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## Strengthening the Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN), Kathmandu *Nepal*

Good Practice

New for 2002

- Categories:**
- Urban and Regional Planning:
    - community-based planning
    - consultative process
  - Technology, Tools and Methods:
    - planning tools and techniques
    - training and capacity building
  - Urban Governance:
    - decentralization
    - management and information systems
    - monitoring and evaluation
    - openness and transparency
    - partnership development
    - resource mobilization
    - visioning

**Level of Activity:** National

**Ecosystem:** Tropical/Sub-Tropical

### Summary

MuAN, a member-funded umbrella organization, was founded in the spirit of decentralization and good governance. It represents its member-municipalities' collective interests to the central government and international community. Today, working closely with the Ministry of Local Development, it is the key player in urban and local development, promoting good governance and sustainable development by advocating policy reforms, providing technical assistance, mobilizing local resources, building awareness, and sharing information among its member-municipalities. It is affiliated with like-minded institutions across the world and shares information on urban issues with international and bi-lateral agencies. Last year, its membership fees and overall financial transactions increased by 300% and 87% respectively.

Funded by UNV Programme and udle/GTZ, UNV-MuAN works on strengthening MuAN's institutional capacity, giving it the "push" to provide technical assistance and counselling to its members, encouraging local volunteerism, promoting MuAN's potentials to aid agencies, and coordinating existing development projects. It was formulated in partnership with local, national, and international stakeholders. It integrates physical planning, municipal financing, mainstreaming informal sector, and information and communication technology with participatory and right-based approaches. Its primary goal is to create a foundation in the democratic process.

National and international volunteers serve as technical advisors to MuAN and local municipalities.

Through demonstration activities, the volunteers work to enhance MuAN's potentials to be an agent of change and create a multiplier effect of reaching out to all municipalities in Nepal.

## **Narrative**

### Situation before initiative began (50 words)

MuAN's secretariat had one executive secretary, four clerical staff, and three technical staff being trained by udle/GTZ but one joined the organization. Local municipalities were facing managerial and technical constraints to meet their mandates. MuAN had limited financial resources to attract technical staff to provide counselling to its members.

### Establishment of Priorities (100 words)

Through its Local Self-Governance Act, 1999, the central government understands that local people should be involved in local development activities and development process will be sustained with local leadership, people, time and money. But local authorities lack the manpower and managerial capacities to carry out their responsibilities.

UDLE/GTZ, a bilateral agency, has learned important lessons during 15 years of addressing urban development issues through its urban development through local efforts (udle) programme. A municipal association, created and financed by udl/GTZ, was born out of the need to have a local active player in urban development. However, the association lacks financial, managerial, and technical resources. When UNV, a volunteer arm of the United Nations, seek to expand its urban sector, udle/GTZ's strategies were integrated into the innovative project of strengthening MuAN.

### Formulation of Objectives and Strategies (100 words)

Together with udle/GTZ, UNDP-Nepal, and MuaN, the UNV Programme formulated the objectives and strategies based on participatory approach to planning. The objectives are to build up the municipalities' confidence in MuAN' potentials to take the lead role in urban and local development, and to build the institutional capacity of five local municipalities to provide urban services that improve the quality of life.

Through intervention activities and sharing information, local municipalities learn the benefits of long-term planning, mobilizing local resources, and implementing public-private partnership initiative. Integrating urban planning and public finance tools with participatory and right-based approaches, MuAN's capacity to provide technical counselling to its members and advocate social change is enhanced. The participatory and right-based approached ensure people's participation at all levels of planning that is fundamental to sustainable development.

### Mobilization of Resources (200 words)

In the spirit of volunteerism, UNV Programme provides funds and human resources through its Special Voluntary Fund and professional roster respectively. GTZ, a German Aid Agency, through its Urban Development through Local Efforts provides additional financial and technical resources. UNDP-Nepal provides administrative backstopping, synergies and linkages to its existing urban development projects. MuAN and five local municipalities are partners in the project implementation and the beneficiaries. They provide in-kind contribution estimated at US\$270,000. These beneficiaries will be empowered with technical resources to work with local stakeholders tin tackling urban issues with minimum external resources.

Through integrated property tax and heightened public awareness, municipalities will have alternative sources of revenues, and the general public will accept that communal responsibility and volunteerism are fundamental to improving their lives, and volunteerism alternatives to dependency.

### Process (400 words)

In the spirit of decentralization and devolution of powers, the central government declared twenty-two new municipalities by amalgamating adjoining villages. These municipalities are divided into wards with its own chairman and members. They are responsible to provide urban services, but they lack financial resources as well as technical and managerial capacities. The democratic process requires that people's participation in the development process but these people are unaware that their voice matter, especially women and disadvantaged groups as they are ingrained in religious-caste traditions. In response, MuAN was formed to assist these municipalities to voice their plights to the central government, and to mobilize local resources. UNV-MuAN's challenge was to develop the technical, managerial, and financial resources of MuAN as an organization responsible in promoting good governance that improves the quality of life in a country steep in religious-traditions and extremely dependent on foreign aids. Thus innovative approaches are needed to encourage change in values, attitudes, and approaches in problem solving.

A simple approach of mutual interests and understanding, and attentive listening have been the key to overcoming major and minor obstacles. Though simple, this approach energizes, mobilises, and empowers the beneficiaries to accept that development with local minds and money is sustainable. At advocacy and representation level, UNV-MuAN supports the organization to the central government and local municipalities. At technical and advisory level, UNV-MuAN builds confidence among local and international stakeholders through technical advice and training activities. Training municipalities' staff empowers them to seek alternative solution to urban issues, and learn to implement project that are transparent and accountable. Using participatory and right-based approaches to urban development, local people are required to participate in planning their lives, using meta-card discussion and elimination process. At strategic and conceptual level, UNV-MuAN builds information system that ensures continuity and reliability.

Using national and international volunteers to implement the project is cost effective and enhances the concept of community mobilization through local volunteerism. UN Volunteers Programme believes volunteerism is sharing and empowering are fundamental to sustainable development.

#### Results Achieved (250 words)

MuAN is equipped with resource information center containing database of all municipalities, a publication focusing on urban issues nationwide, a bi-monthly newsletter, a website and periodicals relating to urban issues, public finance, community development, and local experiences. It is empowered to collect, process, disseminate, and analyze data tracks of 20 urban indicators. It gives technical and managerial counseling to its members and serves as a clearing house for its members and international community. It provides a platform for stakeholders to establish mutual understanding and cooperations. It coordinates development projects nationwide. It has taken a leading role in influencing poverty alleviation programme through urban management. The local authorities are equipped with planning and financing tools to shape their own development efforts, using local resources.

#### Sustainability (300 words)

Decentralization process and devolution of powers are linked to political will and active participation of the ordinary people. To sustain such reform, UNV-MuAN inspires innovation, motivation, pride, and commitment of stakeholders based on continuous dialogues, negotiations, and moving-on attitudes. It integrates legal, financial, economic, and skills development components. UNV Programme, UNDP/GTZ, UNDP-Nepal, and MuAN create a sustainable and adaptable model designed to identify trouble spots and intervene through mediation and discussions. UNV-MuAN offers no financial assistance, subsidies, grants, or loans. The beneficiaries make their investments and chart their progress. They set their rules, mutual interests, and support, and accept the responsibilities of achieving their stated visions, while UNV-MuAN provides advice when requested at different stages. They attract external financial assistance through their abilities to demonstrate needs against agencies' criteria. A "phasing-out" period is imbedded in the project, a period when the volunteers monitors the day-to-day activities of MuAN's staff.

#### Lesson Learned (300 words)

Local resources are mobilized through participation and cooperation of the local people.

Decentralization is a slow process, as it requires a shift in traditional values, norms and approach to doing things especially in Nepal that depends on foreign aid. It requires the central government to understand that local people should be involved in local development activities and development process will be sustained only with local leadership, mind, and money. Local authorities need to understand that they are accountable to their constituencies. Building trust and institutional capacity is a slow process that needs simple and transparent methodologies. These methodologies are not easy to achieve as political will and managerial capacities are time-consuming and difficult to achieve. Yet a sense of communal responsibilities, political will, and professional capacities are necessary ingredients that make political reforms and improve quality of life possible. With local leadership, people, and money, decision-making process is enriched, transparent, and sustainable as it is reached through mutual interests and knowledge within the local community. Through collective interests and negotiations, the local authorities could influence the policies that affect them and their constituencies.

Transferability (300 words)

In a short period of time, MuAN's role in promoting good governance and urban development in Nepal is enhanced and solidified among international and bi-lateral agencies as well as local municipalities in Nepal. It provides a collective voice for local elected officials with the central government. It has become a source of information to international agencies, local municipalities, and the central government. The UNV-MuAN was formulated in partnership with the beneficiaries in the spirit of sharing skills and knowledge while strengthening their capacities to meet their objectives. The process of institutional capacity building is slow with one step forward and two steps backwards compounded with tensions in a foreign aid-dependent country like Nepal. This is the nature of building trust, confidence and institutional capacity based on mutual interests and respect. To transfer skills and knowledge, these beneficiaries are required to provide permanent staff to work closely with UN Volunteers to experience the process of building confidence and capacities of local authorities to achieve long-term goals, develop action plans, and mobilize local resources and local volunteerism. A "phasing out" period is part of the project strategy. During this period, the UN Volunteers will monitor the daily activities of the counterparts and intervene when necessary. Through demonstration activities and technical advisory support, the national and international volunteers will create a multiplier effect of reaching out to all fifty-eight municipalities in Nepal and the rest of the world.

## Key Dates

1990 - Restoration of multiparty system

1998 - MuAN officially declared as non-governmental organization representing the interests of all municipalities

1999- Local Self Governance Act

2000- Project Implementation begun

2001- MuAN's role in the Tenth Development Plan

## References

1. "Blame for not giving authority to mobilise resources" Kantipur, Nepali National Daily, May 15, 2001 (Newspaper article)
2. "It is essential to make private sector involve in resource mobilization" Nepal Samacharpatra, (Newspaper Article in Nepali) 14-16 May 2001
3. "Resource inadequate for local dev works", The Kathmandu Post, 15 Ma 2001
4. "MuAN seeks more authority" The Kathmandu Post, 10 August 2001

## Contact

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**Type of Organization:** Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

## Nominating Organization

N/A

## Partners

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UN House, P.O.Box 107  
Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Nepal  
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Fax: 977-1-523991  
E-Mail: morsinah.katimin@undp.org

**Type of Organization:** International Agency (Multilateral)

**Type of Partner Support:** Technical Support

Udle/GTZ  
Arun Regmi  
New Baneshwor  
P.O.Box 1457  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
E-Mail: udle@gtz.org.np

**Type of Organization:** International Agency (Bilateral)

**Type of Partner Support:** Technical Support

Pulchowk  
S.R. Regmi  
Ministry for Local Development/HMG  
E-Mail: sregmi@mld.org.np

**Type of Organization:** Central Government

**Type of Partner Support:** Political Support

## Financial Profile

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Year	Total	UNV Partner A % Total Budget	Udle/GTZ Partner B % total Budget (in-kind)	MuAN and local municipalities : Partner C % Total Budget (in-kind)
2000	65,200	0%	30.98%	69.02%
2001	183,888	41.27%	9.79%	48.94%
2002	153,136	41.22%	0.26%	58.52%
2003	118,976	60.82%	0.36%	38.82%



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