



**Strengthening Ethiopia's
local governments**
**through the Uniting Local
Governments in Ethiopia project**

Uniting Local Governments in Ethiopia project (ULGE)

The ULGE project (2020-2024) seeks to strengthen Ethiopia's local government sector, contributing to the country's decentralization process as a pathway to sustainable development. To pursue this goal, the project is centred on two main pillars: 1) improving exchanges between local governments; and 2) improving public financial management in selected pilot cities.

1. Allowing local governments to learn from each other

Ethiopia's local governments face many challenges. By learning how different local governments tackle these challenges, they can adopt locally grown solutions that have already proven effective. The Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA) plays a central role in coordinating these processes of horizontal learning between Ethiopian cities. The ULGE project provides a framework in which these exchanges of knowledge can take place, while simultaneously strengthening ECA to organise such exchanges independently and link them with their lobby and advocacy activities at regional and federal levels.



The pivotal role of the ECA in ULGE

The Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA) is an alliance of currently more than seventy Ethiopian cities working towards improving the living conditions of the urban population. As a local government association, ECA has three main duties:



Service provision – ECA provides services to member cities, ranging from capacity building on new legislation to technical expertise on city management.



Providing a platform for exchange – ECA brings together over 80 cities to share, discuss and voice the issues that matter most to them.



Lobby & advocacy – As association, ECA is in a unique position to defend the interests of their membership at the different levels of government and society.

Through learning-by-doing, ECA's capacity to be a platform for exchange is enhanced, while the exchanges themselves provide ECA with a source of inspiration for their service provision and lobby activities. The inclusion of ECA therefore ensures the project's impact ripples through the entire local governments sector, speeding up the implementation of ongoing urban development reforms.

The power of horizontal learning

At the core of horizontal learning is the belief that professionals are already experts in what they do. Individually, they might not carry every single solution, but collectively they contain an expertise far greater than any single expert ever could. Above all, they know how to apply this expertise within their specific context. Horizontal learning seeks to tap into this expertise by facilitating structured moments of exchange.

By bringing together cities from all regions of Ethiopia, ULGE creates a unique platform where good practices that have already proven effective can be identified and shared challenges can be addressed. Additionally, it inspires participants by showcasing the actions of others.

2. Piloting public financial management for growing cities

As Ethiopia is experiencing a rapid population growth, mostly in medium-sized cities, people are demanding their government for more and better services. Unfortunately, cities are systematically underfunded and remain largely reliant on the national level for funding.

Seeking to address these issues, ULGE has launched a pilot aimed towards improving the existing financial management for the cities of Yirgalem, Bulbulla, and their adjacent rural woredas. Both clusters receive support in developing Financial Management Development Strategies and on increasing their own-source revenues, ultimately leading to better services, including water, sanitation, local roads and solid waste management. The support includes IT support to registration of properties, e-billing and e-payment services and tax payer communication.

As the local government is the body of government closest to the citizen, increasing their discretionary space for service delivery will result in better and more effective services for their citizens.

ECA also plays a key role in this component. The experiences of these pilots serve as a basis for trainings and manuals on financial management and revenue mobilisation provided by ECA to its members. Moreover, the project will expand the research base for urban and local level issues by involving universities building the evidence base to advance decentralisation.



Who are we?

ULGE is a joint effort by VNG International and ECA, and is financed by the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia in Addis Ababa.

VNG International - The ULGE project is implemented by VNG International, the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities. In over thirty countries worldwide, VNG International strengthens local governments, associations of municipalities, and local trainings institutes. VNG International was founded in 1993 by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten, VNG), the world's oldest local government association. VNG International is housed within the VNG offices in The Hague, allowing it to easily access the know-how of the Dutch local government sector.

Ethiopian Cities Association - The Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA) is an alliance of currently 81 Ethiopian cities working towards improving the living conditions of the urban Ethiopian population. ECA was established in February 2009. It is a voluntary membership organization owned by and accountable to its members. ECA aspires for all Ethiopian cities to be prosperous, sustainable, productive, and competitive by 2030. The formation of ECA is the joint interest and effort of Ethiopian Cities to strengthen coordination of their efforts and mutually work towards mitigating the deep-rooted and diversified urban problems in their cities. Since its establishment, ECA has been engaged in a wide range of capacity building, experience sharing and learning, and training activities.



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