capacity have moved their municipalities visibly forward in the areas of management, citizen participation, and service delivery. These success stories, unfortunately, remain largely isolated, and there is much to do to further enhance the skills of local elected and appointed officials so that each local government will be able to fully contribute to improving the quality of life for citizens.

INDIA AT A GLANCE

Population

1,027,015,247
(2001 Census data)

Governmental system

Federal Republic

Number of states

27, plus 7 union territories
(2001 Census data)

Number of local governments

3,697

Number of local governments with populations over one million

27

Urbanization rate

30%; projected to grow to 42% by 2020, for an urban population of 405 million

GDP

\$2.2 trillion (2000)

GDP per capita

\$2,200 (2000)





Role of Local Government Associations

Local government associations (LGAs) play an important role in enhancing the ability of their members to continually hone and improve their skills. They provide a forum for information exchange, serve as a center for research in support of professional development, and advocate for members in front of other levels of government and relevant institutions. Local government associations can help define important governance issues and work to improve the image of local government with the public.

Often, local government reform and the establishment of LGAs have come at a time of transition. In the U.S., for example, the National League of Cities, the National Civic League, and the City Managers' Association (today known as ICMA) were all established between 1894 and 1924, when many American citizens were expressing their unwillingness to put up with dysfunctional and often corrupt local government and limited, ineffective services.

In many countries undergoing vast political reform or mild waves of decentralization, the establishment or renewal of LGAs has taken place. Hopefully, they have the will and capacity to support local governments in their increasingly important roles. Often, once a general LGA representing cities and elected officials is established, there is a role for professional associations that represent and meet the needs of municipal officials working in specialized areas such as urban planning, financial management, environmental management, etc.

BACKGROUND

Colonial Inheritance and the Indian Administrative Service

India has a long tradition of local government, established during the British colonial period, but not of local *self*-government. Under India's federal system, state governments exercise a great deal of control over local governments, including the ability to dissolve municipal councils and abrogate their responsibilities through the creation of parastatal agencies to carry out functions including planning and the provision of services such as water and sanitation.

The Indian Administrative Service (IAS), a relic of the British colonial era, poses a major challenge to the professionalization of urban management in India. Under the IAS system, college graduates take a civil service exam in order to begin a career as government functionaries. IAS officers and their state equivalents are generalists who are rotated between state and municipal-level assignments every two-three years.

Whereas in the U.S. about 75% of city managers have a masters degree in public administration and generally work as local government managers for the length of their career, municipal commissioners and chief officers in India may assume their posts having no background in urban planning and management. This lack of relevant skills and experience is compounded by the lack of continuity. As soon as municipal commissioners (the chief administrative officers in cities with populations over 500,000) and chief officers (the chief administrative officers in smaller cities) become intimately knowledgeable about a city's issues, they are transferred, and their successors may have little or no urban management experience.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, there are two major associations representing the concerns of cities and elected officials: the National League of Cities (www.nlc.org) and the U.S. Conference of Mayors (www.usmayors.org). In addition, there are a number of professional associations, including:

- The International City/County Management Association, whose members are the chief appointed officials in city and county government (icma.org)
- The Government Finance Officers Association, whose members are finance officers at the local, state, and federal level of government (www.gfoa.org)
- The American Planning Association, whose members are urban planners working in the public and private sector (www.planning.org)
- The American Public Works Association, whose members work on infrastructure and transportation issues (www.apwa.net)
- The Solid Waste Association of North America, whose members work on solid waste management issues in the public and private sector (www.swana.org).

There are currently no degree programs in local government management in Indian universities.²

Continuing education for municipal officials is not a priority for state governments, and, given the fact that IAS officers rotate between different sectors, there is little incentive for them to seek out specialized skills. Only very recently has the Gujarat Urban Development Department (GUDD) offered urban management training courses for chief officers in order to create a cadre of specially training urban professionals. The GUDD has also introduced a system where new chief officers “intern” with an acting chief officer to gain on the job experience. Both are welcome steps towards the professionalization of urban management, but are undermined by the IAS recruitment system and culture, which continue to encourage these newly-trained urban management specialists to apply for new positions that may bear no connection to local government administration.

In the long run, dismantling the IAS and its state equivalents is a critical step to reforming the bureaucracy, corruption and inefficiency that exist at every level of Indian government. However, resistance to such reform is strong; many IAS officers like the rotations, which enable them to assume positions of increasing authority and enjoy perks such as housing. From the perspective of the national and state governments, rotating IAS and state-level IAS officers prevents them from developing too much influence and clout. In the short to medium term, reform must come through greater training of municipal officials, streamlining management systems, and introducing new practices and technologies.

Steps Towards Decentralization

In 1993, a major step towards the decentralization and empowerment of local governments in India took place when the 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution came into force. The Amendment calls for greater responsibilities and authorities for local governments that include:

- Planning for economic and social development and an increased role in the development and implementation of urban poverty alleviation projects
- Increased responsibility for strategic/urban planning at the district and metropolitan levels
- Greater authority to generate and collect own-sources revenues

On paper, the 74th Amendment was a groundbreaking move towards decentralization in India. However, the impetus for its passage was more a reaction to the promulgation of the 73rd amendment in 1992, which gave greater autonomy and rights to rural communities, and it was drafted with little input from municipal interests.

The amendment gives great discretion to state governments to determine the scope of local government autonomy they are willing to support. For it to have teeth, state governments need to embrace it, interpret its clauses and develop the necessary administrative structures to support it. To date, few if any have chosen to do so, as this would mean relinquishing power and financial resources, and local governments remain very much creatures of state governments.

CMAs have a key role to play in lobbying state governments to operationalize the provisions of the 74th Amendment, and can help demonstrate that by working with local governments as partners rather than as subordinates, resources can be allocated more effectively and efficiently to address India’s urban management problems. The section below examines some of the main challenges facing its local governments.

Major issues facing local government in India today

Lack of autonomy

As noted above, most decisions that affect local governments, such as finance, infrastructure planning and development, and policy-making, are made by the state government. In Gujarat, the Chief Minister appoints a minister who oversees the urban development portfolio. The Principal Secretary, who is a senior IAS bureaucrat, heads the Government of Gujarat (GoG) Urban Development Department, which has ultimate authority over all urban development in Gujarat. In addition, a Directorate of Municipal Administration serves as the statutory body for Gujarat’s 168 cities. Municipal commissioners are appointed by the GoG from the IAS cadre, as are the chief officers of smaller cities. This model is replicated with minor variations in other Indian states.

Municipal corporations enjoy more autonomy than municipalities, and have better resources (see next section). Under the leadership of progressive municipal commissioners, Ahmedabad and Surat Municipal Corporations have initiated a number of innovative practices in recent years.

Limited local government resources

Local governments in Gujarat, as in other states, rely largely on funding from the state government to provide urban services and finance infrastructure, and are unable to keep up with the rapid growth of urban populations and growing demand for services. The main two sources of revenue for Gujarat's municipal corporations are property taxes and the octroi tax, which is charged on all goods entering a municipal jurisdiction.

In 2001, the GoG abolished the octroi tax for all other municipalities³ after strong lobbying from the business community. The Gujarat Municipal Finance Board (GMFB) instead gives grants to municipal governments, thus giving the state government greater control over municipal budgets. The GMFB is also responsible for providing funds for infrastructure and special projects. Utilities such as electricity and water are run by parastatal monopolies; user rates are heavily subsidized, and power outages and water shortages are common. To offset these challenges, local governments need help in improving the collection of existing taxes and fees and in advocating for increased powers to access new revenue sources.



CMAG members prepare a memo to the state government.

Meeting these Challenges: The Formation of CMAG

The formation of CMAG sprung from the growing awareness of the complexity of managing India's burgeoning cities, and of the need to equip urban administrators with the right competencies, tools and experience to effectively carry out their expanding responsibilities.

Municipal professionals have specific training, research, and information sharing needs. A lot of information on good urban development and management practices exists, but until the formation of CMAG, there was no institutional mechanism for sharing it between urban managers in Gujarat. Municipal administrators had few opportunities to come together for training and networking. Equally importantly, urban local bodies lacked a forum through which they could develop policy positions and advocate for municipal concerns, in particular the full implementation of the provisions of the 74th Amendment, to higher levels of government.

To help fill this void, in 1997 ICMA and USAID decided that the time was right to support the formation of a pilot CMA. The state of Gujarat was selected to test CMA concept, due to the progressive leadership of some of its municipal corporations and their enthusiastic support for the concept. The reforms implemented by these leaders exemplified the kind of best practices that warrant sharing with other municipalities. Gujarat's largest city, Ahmedabad, increased the collection of property taxes by over 100% in a year period, and was the first city in India to issue municipal bonds. The city of Surat, which suffered an outbreak of the plague in the mid-90s, was transformed from the dirtiest to the cleanest city in the state under the leadership of its reformist municipal commissioner.



CMAG was thus formed in September 1997 as a public trust (equivalent to a non-governmental organization). At its founding meeting, urban managers from across Gujarat came together with representatives from state government, ICMA and USAID to determine the association's mission and objectives, membership composition, financing and first year work plan. Importantly, at the founding, members of CMAG adopted a code of ethics adapted from the ICMA code of ethics, committing its members to fulfilling their responsibilities in a transparent, accountable, and bipartisan way.

In the five years since its establishment, CMAG has made significant strides in fulfilling its mission, which states that “In order to nurture excellence in local governance and improve the quality of life of the citizens, CMAG will strive to build professional management capacity within urban local bodies, and will strengthen and promote them as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance.”

CMAG serves as an important model for how to begin the challenging task of professionalizing local government management in India. Some of the principle ways in which it has done this, and key lessons learned along the way are described in the following sections. CMAG's experience offers valuable insights on how to build the capacity of a professional association for urban managers that can benefit associations in other states in India—and in countries around the world—that are undergoing a similar process.

ROLE OF CMAG WITHIN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Advocating for Local Government Rights

ISSUE

Local governments are an important component of a strong democratic system when they have the necessary rights and means to serve their citizens. In order to function optimally, the political framework, legislation, and programs of the national and/or state governments must be supportive. While not all local governments have all of the same issues all of the time, there are always issues that local governments have in common vis-à-vis state or national governments. Therefore, a strong local government association brings together local governments, identifies common issues, conducts research, and often develops policy platforms and represents local governments as a whole in front of state and national government.

The ability of associations to advocate on the behalf of local governments is an essential function that should be continuously improved. An association needs to have and use an established process for developing positions and arguments that includes both member input and good policy research. The association should ensure that members are aware and ready to advocate on key issues as needed. Mechanisms have to be in place to call upon members to get involved in the process.

Local government leaders and staff need to understand how the legal framework and state and national programs impact the operation of local government. In a situation where decentralization is taking place and laws are changing, it can be a constant battle to learn about new regulations and what impact they will have on local government. Even if laws are not changing, newly elected officials need to be educated on the legal framework and its implementation so that they can carry out their duties effectively. A local government association can benefit all of its members by keeping updated on legal issues, providing interpretation as needed, and sharing that information with members so that they do not have to individually seek out often hard to find legal information.

RESULTS

The 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution, which came into effect in June 1993, gave urban local bodies a statutory status for the first time. The amendment of existing municipal legislation calls for regular municipal elections every five years; enlargement of municipal councils to ensure greater representation and reservations for women and minorities. The Amendment also calls for state governments to assign the civic functions identified in Article 243W of the Constitution under the Twelfth Schedule to urban local bodies (see sidebar).



However, as noted earlier, the 74th Amendment does not *mandate* that state governments devolve this powers and attendant fiscal resources, and leaves it to each to determine the scope of decentralization it is willing to support. To date, not surprisingly, few states have chosen to embrace its provisions and devolve authority and fiscal autonomy and resources to municipal governments.

CMAG has made advocacy for professional, more autonomous local government one of its three key objectives. While the association has not yet developed a formal policy platform, legislative and regulatory issues are addressed through CMAG's newsletter, workshops, and seminars. In the near future, the association plans to establish a policy forum of CMAG members that will focus on advocacy issues and develop a strategy for lobbying the GoG on decentralization issues.

To lay the groundwork for this, CMAG's senior staff and Executive Committee members work hard to foster good relations with key state agencies both as members of CMAG and as partners in the implementation of its programs. The association has gained the respect and ear of key state-level officials and agencies, and has had some limited success in ensuring that municipal interests are reflected in state policies and laws. For example, as an outcome of a November 1997 workshop on *Improving the Financial Resources of Urban Local Bodies Through Non-Tax Revenues*, the association submitted a memo to the GoG requesting greater financial autonomy for municipal governments. The GoG has since authorized local governments to create special development districts where developers are required to pay impact fees to the municipality in order to cover infrastructure improvement costs.

A second, more important policy-making role for CMAG is its involvement in the development of a slum upgradation policy for the State of Gujarat. The Gujarat Urban Development Department (UDD) recommended CMAG as the "process manager" for a World Bank funded initiative to develop a slum policy for the state. This is pioneering work—CMAG's research so far indicates that few countries have developed such a policy at the state or national level. The Gujarat policy will serve as a model for a national slum policy, and, potentially, as a model for other countries.

CMAG is using a very participatory approach to this task. A series of consultative workshops are being held in towns and cities of various types to which all community stakeholders are invited—local and state government officials, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations working in the slums, and slum dwellers themselves—to identify priorities and determine the resources that different organizations can bring to bear. The association has subcontracted with three NGOs to conduct studies of slums in eight cities as well as one on land tenure issues in Ahmedabad to inform the policy paper. The draft policy will be shared with a broad cross-section of stakeholders and placed on the Internet for public review and comment, and CMAG will work with the UDD to actively solicit feedback through roundtable discussions, written input and other forums. Based on this, revisions will be incorporated into the draft, and UDD will then seek approval of the final policy from the Government of Gujarat.

CIVIC FUNCTIONS ASSIGNED TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In the Twelfth Schedule of the Indian Constitution

Urban planning

Regulation of land use and
building construction

Planning for economic and
social development

Municipal roads and bridges

Water supply

Public health and sanitation

Fire services

Urban forestry and
environmental protection

Protection of the interests
of the weaker sections
of society

Slum improvement and
upgrading

Urban poverty alleviation

Provision of urban amenities
(parks, gardens, playgrounds)

Promotion of cultural,
educational and esthetic
aspects

Burials and burial grounds,
cremations and cremation
grounds

Cattle pounds, animal
protection

Vital statistics (registration
of births, deaths, etc.)

Public amenities including
street lighting, parking
lots, bus stops and public
conveniences

Regulation of slaughter-
houses and tanneries

CMAG AT A GLANCE

Institutional Membership

- Municipal corporations (6)
- Municipalities with populations over 50,000
- Public and private institutions and NGOs involved in urban management research and training related activities

Individual Membership

- Municipal commissioners and deputy/assistant municipal commissioners
- Municipal department heads
- Class I and II officers working in urban local bodies or authorities

Associate Membership (non-voting)

- Municipalities with less than 50,000 population
- Public and private sector professionals involved in urban planning, management, design, or other urban governance issues
- Students in urban planning, design, and management

2002 Annual budget

4,000,000 Indian Rupees
(estimated US \$82,035)

Staffing

5 full-time positions,
supplemented by
consultants as needed

Objectives

- Information exchange and dissemination
- Advocacy
- Training and capacity building for professional development

Cooperation with associations of elected officials on advocacy issues has so far been limited. CMAG's Executive Committee (EC) believes that the association should cater first to the needs of its members, and that greater collaboration with elected officials could impede this objective. However, elected officials can have associate membership status, and are invited to participate in workshops and other professional activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Effective advocacy requires a commitment of staff resources and member involvement. Staff need to work closely with members in conducting research and policy analysis, developing policy positions, developing relations with key state/national officials, and engaging in active lobbying efforts.
- Member involvement on policy and advocacy issues can occur through task forces, committees, policy forums, and other, less formal mechanisms such as working lunches and interaction with state and national government officials at other functions. Nurturing good relations with state and national government agencies can pay important dividends in learning about policy directions and funding sources and help establish the credibility of the association as an important stakeholder in policy-making.
- CMAG staff and EC members should take a more active stand on critical policy issues such as the abolition of octroi tax as a key revenue source for municipalities in Gujarat.
- The association has an important role to play in researching successful management and fiscal decentralization efforts in other states, using these as the basis for a platform on similar reforms in Gujarat.

- There is strength in numbers. Associations representing professionals should seek out ways to work with associations representing local elected officials to develop policy positions and advocate on issues of common concern such as fiscal autonomy.

Capacity Building for Stronger Local Government

ISSUE

Local governments, like all organizations, need to continuously increase the capacity and improve the skills of their staff in order to be as effective as possible. In countries where decentralization has given new responsibilities to local governments, the need to develop new skills and build stronger management capacity is even greater.

Local government associations often play a role in providing training directly to their members, often collaborating with educational and training institutions, and can help their members identify other relevant training opportunities. Associations may also develop self-study training packages and/or identify other training books and resources that can assist local government leaders and staff to build new skills and knowledge.

Training programs should be developed with input from members, and guidance from other urban management experts as appropriate, to ensure that they reflect the priorities and needs of the association's members. Staff can solicit member input using a variety of mechanisms such as surveys, the creation of a member task force focused on professional development, discussions at Board meetings, or focus groups.

RESULTS

Training workshops, seminars and a variety of other programs have been a core programmatic focus for CMAG since its establishment in 1997. The association works to ensure that its training programs are responsive to member needs, and conducts a twice-yearly member survey to identify training priorities. Workshop topics are also generated by CMAG staff based on discussions with members, state government, partner institutions such as Environmental Planning Collaborative (EPC—a non-profit environmental planning consultancy), the Center for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT), and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), and USAID’s FIRE project.

CMAG generally organizes workshops and other professional development events in cooperation with these and other partners, and maintains a database of training and subject experts that they can draw on to develop and lead workshops. Evaluations are distributed at the end of all training events to solicit feedback from participants on the usefulness of the content and how they intend to apply it, the quality and appropriateness of the instructors, course materials and the training venue.

Most training is targeted at senior-level municipal officials, and takes place in Ahmedabad, the capital city. This may prevent members from other parts of the state from participating, due to the time and expense of traveling to Ahmedabad. CMAG staff acknowledges that there is a need to conduct more “nuts and bolts” training for front-line staff, and to hold more training events outside of the capital city.

ILLUSTRATIVE TRAINING WORKSHOP TOPICS

Citizens’ Charters

As an outcome of this workshop, the GoG asked CMAG and CEPT to develop a model charter for all Gujarati cities, and a manual on its application. The GoG has mandated that it be adopted by all cities in Gujarat and displayed in municipal offices in public view.

Operation and Maintenance of Water Supply Systems

CMAG organized a workshop to address issues that local governments face in meeting their water supply and treatment needs. Participants discussed measures to improve supply efficiencies, and examined new technologies.

Designing a Public Grievances Redressal System

CMAG researched best practices from other countries and organized a workshop for participants from the public and private sectors on how to develop an effective, equitable system for addressing citizen and business complaints about local government services. As a result of the workshop, the municipal corporation of Surat modified its grievance redressal system, which has served as a model for other cities.

Assessing the Financial Impact of the 2001 Earthquake on Municipalities in the Kutch District

The objective of this workshop was to aid public administrators in evaluating the fiscal impact on municipal budgets of the devastating earthquake that hit the Kutch region of Gujarat in January 2001.

Improving Financial Resources for Urban Local Bodies

As noted in the Advocacy section, the resulting memorandum to the GoG requesting greater financial autonomy resulted in the introduction of impact fees in special development districts.

Municipal Accounting and Budgeting Reforms

CMAG organized regional workshops to introduce municipal administrators to double-entry accounting and the use of software programs to improve municipal accounting and budgeting practices. The workshop raised awareness and identified hurdles to introducing new technologies, including a lack of interest (or fear) in computerization on the part of many municipal administrators and the absence of uniform accounting standards and charts.

Training in Restoration, Retrofitting and Reconstruction of Structures in Seismic Areas

Following the January 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, CMAG partnered with the GoG and EPC to conduct training workshops for engineers in restoration, retrofitting, and reconstruction techniques in seismic areas to ensure that reconstruction and new building in the devastated Kutch district would meet new seismic standards.



Best Practices Transfer: demonstrating the conversion of waste to compost.

To date, CMAG has elected not to charge its members a fee for workshops and other professional development programs, as the staff feels that it is important to first demonstrate that training events and other programs are valuable and worth paying for. For now, such programs are funded either from member dues or by the sponsoring donor-supported project. CMAG rarely seeks funding support from state agencies or national government institutions like the NIUA, because the approval process is complex and long. Staff have learned how to put on workshops on a shoe-string budget, saving on costs by doing away with non-essentials such as the workshop bags and fancy lunches that many conferences and workshops offer.

Scheduling training events continues to be a challenge, and CMAG has found it difficult to develop its training calendar far in advance. State and local government departments and agencies frequently schedule meetings targeting the same audience on short notice, and municipal officers must give these events precedence over CMAG workshops and meetings.

Proposed training topics for 2002 include:

- Service Contracting
- Financial Management
- Solid Waste Management
- Development Plans/
Physical Planning
- Property Tax Reform

In addition to training workshops, CMAG has implemented a number of other innovative and successful programs to help build the technical and management capacity of CMAG members. These include:

Best Practices Program. City managers across Gujarat have introduced innovative measures to improve service delivery, maximize the use of their limited resources, and improve the quality of life. Recognizing the value of sharing and transferring these innovations, in 1999, CMAG initiated a Best Practices Program with support from ICMA and USAID. The objective of the program is to identify, document and disseminate information about innovative approaches to common urban service delivery and management problems, to promote the transfer of knowledge, experience and expertise among local governments in Gujarat, and to develop and disseminate effective learning tools and processes.

The six municipal corporations of Gujarat were selected for documentation because of their size and dynamism in urban governance, and seven of Gujarat's 143 municipalities were also selected based on recommendations from the Gujarat Directorate of Municipalities and Municipal Finance Board. An urban planning consultant was hired to document innovative initiatives undertaken by the cities. The consultant first conducted a literature review to learn how other international and national practices have been documented, and then traveled extensively to the selected cities to interview key municipal officials and seek out their best practices and programs for documentation.

A total of 59 practices were written up and compiled in a Best Practices catalogue, which was distributed to all CMAG members, NGOs and international donors, and is in great demand from other government officials (state and municipal) in other states. It is also available on CMAG's web site. Each practice includes information about:

- The situation before the initiative
- The strategy adopted
- The results achieved/anticipated
- Sustainability
- Learning
- Replicability

To give the practices additional prominence and draw some positive media attention to urban issues, CMAG gave Best Practices Awards to select cities. An expert panel was convened to evaluate all 59 practices and select ten for special awards. These were presented at a CMAG conference to

enable all 13 cities that participated in the program to share their experience with other CMAG members. Interest in the program has been great, and since then, CMAG has received several unsolicited best practices from member communities.

Best Practices Transfer Program.

Not satisfied to simply document and disseminate municipal innovations, again with support from ICMA/ USAID, CMAG initiated a process to transfer these good practices to other local governments that were interested in replicating them.

At the Best Practices Conference, CMAG staff solicited interest from attendees in being partnered with one of the award-winning innovator cities as a learner. The response was enthusiastic, and over 14 communities asked to be matched with one of the innovators to learn about one or more initiatives. CMAG organized exchange visits to these cities, where municipal professionals and elected officials from the learner communities had the opportunity to learn about their award-winning programs, and to discuss the strategies and methodologies used to implement them. Following the site visits, the learner communities have continued contact with their innovator partners, using them as a resource and mentor.

CMAG has also provided technical assistance to learner cities in the development of proposals to the GMFB for financial support to replicate the transfer program. While only one community has been successful so far in getting funding, it served to establish an important precedent of state government financial support for inter-local learning and cooperation.



Best Practices Transfer: Municipal engineers and architects discuss the role of public-private partnerships in heritage conservation at a restored building.

The association believes the program has several advantages over conventional forms of technical assistance and cooperation:

- It is a demand-driven process in which one party seeks to learn from a peer without any pre-conditions or other agendas and where both the provider and learner benefit from the exchange;
- It is based on the principle that seeing is believing, and facilitates learning based on proven solutions to common problems;
- It is a cost-effective means of matching supply with demand for information, knowledge, expertise and experience; and
- It is a multi-dimensional form of learning, that addresses political, administrative, technical and managerial issues which may be difficult to address in more formal learning environments such as seminars and conferences.

In response to the demand from CMAG members for a follow-on to the highly-regarded program, the

association submitted a grant proposal to the Ford Foundation in 2001 to implement a second phase of both the Best Practices Documentation and Best Practices Transfer Programs. Ford has awarded a total of \$87,000 to CMAG for these initiatives, which will get underway this year. As with Phase I, CMAG will hire a consultant to carry out the necessary research, interviews, and documentation of the practices and to help facilitate the dissemination and transfer process.

News of the program has spread to other states in India, and delegations from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra have traveled to Gujarat to learn about its cities' innovations. Best Practices programs will be a core first-year activity of the new CMAs that have been formed in eight other states. In addition, in the summer of 2002, a team of CMAG staff and board members traveled to Indonesia to conduct a training workshop for Indonesian associations interested in developing their own Best Practices Programs.

Urban Indicators and Performance Measurement Program.

There is a growing demand on the part of municipal and state agencies, policy makers, elected officials, municipal managers, NGOs and citizens in India for analytical tools and reliable data on urban services to enable better informed planning and decision-making. Reliable comparative data on the performance of municipalities is also in demand from financial institutions, investors and credit rating agencies.

In response to this demand, in 2000, with financial and technical support from USAID and ICMA, CMAG initiated an Urban Indicators and Performance Measurement Program (UIPM), drawing on the experience of the private and public sectors in other countries in the use of such tools to improve public services. Specifically, the objectives of the program are:

- To create a database of indicators and performance measures for the cities to enhance their developmental planning work;
- To develop UIPM as a management and analytical tool for monitoring and evaluation of programs;
- To develop UIPM as a tool to measure the impacts of programs;
- To identify critical issues and assess the severity of the problems;
- To help local governments prioritize actions and allocate resources efficiently.

A technical advisory committee (TAC) was formed that included CMAG staff, experts from ICMA, USAID, the USAID FIRE project, academic institutions, GoG agencies, and Class I municipalities. The TAC agreed to focus the program on three sectors: finance, environment and health, and worked with CMAG on the development of draft indicators, drawing on the urban indicators developed by the UN and the ICMA Performance Measurement Consortium as references.

The indicators were broken down into two main categories. Infrastructure indicators considered service levels (e.g. water supply per capita per day, average hours of supply per day, number of supply days per week), service coverage (e.g. percentage of households with a water supply connection, percentage of pipe length to total road length) and service costs and efficiency (e.g. cost of supply per liter; amount of unaccounted for water). Finance indicators examined resource mobilization (e.g. property tax collection rates, number of properties assessed per staff, percentage of utility bills paid), expenditure management (e.g. per capita expenditure on water supply, per capita expenditure on general administration), and debt management (e.g. debt service ratio, outstanding liabilities per capita). Different weights were assigned to each indicator to come up with an overall score for each city.

The TAC held a one-day meeting to review and refine the draft indicators before sending out a detailed questionnaire to six corporations and ten “Class I” municipalities, receiving ten

responses. When the TAC reviewed the responses, they realized that data collection was not being done consistently within and across municipalities using uniform accounts headings. CMAG staff did thorough follow up with all cities to collect and clarify required data and information, including visits by staff to ensure the quality and thoroughness of the data so that a reliable comparison could be made across cities.

Once the data had been analyzed, CMAG organized a symposium to share the results with participating cities, state government officials and citizens. Results were published in a compendium and CD with an explanation of the methodology, a display of the results, and lots of easy to read graphics. Each city received a comparative ranking for each indicator, which generated a lively debate amongst participating municipal officials, some challenging the data analysis when they were not satisfied with their city’s ranking. However, the rigorous, transparent process that the TAC used to collect and interpret the data was hard to dispute.

The general consensus of municipal participants was that the measurements and analysis provide a very useful tool to help them compare their performance to cities of similar size and to identify areas where their management and service delivery systems could be improved. CMAG staff and members of the TAC made follow-up visits to individual cities to help department heads and managers identify areas where they should consider introducing new practices and management systems.

Now that participating cities know how their performance compares to that of cities of comparable size, an element of competition to improve their ranking has been introduced between them. The UIPM is viewed as a great success by CMAG, which has received requests for information on the program from Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and several of the other CMAs in India. Academic institutions have also been interested in learning about the process, and CMAG has been invited to make presentations in Delhi and Mumbai.

CMAG staff note, however, that municipal administrators are not yet really using the measures as a tool to improve their performance. For the process to be taken to this next, important phase, participating cities need ongoing motivation and technical support. To this end, CMAG has written a grant proposal to USAID and NIUA to expand the program, adding more cities and providing technical assistance in interpreting the data and using it to introduce changes to improve management and service delivery systems. Over time, CMAG hopes that the UIPM process can help develop sector norms and performance benchmarks, which currently do not exist in India for urban development agencies and services.

Responding to the 2001 Earthquake.

On January 26, 2001, a massive earthquake hit Gujarat. Over 14,000 people were killed, and entire communities in the western region of Kutch were decimated. In Ahmedabad, over 1,000 died and 200 buildings collapsed. While many were afraid to enter damaged buildings, CMAG staff immediately returned to their office to demonstrate that it was safe and to begin mobilizing resources to respond



CMAG staff assess damage caused by the January 2001 earthquake with municipal officials.

to the disaster. The association's phones began ringing off the hook as cities, towns and villages affected by the earthquake looked to CMAG for support. Requests flooded in from NGOs, disaster relief agencies, donor agencies and other organizations and experts seeking information about how they could help. In partnership with EPC and Kutch Navnirman Abhiyan (KNA), an umbrella organization of disaster-response NGOs in Kutch, CMAG formed an informal network, the Earthquake Technical Assistance Cell (ETAC) to coordinate the response to the disaster.

In the first week following the earthquake, EPC, which had already carried out a regional planning exercise in the region, prepared digital maps of different districts showing transportation routes and the location of buildings using the data they had already collected. These maps were given to CMAG, which with funding from a private trust distributed them

to state agencies, disaster relief organizations, and NGOs. An ETAC team also rushed to Bhuj, one of the hardest hit communities, to assess the damage and determine how to target assistance most effectively.

CMAG recruited structural engineering experts from around the country, who traveled to Kutch in volunteer teams on a nine-day tour to assess and categorize the damage. The engineers conducted community workshops to explain the structural stresses on the buildings, how to retrofit remaining buildings for seismic conditions, and how to ensure that new construction is seismically sound. Based on the engineers' assessment, EPC developed and published maps that showed where the damaged buildings were and the extent of damage to each, which are being used to inform redevelopment planning work being funded by US-AEP.

The ETAC quickly wrote funding proposals for urgently needed programs to support the rehabilitation process, resulting in a number of initiatives:

- The establishment of a Resource Center in Bhuj for local people seeking assistance.
- A program for planning and participatory rehabilitation in both rural and urban areas. The initiative helps local authorities develop plans for rebuilding their devastated communities using a participatory process to get citizen input on where to place important infrastructure such as community wells.
- A rapid appraisal of the structural and financial impact of the earthquake in five of the hardest hit communities.
- A financial assessment of the earthquake's damage, using an Excel-based financial operating policy software. The software is now being used by communities as a budgetary management tool to guide their financial decisions as they begin the daunting prospect of rebuilding their devastated communities.
- Three-day, intensive training programs for 700 engineers (organized in clusters over a one-month period) on seismic construction and retrofitting.
- Assistance to communities in protecting their rich architectural heritage. In a number of communities, damage to historic buildings in areas where land values have increased provided a convenient excuse to tear them down and make way for new, more profitable construction. CMAG coordinated meetings with conservation-based and other NGOs, disaster relief agencies, and donor agencies to lobby state and local governments on the importance of preserving these unique and irreplaceable structures.

- Assistance to the city of Bhuj in documenting the importance of their historic buildings, and developing a walking tour to educate citizens about the city's architectural heritage and attracting tourists to the city.

CMAG played a critical role in coordinating the response to the 2001 earthquake, brokering partnerships between the governments of affected communities and NGOs, identifying critical technical assistance and humanitarian needs, and mobilizing resources to get them to the right places. The association's profile has been raised, and it has garnered greater respect and trust from the GoG, donor organizations, NGOs and, perhaps most importantly, from member communities.

CMAG is an active partner in the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority—a coordinating mechanism for reconstruction and planning for the future. CMAG was asked by the Authority to put together a workshop on disaster preparedness for hospitals, and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) had CMAG evaluate the response of all AMC municipal departments in first ten days after the earthquake, which CMAG did gratis. The city has also contracted with CEPT to develop a Disaster Management Plan with input from CMAG.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Associations can serve an important coordinating and clearinghouse role in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. They can help to identify and mobilize resources to respond in the early days after the event, put government agencies, disaster relief organizations, and NGOs in contact with each other, and help them avoid duplication of effort and target their resources, provide technical assistance

in responding to the emergency, and document and disseminate best practices in disaster response and preparedness.

- Associations need to help create a demand for training and professional development by ensuring that topics offered reflect municipal needs and priorities and provide new skills and tools that can be easily and practically applied. This is especially important in an organizational culture that does not reward or support professional development.
- Associations should seek out opportunities to collaborate with other training networks and organizations in the design and provision of training in order to leverage resources and avoid duplication. CMAG and another association should take advantage of member cities' willingness to provide local transportation, a venue, and meals when training is offered in their communities.
- It may be necessary for associations to underwrite training costs initially through donor support or member dues. However, as demand increases, it is important to gradually reduce subsidies and introduce fees to make the training pay for itself in order to ensure its financial viability and sustainability.
- Training needs to be offered in convenient, reasonably-priced locations—not just the capital city—to facilitate the ability of municipal officials from all size cities to participate.
- Dependence on outside funding support for training activities, can make it difficult for CMAG and other associations to say “no” to requests to conduct workshops and other training events. Care needs to be taken that training activities are based on member needs and demand, and are not driven by outside organizations' agendas.

- Training needs to reach beyond senior management: there is also a great need for “nuts and bolts” training in basic operational and management procedures for front line staff.
- Workshops and seminars should typically be between 1–5 days in length, as it is usually difficult for busy municipal professionals to get away from their jobs for longer periods.
- Coordination with state and local government departments is essential in planning events to avoid scheduling conflicts.
- Training for adults is most effective when it is interactive and trainers have strong facilitation skills. Case studies should directly relate to participants’ circumstances and work experience, and offer tools and techniques that can be adapted in other communities. Setting up training facilities in round tables, using ice-breakers, small group discussions and group exercises can help foster a more participatory learning environment.
- There is a huge demand for documenting and sharing good practices among urban managers. While formal training is important and necessary, the value of learning directly from the experience of others cannot be underestimated. Associations have an important role to play in facilitating this kind of on-the-job learning and creating forums where peers can come together to share experiences.
- Programs such as the UIPM help to identify good practices and inconsistencies in the way that local governments collect data, and inject a sense of competition between cities to improve their performance. For such programs to achieve their maximum value, follow-up training and technical support are necessary to ensure that new tools and knowledge are applied.

Communications: Information Dissemination and Networking

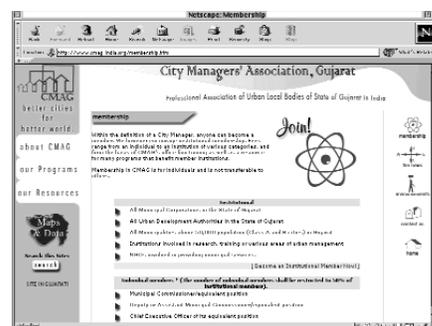
ISSUE

In the absence of a strong local government association that brings together members from throughout the country, local governments will tend to benefit only from the experiences of their closest neighbors. When a certain problem arises, the mayor may call on the mayor down the road to ask for advice, but probably not the mayor in another state or province.

A local government association serves as a communication mechanism for its members. It provides an opportunity for networking in person, and organize the collection and dissemination of information on good practices, conferences and training and legislative news. Events also keep members up to date on current issues and innovations.

RESULTS

There is a great need for information sharing between urban local bodies in India, and for access to what is happening both within India and internationally in the urban management arena. From the very beginning, serving as a clearinghouse for Gujarat’s urban managers for best practices, and providing information about legislative issues, training and funding opportunities, and other local government concerns has been a key function of CMAG. The association has developed a number of mechanisms to disseminate information and best practices to its members and to other interested public and private institutions, including:



CMAG web site: www.cmag-india.org

Web site. With financial support from USAID and technical support from ICMA, CMAG has developed an informative, interactive web site in both Gujarati and English: www.cmag-india.org. The site provides information on CMAG’s mission, objectives, and activities, and has all of CMAG’s publications in downloadable electronic format. In a recent month, the site registered over 10,000 hits. However, most municipal offices in Gujarat lack access to the Internet. Internet connections in India are very expensive and connection speeds slow, and many municipal administrators lack computer skills.⁴ CMAG acknowledges its web site is still used primarily by urban professionals in the private sector and international associates.

Publications. CMAG produces a variety of publications on issues such as financial management, solid waste management, disaster preparedness and response, and citizen participation. Its Best Practices compendium is in high demand from local governments in other states. All CMAG’s publications can be downloaded from its web site.



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The Gujarat Urban and Metropolitan Development Authority Act 1976.

News

City Managers' Association (Gujarat)

The City Managers' Association has been set up with the intention of providing support to the city governments by doing the complex procedure of grant or building up the basic capacity and expertise in local level. It also seeks to give recognition to the role of urban managers and assist for their professional training. As a forum it seeks to coordinate city government activities to the higher level of government.

The broad objectives are:

1. **Interchange of views and dissemination** on urban issues, best city management practices, technology, cross country management objectives through publications (newsletters, manuals, books), workshops, seminars and audio-visual media.
2. **Advance skill development** for professional development through workshops, seminars, short courses, lectures and research reports.
3. **Coordinate** the working of state and central government in urban issues.

Workshop on Improving the Financial Resources of Urban Local Bodies

December 19, 1997

At the end of an one-day workshop on improving the financial resources of urban local bodies, CMAG advised a memorandum to the Government of Gujarat, requesting the necessary steps to be taken to enable the urban local bodies to raise financial resources. Four main issues, namely, limited Funds, Revenue, Loan and Municipal Asset Management and User Charges are the main major sources which were identified and highlighted during the workshop.

More than fifty persons, policy makers and professionals participated in the workshop and shared their experiences. The participants and resource included the Municipal Commissioner, Chief Officers of the Municipalities, representatives of the official and of the community. Chief Executive Officers of the Urban Development Authorities, Chief Secretary and additional Chief Secretary from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Government of Gujarat and representatives of NGOs, professional



CMAG, Ahmedabad. The workshop was organized by Mr. Sankar Das, Addl. Chief Secretary. The following is a note on the background, content and recommendations of the workshop.

organizations and media. A senior representative from International City County Management Association (ICMA) was also present to facilitate the proceedings of the workshop.

Overall coordination was done by Mr. P.L. Bansal, Vice President and Mr. Pradip Dikshit, Secretary, CMAG and Mr. Manoj Bhandi, Urban Planning and Construction, CMAG. Technical support for the workshop was provided by Government Planning Commission, a task-force (planning experts). The primary session was addressed by the Chief Secretary, Mr. L.N.S. Maheshwari. The workshop was inaugurated by Mr. Sankar Das, Addl. Chief Secretary. The following is a note on the background, content and recommendations of the workshop.

1.1. The emerging scenario Gujarat has entered a phase of rapid industrialization and urbanization. In the coming ten to fifteen years, the urban population in the state will increase to about 50%. This will put tremendous pressure on the city governments. In addition, the 74th amendment of the Constitution of India has now changed the municipal bodies in the country with the responsibility to perform certain duties, which are listed in the 17th schedule of the Constitution of India. It is obligatory for the municipalities and the municipal corporations to perform these duties. Failure to do so could warrant action for the violation of the Constitution. But most of the municipal authorities in the state would not be in a position to discharge these duties, as they do not have adequate financial resources and technical capabilities. It is essential that all the urban local bodies in the state are made financially self-sufficient through adequate efforts are

CMAG, Ahmedabad. The workshop was organized by Mr. Sankar Das, Addl. Chief Secretary. The following is a note on the background, content and recommendations of the workshop.

CMAG newsletter.

Quarterly newsletter. CMAG's newsletter, published in both Gujarati and English, includes articles on issues of importance to local government written by staff and drawn from a number of other sources. It is mailed to all CMAG members as well as donors, partner organizations, state government agencies, and other institutions concerned with local government affairs. The newsletter is also posted on CMAG's web site.

Library. CMAG maintains a small library of urban management publications in its office. It plans to expand this library into an "Urban Resource Center" (URC) in space provided by the AMC. Many CMAG members travel to Ahmedabad on business, and the URC is intended to provide them with a user-friendly and accessible place to obtain relevant information. In addition to books, reports, and newsletters, at the suggestion of CMAG members, it will include tender documents, model contracts, municipal ordinances, and other documents that municipal governments

can use as templates. The resources of CEPT will also be made available to CMAG members through a joint lending program. Another key element of the URC will be a multi-media center, providing Internet access and CD ROMs to CMAG members, most of whom lack these facilities at home.

Best Practices Catalogue. As described earlier, this compendium, modeled loosely after ICMA's *Ideas in Action* series, includes 59 best practices in urban management identified by CMAG from across Gujarat. A second volume of this immensely popular catalogue and related Best Practices Transfer Program will get underway this year with funding from the Ford Foundation.

Phone, fax and mail. CMAG staff still relies fairly heavily on the old-fashioned telephone, fax machine and "snail mail" to get word out to members on CMAG events and training opportunities, as few municipal members have e-mail access.

One page "briefing notes." These short, informative updates on issues of interest to CMAG members are sent out on an ad-hoc basis in Gujarati.

Nurturing partnerships and relationships. CMAG's importance as a clearinghouse for information for local governments, and the respect that it has gained from state agencies, NGOs and other urban management organizations, garner CMAG invitations to a variety of meetings and forums. Staff participate in events at CEPT, NGOs, network discussion groups, think tanks, and donor meetings. They also attend municipal corporation and chief officers' statutory coordination meetings, a sign of the trust that these officials place in CMAG.

CMAG has consciously nurtured good relations with the state government, inviting state officials to attend its workshops, making an effort to schedule them when key officials are available and asking them to give opening remarks at these events, which gives legitimacy to CMAG programs. This effort has paid off, giving CMAG staff access to officials and information at important state agencies such as the Urban Development Department, Directorate of Municipalities, and Municipal Finance Board.

International networking. In its first year, CMAG established a formal affiliation with ICMA, which has been an important connection for the association. ICMA staff continues to provide technical support and advice, and the two associations have established a manager exchange program through which ICMA and CMAG members undertake a two-three week peer exchange to learn from each other and develop professional linkages. In addition to the ICMA link, CMAG receives frequent invitations to participate and share its experience in a number of international forums, including the European Union's Asia Urbs program, the International Network for Urban Development, and training events organized by ICMA in partnership with USAID and US-AEP.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The lack of information technology and low computer literacy of CMAG's municipal members can be a barrier to getting information out to members in a timely and effective manner.
- CMAG must lobby to ensure that a fair allocation of the state funds budgeted for information technology goes to municipal authorities.
- For the foreseeable future, CMAG will continue to rely on the dissemination of information in hardcopy format, a costly and time-consuming process. Interns can be used to help minimize the demands on staff time to print and mail materials. Some members have offered to help with the regional distribution of CMAG materials, which would reduce the volume of mailings CMAG must pay for.
- The association must help its municipal members overcome their fears of computerization and obtain computer training—starting with basic skills—so that they can exploit information technology applications and facilitate communications and information sharing. CMAG plans to explore partnerships with private institutes to provide this training, and to seek funding support from private sector computer hardware and software companies that have a vested interest in increasing the computer literacy of local governments.
- Maintaining CMAG's web site to ensure that the information is up to date and useful, and drafting its quarterly newsletter, are time-consuming activities that drain its limited staff

resources. CMAG plans to recruit interns (both Indian and foreign) and university students to write up workshop proceedings, identify and write relevant articles, gather information and documents for the newsletter and web site and assist with uploading information to the site and preparing the quarterly newsletter.

- Language and length matter: To reach all CMAG members, particularly those from smaller municipalities, written materials should be in both Gujarati and English. Busy municipal administrators do not have time to read lengthy documents; information must be presented in a brief, concise way.
- CMAG and other associations should actively seek out useful materials from other sources to enrich their own publications. A wealth of excellent books, training materials, case studies, and other useful documents on urban management already exists, and rather than reinventing the wheel, associations can adapt such materials to meet their needs.
- Networking—regionally, nationally, and internationally—is an important means of educating other institutions about associations' missions, identifying funding or opportunities for collaboration, establishing professional contacts and learning about best practices and other resources.

Media Relations and Public Outreach

ISSUE

Local government is an often overlooked institution by the media unless there is bad news to be shared, and the public is usually unaware of local government successes. This is certainly true in India, where local governments suffer from a very poor image and the media tends to cover local government affairs only when there is a juicy story on corruption or ineptness. In an environment where local government has operated as an administrative arm with little or no power, it is difficult for the public and the local officials to feel proud of whatever successes they achieve. Local government associations can help present the work of local governments in a positive light, share success stories of individual local governments with the media and encourage their members to publicize their good work.

RESULTS

CMAG has worked to develop good relationships with the press in Gujarat and to encourage them to give positive media coverage to local governments. Media representatives are invited to cover CMAG events, and receive press releases on CMAG programs such as the Best Practices Award. Staff review daily newspapers for articles on local government issues, and have approached the Gujarat edition of the Times of India, a national broadsheet, about introducing a weekly educational supplement highlighting good practices in municipal government, with sponsorship from the private sector.



CMAG is also invited frequently to speak at regional, national, and international conferences and workshops (so far in 2002, CMAG has presented at workshops in Indonesia and Australia) on the importance of local government in India and the role of associations like CMAG in improving urban management.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Local government associations have a key role to play in educating the public and media about local governments—their roles and responsibilities, the challenges they face due to inadequate training and scarce resources, and, especially, to draw attention to success stories.
- Cultivating good relations with journalists (print, radio and TV) can help generate more frequent and positive coverage of local government affairs. Associations should invite journalists to observe member events, and issue press releases highlighting municipal and organizational achievements and awards.
- Local government associations need to educate the international donor community about the importance of good local governance to meeting the challenges of urbanization and sustainable development. Too often, donor assistance programs are targeted at the national or state levels of government and are oriented towards changing the national legislative framework. By documenting and disseminating good practices at the local level, associations can demonstrate the value of using donor support for local government programs to test innovations and reforms, and to inform new policies and resource allocation decisions at the state/national level.

VIABILITY FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Governance, Leadership and Management

ISSUE

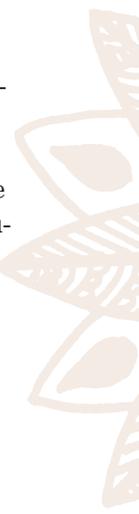
Effective governance and management are critical to the success of any organization. A local government association that is functioning optimally has a clear organizational mission and goals, a board of directors or executive committee that executes its roles with highest regard for serving members, and is non-partisan so that all local governments can be well-represented without bias.

RESULTS

CMAG is governed by a 22-member Executive Committee (EC). The “Office Bearers” consist of the President, who is always the Municipal Commissioner of Ahmedabad; three Vice Presidents (two are commissioners from other municipal corporations, and one is an individual member) a Secretary (one of the deputy municipal commissioners of Ahmedabad), and a Treasurer (this position rotates amongst CMAG members). In principle, a third of the EC’s members are replaced every two years to provide new perspectives and input, while at the same time maintaining some continuity. Because of the rotations of municipal commissioners, in reality there are more frequent changes in EC leadership. This can challenge the EC’s ability to provide strong leadership and continuity in direction, and requires staff and other EC members to devote time getting new board members up to speed.

The CMAG secretariat, which is housed in the offices of the AMC, consists of five full-time staff (see below). The EC meets every one-two months and on an as-needed basis with staff to serve as a sounding board and counsel on program development and implementation and other management issues. In part because of the frequent changes in EC members and the strong sense of hierarchy that is ingrained in Indian local government culture, the EC tends to be dominated by a few voices from the largest municipal corporations, and not all members are actively involved in generating new program ideas. Three EC subcommittees, one under each vice president, are tasked to focus on each of CMAG’s objectives, but due to the heavy workload of EC members, communications problems (lack e-mail access, etc.) and the dominance of a few EC members, these subcommittees are not really active.

The EC is responsible for making and approving all financial spending decisions of over 5,000 rupees (approximately \$100 US) based on recommendations from staff, and only the Treasurer or President are able to sign checks on behalf of the association. This can be problematic when the secretariat needs to take prompt action and neither the Treasurer nor the President is available. However, CMAG staff feel that the secretariat retains reasonable autonomy in the day-to-day management of the organization. Staff develops an annual work plan that is vetted and approved by the EC, and are also empowered to be fairly responsive to targets of opportunities and member needs.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Executive committees/boards can benefit from training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities as policy and budget advisors. New members can benefit from an orientation packet with information on the organization's activities and publications, copy of the strategic plan and annual work plan, financial statement, and other background materials. This is particularly important when there are frequent changes in committee/board leadership, as is the case with CMAG.
- Association staff need to be empowered to run the organization, make financial decisions within defined parameters, and respond quickly to targets of opportunity. Committee/board members need to avoid the urge to micro-manage the day-to-day affairs of the organization.
- All executive committee/board members should be encouraged to participate in meetings and contribute ideas and suggestions to the organization's secretariat. Decisions should be based on group consensus.

Staffing/Organizational Capacity

ISSUE

Adequate organizational capacity is essential to grow and sustain a municipal association. The executive body must establish the strategic direction of the organization and provide policy guidance, but its members, who usually hold senior management positions in local governments, do not have the time to manage its day-to-day affairs. Staff with knowledge of urban management issues and good communications, organizational, administrative, and program management skills are critical to organizational growth and sustainability.

RESULTS

Much of CMAG's success, in particular its ability to begin programmatic activities quickly, can be attributed to the fact that it was staffed from the beginning. Manvita Baradi, who until June 2002 served as CMAG's Director of Programs and is now an advisor for ICMA and US-AEP on association development in Asia, was hired by ICMA (through its agreement with USAID) on an initial three-month contract to help organize the founding workshop and operationalize CMAG. Ms. Baradi was selected due to her training and experience as an urban planner; her contacts in the urban development and planning field, strong organizational and communications skills, and computer literacy. Her contract was extended by ICMA for an additional three months so that she could serve as the project coordinator for CMAG's programs.

While this start-up grant was very important, the organization recognized from outset that it could not continue to rely on outside funding to support

staffing, operational and program expenses, and needed to turn increasingly to member dues and other revenues to cover these costs. Many new municipal associations have a difficult time convincing their target membership of the value of paying dues. However, the success and quality of CMAG's initial activities demonstrated the benefits of joining the organization, and membership (and more importantly, membership dues) began to grow. Starting in April 1998, the EC was able to sign an annual contract with Ms. Baradi as CMAG's project coordinator, and she was promoted in March 2000 to Director of Programs.

The success of CMAG's workshops and other programs eventually persuaded the EC of the need to staff up, and in early 2000 a second full-time professional position—another young urban planner—was added, funded fully by member dues.

The trust that the CMAG Executive Committee had in Ms. Baradi was very important to the initial development of the association. The EC had confidence in her ability to manage CMAG's initial work program and to serve as the organization's representative before international donors, members, and the state government. This trust and freedom enabled Ms. Baradi to be pro-active and push for the development of new programs such as the Best Practices Documentation and Transfer and the Urban Indicators and Performance Measurement Program. Her ability to confidently interact with municipal commissioners, state government officials, and other high-ranking officials enabled CMAG to gain visibility and spread the word about its activities.

In July 2000, at the urging of USAID, CMAG hired a full-time executive director. This position was supported by ICMA through its USAID contract for six months, but has been fully-funded by CMAG dues since 2001. The job profile for the executive director position was developed by the EC, and ads were placed in newspapers. A selection committee was formed, whose members included the Director of the University's School of Planning, a professor from the Indian Institute of Management, and five EC members. The selection committee opted to hire an executive director with significant NGO management experience but little background in urban management.

Today, CMAG has a full-time staff of five: three professionals—the executive director (responsible for business development, administrative procedures, office management, etc.); a program director (responsible for program development, membership needs and development, workshop/training development, and networking); a program manager (responsible for project management, workshop logistics, the web site and newsletter); and two administrative support staff. CMAG contracts with consultants and other institutions for technical and administrative support on an as-needed basis.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is important for associations to staff up from the very beginning, as it is unrealistic to expect the executive committee or board to manage the day-to-day affairs of the organization.
- While there is often a temptation to hire retired municipal officials because of their contacts and inside knowledge of local government operations, caution should be exercised in taking this approach. Association staff need to be energetic and computer-literate, and willing to carry out the multitude of tasks—both administrative and programmatic—involved in establishing a new organization. These range from getting the organization registered and setting up and managing its bank accounts, procuring office space and equipment, to communicating with members, funding agencies, and other concerned institutions and individuals, to developing and running its programs.
- Keeping the organization lean is important, especially in its early years. No organization with limited resources—especially a young organization—can afford to carry any “dead weight,” and all staff need to have appropriate and multiple skills. As the association's membership and programs grow, additional staff can be added if needed, and/or consultants hired for specific projects on an as-needed basis.
- Staff who will work directly with or for new hires should be given the opportunity to meet with prospective candidates, and their input given appropriate consideration in the selection process.

Human Resource Development

ISSUE

A crucial indication of the ability of an association to move from being a responsive, informal organization to one that is proactive and forward moving is its ability to capitalize on its human resources. Excellent human resource management includes documented and accurate personnel procedures, job descriptions, and office procedures. Structured employee performance reviews should take place on an annual basis, providing employees and supervisors an opportunity to provide constructive feedback on each other's performance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and develop performance and professional objectives for the next year. Employees and member volunteers should have regular professional development opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge and their ability to contribute to the organization's mission.

RESULTS

CMAG has job descriptions for all full-time staff positions, which are drafted by staff and reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee. While the association intends to develop an operations and employee manual with documented office procedures and personnel policies, it has remained on the back burner so far, due to a lack of staff resources to draft the manual. The EC conducts perfunctory performance evaluations before the renewal of employees' contracts, but there is generally no input in the process from the concerned staff person or discussion with the supervisor/review team. The evaluation

process therefore misses an important and beneficial opportunity for constructive two-way feedback and team-building, and may cause resentment on the part of staff because of the behind-closed-doors manner in which it is conducted.

CMAG staff are not able to undertake travel or attend training programs where there are costs involved; professional development funds are only for members. If another funding source is available, they can sometimes participate in training activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Staff involvement in the drafting of job descriptions is important to ensure that they reflect the perspective of those working in the organization on a day-to-day basis, as they are the most familiar with specific resource and skill needs.
- Performance evaluations should be conducted in a transparent, consistent, and regular manner, and serve as a mechanism for the supervisor to evaluate the employee's performance and professional objectives, and to discuss any concerns. They should also provide an opportunity for the employee to offer feedback on their supervisor's ability to set clear priorities and objectives, offer appropriate guidance, delegate responsibilities, and provide constructive comments and support to help the employee improve his/her performance.
- The provision of professional development opportunities for staff is important to enable them to continually improve their skills and knowledge and make a greater contribution to the organization's mission and programs. The association should strive to budget funds to support travel and related costs for staff training.

Programs: Plan, Execute, Evaluate

ISSUE

Through years of experience and hard work, associations reach a level at which they are able to use participant input to plan, execute, and evaluate programs to meet their needs. A strategic plan can help guide the organization's direction, objectives, and desired results. With this strategic guidance and framework, staff can develop annual work plans that detail what actions will be taken to achieve these goals and identify the resources needed to carry them out. Work plans should be flexible enough to respond to emerging opportunities, and staff should engage in ongoing needs assessment, outreach, and two-way communication with members to make sure that the organization is responsive to their priorities and needs.

RESULTS

When CMAG was established in 1997, participants at the founding workshop prepared a first-year work plan to guide the organization's development and programs. This work plan served as an important roadmap for the association's program coordinator as she began the task of building the organization. Executive Committee input and guidance was critical at every step of the way, and Ms. Baradi worked closely with several EC members to identify resources for program implementation and new program development, recruit members and get them to pay their dues, and create and expand CMAG's network.

In 1999, CMAG carried out a comprehensive strategic planning process with technical support from ICMA/USAID. The EC and other association members came together in a two-day workshop facilitated by ICMA to develop a five-year strategic plan for CMAG. The resulting document mapped out the association's medium-long term goals and strategic objectives and identified the action steps, activities and the expected timeline for achieving them, as well as who has lead responsibility for implementing each.

While CMAG's program director uses the strategic plan as a reference, it has not really been used as a working document to guide the association's direction and activities in the way that was originally intended. New EC members are not briefed on the plan, and the committee (many of whose members have joined since the plan was adopted) does not review progress against its goals at their meetings. The strategic plan was recently put on CMAG's web page, and staff have discussed convening a member retreat to review and revise the strategic plan and using it to help develop annual work plans.

No formal work plans have been prepared since the first year's plan; staff work with the EC to develop a schedule of workshops and other program activities. This provides flexibility to the organization, but can also pose challenges when staff have to respond to competing priorities and lack a clear roadmap to guide their work.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is important for a new local government association to have clear organizational objectives and priorities, and to develop a work plan that provides clear guidance to staff in how to target their time and resources and direct the growth of the organization.
- Once the association has been established, staffing is in place and an initial one-two year period of programming and growth has occurred, the organization can carry out a strategic planning process to guide its direction and expansion in the medium to long term.
- Extensive member input should be sought in the strategic planning process to ensure that the resulting document reflects the priorities and needs of all members, not just a minority that are actively involved in the association's governance.
- The strategic planning process may benefit from an outside facilitator with expertise in strategic planning and urban management.
- A strategic plan is only useful if it is treated as a working document, is used by association staff and executive board/committee as a roadmap and serves as the basis for the development of annual work plans. Staff should report on progress in implementing the plan at executive board/committee meetings, and look for ways to engage members in its implementation. The strategic plan needs to be flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities.
- New executive board/committee members should be provided with a copy of the organization's strategic plan and be briefed on its status. All association members should be aware

of the plan, and the association should make it available to members, state agencies, donor organizations, NGOs and training institutes so that areas of shared interest and opportunities for collaboration can be identified.

Member Involvement

ISSUE

Member communication and participation is an essential part of a well-functioning association. A membership organization that is driven only by its executive board or committee, executive director and staff without broad member input is missing crucial input and information. Association staff and leadership should be friendly and respectful of members—welcoming them into the association's office and awarding excellence. Two-way communication via a variety of means should take place on a regular basis and mechanisms sought to get member input, such as task forces and committees.

RESULTS

CMAG places a high value on communicating with members. As noted earlier, the lack of computerization and e-mail in municipal offices in Gujarat and relatively poor telecommunications infrastructure poses a challenge to easy communication, but CMAG staff works hard to reach out to members in a variety of other ways. This includes phone calls, participation at member governments' statutory meetings and informal meetings with members at their offices, encouraging members to visit CMAG's offices when they are in Ahmedabad, soliciting member feedback on association programs and training workshops and using of the CMAG newsletter and web page to share information. The Best Practices Award Program is another means to acknowledge and honor members' successes.

To date, CMAG has not created member committees and task forces to assist the EC and staff on issues such as financial diversification and resource development or policy development and advocacy. Staff acknowledge that this is something that they need to do in order to engage more members in the association's affairs.

This year, the organization is issuing its first annual report, which will be an important way to share the results and successes of its first five years with members, partner organizations, state and national government, associations in other states and countries, and the international donor community.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Member involvement requires a conscious, continuous effort on the part of association staff, in particular when there is a low rate of computerization and computer literacy amongst members.
- Association staff have a vested interest in encouraging and facilitating the use of information technology by local governments. The increasing use of e-mail and web-based applications greatly reduces the time and cost of communicating with members and disseminating information, and expands the association's reach.
- Members like to feel special. Staff should make a special effort to welcome them to the association's offices, and seek out ways to recognize their accomplishments (e.g., Best Practices awards, articles highlighting their communities in the association's newsletter, etc.).
- It is important to involve members in identifying training and information needs to ensure that association programs are demand-driven.

Financial Viability

ISSUE

Of all the issues that must be addressed in order to be a successful association, financial viability cannot be overlooked. Without a well-developed, stable source of revenues—both member dues and other sources, the best intentions of the association will not be met. Membership should be as broad as possible and other entrepreneurial activities that support the mission and goals of the association should be encouraged.

Determining the membership structure of a municipal association and creating a dues structure that is viewed as equitable by all members can be challenging. Issues that need to be examined include:

- Whether to have both individual and institutional members;
- Whether to limit membership to those working in the public sector or also to include organizations and individuals working for NGOs and the private sector on urban management-related issues;
- How to structure membership fees to cover operational and programmatic costs in a transparent and rational manner;
- How to ensure the respect and good will of members and the integrity of the association and attract new resources through transparent and accountable administration of all association funds.

RESULTS

CMAG's founders developed a quite complex membership structure, with three categories of members—institutional, individual, and associate. Institutional and individual membership was initially limited to the largest cities (those with a population of 100,000 or larger), as CMAG's leadership felt that it should not try to spread its membership base too thinly while the organization was getting established and stabilized.

The membership structure was reviewed during the 1999 strategic planning process, and the EC decided to extend institutional and individual memberships to Class II cities (those with populations between 50,000 and 100,000). The membership structure limits Class III and Class IV municipalities and municipal officials to associate, non-voting member status. They have no representation on CMAG's EC, in spite of the fact that these front-line, lower-level administrators represent a sizeable portion of municipal employees. The total number of individual members cannot exceed 50% of institutional members.

The six largest municipal corporations, each of which is allocated ten representative slots, pay 85% of CMAG's dues, while smaller cities, individual and associate members pay a token annual fee. While the municipal corporations seem to be on the whole comfortable with the heavy cross-subsidization that they support, CMAG should undertake a comprehensive examination of its dues structure in the future. It should evaluate whether the existing structure is equitable and ensure that revenues from dues are sufficient to meet member service and programming needs as well as operational costs.

The collection of dues from all CMAG members remains a challenge, and CMAG continues to let members who have not remitted dues participate in association activities, justified by the belief that as the benefits of membership are better understood, they will begin to pay dues.

In spite of this, CMAG has been fairly successful in generating sufficient revenues to cover its basic operational costs and to finance basic member services such as the CMAG newsletter and information sharing. The organization's start-up costs and initial technical support were largely borne by USAID and US-AEP, and the AMC provides CMAG with office space. While this saves the association from having to pay rent, it limits its ability to expand, and creates the perception amongst some members that the organization gives the city special treatment. Workshop costs are paid from member dues or co-funded with donor organizations.

CMAG staff are interested in pursuing new, entrepreneurial approaches to financing association activities. They plan to approach certain industrial education trusts such as Tata, a major Indian conglomerate, and the Gujarati Industrial Development Board about sponsoring events, and have discussed the idea of holding an exploratory workshop with private sector organizations such as the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce to discuss opportunities for public-private partnerships. So far, the EC has vetoed the idea out of concern that the organization will become beholden to corporate sponsors.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Opening up membership in municipal associations to a wide range of managers and administrators enables the entire municipal organization to take advantage of opportunities to upgrade skills and make a greater contribution to improving urban management systems.
- Membership categories should be as clear, simple and equitable as possible.
- The member dues structure should be reviewed periodically (e.g. every 2–3 years), to ensure it is equitable and bears a relationship to the organization’s operational and programmatic needs. Program-based budgeting will help to identify fiscal shortfalls that need to be offset by outside sources.
- A strong commitment to collecting member dues from all members needs to be made. In the medium to long term, those members who fail to pay their dues should not be permitted to continue participating in association events and reaping the rewards of membership.
- Fees for services and training programs need to be gradually introduced to ensure that they cover their costs and are financially sustainable. This will also help ensure that workshops and courses are based on demand.
- For the foreseeable future, CMAG and other CMAs in India will continue to rely to a certain extent on outside funding support. Care should be taken to limit this dependency, and to diversify funding sources beyond one donor. In the case of CMAG, this means looking to other bilateral and multilateral donors beyond USAID and US-AEP. Foundations can also be an important funding source, as CMAG’s \$87,000 grant from the Ford Foundation demonstrates.

- Diversifying funding sources can help municipal associations retain their autonomy and not become a mechanism for implementing other institutions’ agendas.
- Associations should consider the establishment of a member-staff task force focused on financial diversification that can research and pursue new funding sources. The task force should be empowered to be entrepreneurial.
- Associations should capitalize on the growing culture of corporate citizenship and seek strategic partnerships with private sector firms that have an interest in improving urban governance. Other local government associations that have established corporate partnership programs, such as ICMA, Local Government Managers Australia, and the Association of Mexican Municipalities can serve as resources in how to structure partnerships with the private sector to avoid any appearance of preferential treatment or conflict of interest.

CONCLUSION

In its short five-year history, CMAG has made a significant contribution to strengthening and professionalizing local government in Gujarat. Its accomplishments in training and capacity building, documenting and sharing of best practices, networking and peer exchanges, and fostering a

collaborative, equal partnership with the state government serve as a model for other CMAs in India and, indeed, around the world. This is well-illustrated by the technical advisory role CMAG’s former program director is playing in the establishment of new CMAs in other Indian states, its frequent invitations to share its experience with associations in other countries, and the respect in which it is held by its state, regional, national and international partners. CMAG has helped to demonstrate the importance of professionalizing local government management to effectively address the challenges of urbanization. Unless and until local governments are able to improve service delivery and become more transparent, responsive and accountable to citizens, the goal of environmentally and economically sustainable development will not be achieved.

ICMA is proud of its collaboration with CMAG, and congratulates the organization on its impressive results. Our organization is committed to helping emerging local government associations throughout the world to fulfill their mission and expand their capacity to serve local governments in their countries. We look forward to continuing and expanding our fruitful partnership with CMAG and the growing number of CMAs in India and other countries around the globe.

Endnotes

- 1 Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttaranchal.
- 2 The Center for Environment, Planning and Technology in Ahmedabad plans to introduce an urban management post graduate program in the near future.
- 3 The six municipal corporations retain the right to collect the octroi tax.

- 4 Nonetheless, e-governance is catching on in the largest municipal corporations in states such as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, and there is a growing recognition that local governments must embrace information technology to improve their efficiency and performance. The state government of Gujarat recently developed an information technology policy and is setting budget funds aside for the procurement of computer hardware and software by government agencies.

ICMA

The International City/County Management Association is a professional and educational membership association of appointed local government managers and administrators in the United States and abroad. ICMA has more than 8,000 members who work for cities, counties, and regional local governments as well as educational institutions and organizations with an interest in local government. ICMA offers members access to technical and management assistance, training, publications, and online resources. ICMA members are committed to a code of ethics, which is enforced through peer review by the membership. Since 1990, ICMA has worked in more than 40 countries to improve professional local government management throughout the world with support from several donor organizations including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank.

To learn more about ICMA, please visit www.icma.org.

CMAG

The City Managers' Association, Gujarat (CMAG) is a membership-based association of municipal bodies and institutions/individuals working in the field of urban governance in the Indian state of Gujarat. Established in 1997, CMAG's mission is to nurture excellence in local governance and improve the quality of life of citizens by building professional management capacity within urban local bodies, and to strengthen and promote urban local bodies as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. CMAG provides a forum for Gujarati city managers and others working in the urban development and management field to network, exchange information and best practices, participate in training and professional development activities, and advocate for stronger, more professional and democratic local government.

More information about CMAG can be found at its Web site: <http://www.cmag-india.org>.

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