

Evaluation of Project Implementation Modalities of the Cities Alliance

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Introduction: Objectives and Scope

In December 2009, GHK Consulting Ltd was selected to undertake the Evaluation of Project Implementation Modalities of the Cities Alliance. The Terms of Reference define the objectives of the assignment as follows: “The evaluation of client and of non-client grant implementation for city development and slum upgrading projects in cities or at national level should provide evidence to assess the applicability and effects of [client and member] implementation modalities”.¹ The evidence base emerging from the analysis would be used to provide guidance to the Alliance and its partners on *improving ownership and user friendliness* and, thereby, the quality of projects and their results. The findings and recommendations will inform both strategic as well as managerial-level decision-making and business processes.

Approach

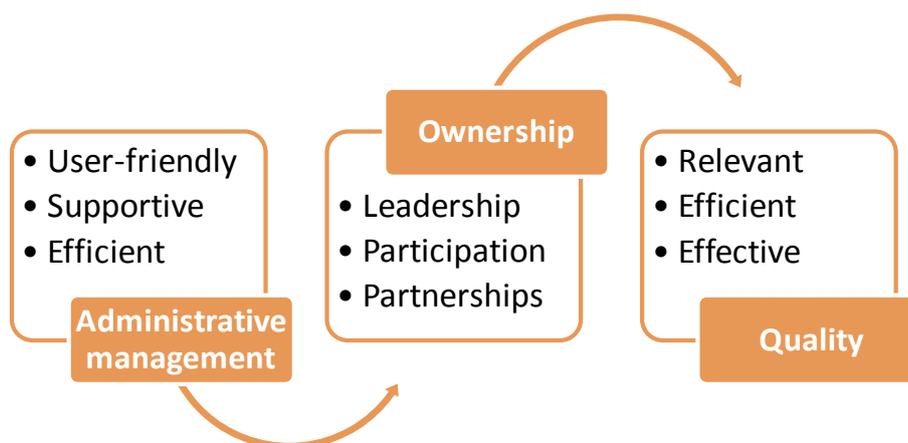
The broad understanding of the context of the assignment is summarised in Figure 1. Importantly, the evaluation is being undertaken at a time when the Cities Alliance is in transition from what might be termed a *grant administration* business model to a more *developmental* business model as broadly outlined in the Medium Term Strategy. In response, based on initial meetings with the CA Secretariat the evaluation will aim to be both summative and formative. In terms of the former, an assessment of comparative strengths and weaknesses of the two principal implementation modalities will be made. Critically, in terms of the latter, the evaluation will aim to provide guidance and recommendations that can inform the *emerging MTS*. The evidence base will be:

- Desk based: a structured review of Grant documentation; and
- Key stakeholder interviews: Covering CA members, client groups and stakeholders (civil society, urban poor representatives and private sector) participating in / material to the CDS / SU activities.

In addition to a general document review, the TOR included a list of 25 CDS / SU projects that would provide the evidence base for the evaluation. All 25 projects would be subject to desk review / selected interviews as useful and it is anticipated that between 4 (the minimum specified) and 8 field visits would be undertaken. A cursory review of the existing data sets suggests the evidence provided by the CA Secretariat base is somewhat incomplete and thus particular emphasis will be placed on interviews and field visits. It was also agreed in principal that the focus of the detailed case studies should be low income countries with Africa receiving particular attention.

¹ Delivery of Cities Alliance grants is through two principal modalities: Member Execution, the largest share, with a focus on the World Bank and UN Habitat; and Client Execution, about a quarter of the grants, through national and/or local governments, NGOs and other organisations. Client Execution is an important element of the Alliance’s objective, as articulated in its Medium Term Strategy (MTS), to ‘systematically increase ownership and leadership of cities and countries’. It is consistent with wider strategic agendas for increasing effectiveness through increased ownership, such as the OECD’s Paris Declaration.

Figure 1: Rationale



Strategic Issues

The evaluation faces a number of challenges in terms of concept definition and evidence. Specific points that will be clarified in the Inception Report are:

- **Ownership:** Defining, identifying the determinants of and “measuring” ownership are key foundations of the evaluation. The logic of the relationship between ownership and mode of execution also needs clarity. Initial evidence does not support a binary choice between client and member execution in terms of relative strength of ownership. There are both practical reasons (administrative and financial procedures) and capacity issues (the comparative readiness of cities to participate in CDS / SU activities) that can dictate which modality is used without necessarily implying the strength of ownership.
- **Quality of Projects:** There are no simple measures of “quality” of projects that CA supports – what defines a successful project and set of outcomes is not clear cut. The strategic goal of poverty reduction remains but CA funded support to CDS / SU activities contribute to this outcome but other factors are also material and thus attribution is complex. In the case of CDS activities, the strategic nature of these activities should be assessed in terms of their *likely contribution* towards improving pro-poor policy and planning frameworks and their likely implementation. The Grant Application / Grant Agreement provides some parameters of positive results which can be measured and monitored and potentially captured in the Grant Completion Reports / Project Outputs, for example, partnerships, use of participation, linkage to follow-on investment, coherence of effort among members. More strategically, the evaluation will need to capture both process and output parameters such as attitude and behaviour changes, organisation / institutional changes, pro-poor participation implementation

progress and resource mobilisation that need to be combined into a format that is logical and valid for assessing quality.²

- **Evidence:** The data on the impacts of CA supported activities is at best mixed; in part reflecting the relatively light touch approach of CA in its grant administration. The current CA business processes only allow partial capture of relevant data through Progress Reporting, Grant Completion Reports and selective field visits. Systematic M&E and longitudinal data collection is not undertaken and in practice is difficult in any event under the current business model. At the project level, the evidence of success is also mixed based on a cursory review of existing data sources. Thus, the emphasis on the case studies and field visits will be important and provide suggestive evidence and signposts on how to move forward.

The evidence base will be used to help identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of CA activities, potential service and business process improvements with the aim of increasing the likely effectiveness of the CA in contributing to poverty reduction and wider developmental outcomes; in particular raising awareness of poverty within policy and planning formulation. These will be developed to support the MTS and to define the CA value-added / value proposition to its clients.

Work Plan

Our proposed methodology is structured in three phases, an inception phase; the in-depth analysis phase of desk studies, interviews and field visits; and a final reporting phase: Figure 2 provides a general overview. The final field visit programme will be agreed at inception but will include CA members and all aspects of the Grant Administration Process. The timeframe of the evaluation has been adjusted from the TOR due to a slightly delayed start. The key deliverables are:

- Inception Report – end January 2010, which would permit suggestions from ExCo and CG to be incorporated into the report.
- Interim Progress Report – end March
- Draft / Final Report – end of June 2010

² There is an issue around defining outputs and outcomes here.

Figure 2: Proposed Methodology

