

PRACTICE

Project Hetura: Reflections on an international local government partnership

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1. Background

The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the Townsville/Port Moresby partnership activities and explore the challenges and benefits to both Councils from the perspective of a Townsville City Council employee associated with the program.

Since 2002, Townsville City Council has been engaged in a capacity building project with the National Capital District Commission (NCDC) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The project, named Hetura, means mateship or friendship in Moto, the predominant language group in Port Moresby. Project Hetura is coordinated through the Commonwealth Local Government Forum¹ (CLGF) Good Practice Scheme with funding from AusAID.

¹ Townsville City Council provides in-kind support through the contribution of staff time and participation while the National Capital District Commission provides a budget allocation for the project.

The overarching goal of Project Hetura is to strengthen management, planning, and governance within the NCDC and to improve the capacity of the organisation to deliver efficient, responsive, accountable services to the community. Rather than engaging in a traditional consultancy, the approach by participants of Project Hetura has been that of a

¹ Four other partnerships operating along the same guidelines currently exist between councils in Australia and Papua New Guinea under the coordination of the CLGF Good Practice Scheme.

partnership built through a relationship of trust and good-will developed over time between the two organisations. Within this partnership, the skills and contributions of all parties are valued, and team members work together to develop sustainable solutions to identified problems.



View of Hanuabada Village in Port Moresby Harbour

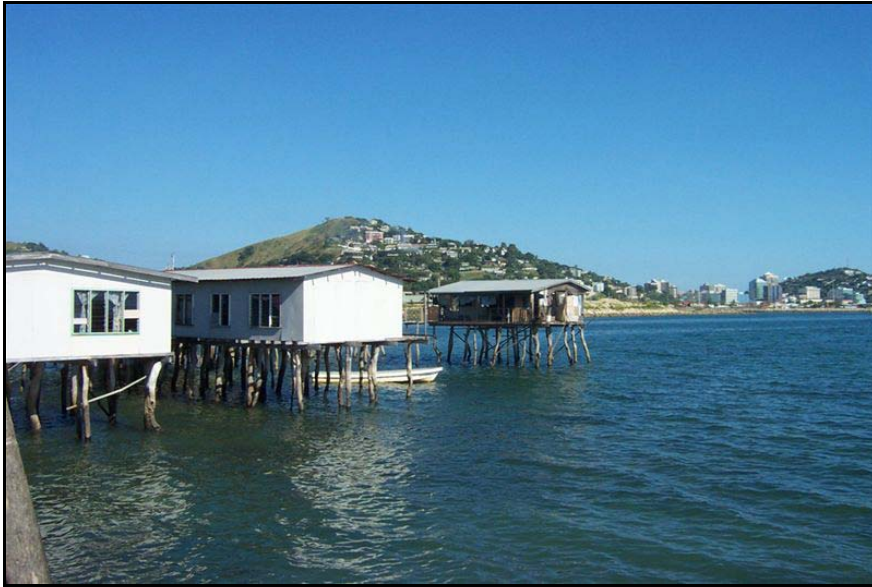
2. Overview of Partners

National Capital District Commission

Port Moresby is the national capital and the administrative and commercial centre of Papua New Guinea. The NCDC operates as the local authority and has responsibility for urban planning and regulation, roads, waste management and community services. Economic activities in Port Moresby are primarily associated with service industries. Like many cities in the Pacific Region, urban migration has resulted in a significant increase to the population of Port Moresby which in turn challenges to the ability of the NCDC to govern effectively and ensure necessary service delivery. Other important considerations:

- Land ownership in Port Moresby is divided between customary land (40%) and ‘alienated land’ which is either owned by the State or in private hands (60%).
- A lack of available housing has resulted in many migrants having no option but to inhabit unplanned settlements which generally lack basic infrastructure and essential services such as water, electricity, refuse collection and sewerage.

- It is estimated that 45% of the population live in settlements which are also associated with high unemployment, elevated crime rates and poor sanitation.
- Population is growing rapidly in the settlements which are unregulated and do not provide a source of revenue to the NCDC thus placing a great deal of pressure on the organisations available resources and capacity.



Stilt Houses on Port Moresby Harbour

Townsville City Council

Townsville City Council (TCC) is located in north Queensland, Australia and is the main centre for government administration outside of Brisbane. The economy of Townsville is diverse and includes industries such as retail trade, health and education services, government administration and defence, construction, mining, manufacturing and property and business management. Townsville enjoys a strong growth rate which is higher than the state average and is currently in the process of developing a new planning scheme that will serve to ensure appropriate infrastructure and sustainable growth.

Figure 1. Comparison of Port Moresby – Townsville key indicators

	Port Moresby	Townsville
Population	600,000	180,000
Area	399 km ²	3,738 km ²
Road Network	750 km	2,450 km
Land Parcels	22,225	82,726
Households/ Res. Properties	37,221	64,750
Unemployment	18.5%	4%
Growth Rate	-	3.2% (2.6% Qld)

3. Project Goals and Achievements

Project Hetura - Phase 1

In 2000 a scoping project was initiated by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (under the auspices of the PNG Urban Local Level Government Association) in order to initiate a partnership with the NCDC and Townsville under the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme. The scoping exercise was and jointly undertaken by officers of Townsville City Council and the NDCD. The primary focus was to review the overall regulatory services planning capacity of the NCDC and resulted in six recommended activities which were later scaled back to a more achievable program with a focus on urban planning and information technology. Activities identified in the initial scoping such as human resources and financial management were to be addressed in the second phase of the project. Phase 1 of Project Hetura was originally scheduled to operate from 2002 to 2006, but was extended for an additional three years through a second Memorandum of Understanding. The following activities were identified:

1. Structural changes

- Changes to the organisational structure to strengthen leadership in the area of Planning, Lands and Building Services.
- Strengthening of the corporate planning process throughout the organisation and transferring responsibility for this to Planning, Lands and Building Services.
- Establishment of planning and development compliance functions as core responsibilities of the Planning, Lands and Building Services Division.
- Improvements to the customer service function including the development of a 'one stop shop' concept, creating a customer service centre to function in

conjunction with Planning, Lands and Building Services, and adoption of workflow and procedural changes to reinforce the ‘one stop’ model.

2. Policy and legislation

- The NCDC make representations to the National Government seeking amendments to the Physical Planning Act and Regulation.
- Amendments to the Urban Development and Services Master Plan as necessary, and the adoption of a Development Plan pursuant to the requirements of the Physical Planning Act and Regulation.
- Funding for a program to undertake preparation of Local Area Plans for the Local Planning Areas of NCDC with priority being given to plans for the areas of Downtown, Boroko and Waigani.

3. IT systems

- An IT systems audit and needs analysis to specifically determine system needs, development options and associated costs.
- Upgrades of the NDCD Property Database
- Improvements to network connections between NCDC buildings and the standardisation of equipment across the organisation.

4. Records management

- Establishment of a single, centralised electronic information and records management system.
- Development of program to provide publications with corporate information, including services offered and programs.

Outcomes of phase 1 Project Hetura

For Project Hetura to succeed it was crucial that participants form a strong working partnership. Building on a “Sister City” relationship that has existed between the two Councils since 1983, officers from Townsville City Council and the National Capital District Commission had early on formed relationships and built a partnership that set the foundation for future constructive interactions. This element of the project is what sets the Good Practice Scheme apart from a typical consultative approach and sees participants work together to navigate through the inevitable setbacks and frustrations of implementing change.

Phase 1 of Project Hetura benefited greatly from a very generous visiting program by Planning and Development staff from Townsville City Council. Working closely with the Strategic Planning staff in the NCDC, a Planning Officer from TCC was able to visit frequently to organise training and provide mentoring in order to ensure the project was moving forward and staff met milestones. This is reflected in the progress made with the restructure of the Division and the development of policy documents such as the Urban Development Plan, Port Moresby Local Development Plan, and the initiation of Settlement Strategies. There was also a marked improvement to governance structures or within the NCDC including greater community and stakeholder involvement and increased transparency and accountability of policy development.

Process review and redesign was carried out throughout the Regulatory and Planning sections and resulted in flow on improvements to areas such as records management and customer service. Customer service was centralised and a centralised filing system was developed with regular audits. Achievements in the area of information technology included the recruitment of a qualified IT Manager who worked with TCC Technical Officers to scope the requirement for a property database, improve network connections between the two main administrative buildings, standardise computer purchases, and make improvements to the email system.

Despite success in some areas, there were external factors that impeded progress. For example, although process review and staff training created efficiencies within the Enforcement Section, external factors such as physical threats against officers and fear of reprisals continue to impact on the ability of staff to carry out the function fully. Issues such as poor accommodation, frequent power outages, and telephone and email communication breakdowns also contributed to delays and required patience by all parties. It was also reported that some managers needed to take a greater role and embrace the principles of the project. Management training was scheduled, but didn't take place during Phase 1 of Hetura and will be carried forward into Phase 2 of the project. The fact that most of these issues have been addressed by the NCDC prior to the implementation of the second phase of Project Hetura shows their commitment to improving the performance of the organisation.

In 2008, a state initiated Council amalgamation took place between the neighbouring Councils of Townsville and Thuringowa. Project Hetura was put on hold by the new

Townsville City Council whilst its new structure was developed and services and processes were reviewed. In 2010 when planning for the next phase of Hetura commenced, several of the activities associated with the project had been progressed by NCDC management while Hetura was on hiatus. This is a good indication that the goals of building capacity within the NCDC are being realised.

4. Lessons learned and Project Forecast

The Phase 1 activities has produced some valuable lessons for all partners. These include:

- Communication is a vital element of the process and should be formally addressed throughout the second Phase of Project Hetura.
- The primary focus of the first phase has been on two Departments within the organisation – Regulatory Services and Information Technology with solid results. Widening the focus within Phase 2 to include elements such as human resources and corporate governance will positively impact the NCDC as a whole.
- Delays are a part of the process and have impacted on the participation of both partners.
- There is a valuable role for external trainers and other service providers; developing relationships with people and organisations that can provide additional skills and services is advisable.

Planned ‘modules’ for Phase 2 are:

1. Information Technology

- Governance: Security Management: virus management, incident management and firewall control systems; Backup systems and procedures; Business continuity planning; Documentation of Standards and Policies.
- Expand TARMIS to incorporate Permit Processing System.
- Records Management: Development of records management policy; Exploration of archiving requirements strategy and capacity.
- Case management system for legal services.
- Linking GIS to TARMIS: Link to revenue system; Property layer finalised; Finalisation of data collection (outsourced) and upload of information.

2. Regulatory Services/Enforcement

- Staff Training; Process review for efficiency; Centralisation of enforcement responsibilities and duties; Review of Structure of Enforcement Division and Finalisation of Structure.

3. Human Resources

- Policy Development: Review of existing policies; Development of Code of Conduct Policy; Disciplinary Policy, Remuneration Policy; Development of Retention and Recruitment strategies.
- Recruitment and Retention.
- Review and Development of Organisational Development and Training program
- Development of Cadetship/Studies Assistance Program.
- Corporately supported Reward and Recognition Program.

4. Asset Management

- Survey and identification of Assets and development of process to enter Road Assets in system.

5. Environmental Sustainability

- Development of Environmentally Sustainable Building designs/codes.

6. Waste Management

- Assistance with Future Planning and Waste Management System Alternatives

There is a great deal of enthusiasm and support going into Phase 2 of Project Hetura. Expanding into new operational areas within the NCDC will strengthen the partnership and provide opportunities for both organisations to develop an even stronger working relationship. The past and future success of the program can be attributed in large part to the professional approach and active support by the leadership teams within both the NCDC and Townsville City Council.