

The Local Elected Leadership Series

Key Competencies for Improving Local Governance



Volume 1: Quick Guide



Local Government
and Public Service
Reform Initiative

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Foreword

One of the most successful UN-HABITAT initiatives to increase the capacity of local governments, their leaders, and many other key local stakeholders worldwide has been through the efforts of its Training and Capacity Building Branch (TCBB). Through the development and dissemination of practical training materials and the training of trainers, TCBB has been able to extend its reach and influence to public officials and communities with the desire and commitment to improve and promote good local governance. More importantly, these user-friendly learning tools have opened the door for an increasing number of women to join the ranks of public officials who can leverage their communities resources to fight poverty and bring about positive changes in their governing institutions. Among these tools is the Elected Leadership series.

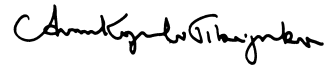


UN-HABITAT first developed and published the Local Elected Leadership series a decade ago, and the series enjoyed a wide success in many regions of the world through numerous training programmes and has been translated into more than twenty-five languages over the years. We expect that this new Local Elected Leadership series will establish new benchmarks of service to local governments and their leaders because of a network of trainers and training institutions that already exists. Their dedication and commitment to elected leadership development is legendary. Without their efforts, it would be impossible to reach around the world with the learning opportunities that are embodied in this series.

This work significantly contributes to the Global Campaign on Urban Governance, which was launched by UN-HABITAT in 1999 to support implementation of the Habitat Agenda goal of “sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world.” The Campaign’s goal is to contribute to the eradication of poverty through the improvement of urban governance. There is growing consensus that the quality of urban governance is the single most important factor for the eradication of poverty and for prosperous cities. Based on this consensus, the Campaign has focused on contributing to the capacity of local governments and other stakeholders so they can fully implement good governance initiatives.

There are so many to thank in the accomplishment of this project: the financial support through funding from the Government of the Netherlands and the Open Society Institute; the expert committee that took time to share their thoughts and wisdom, the hundred of trainers

who contributed to a better understanding of how to strengthen the series; the team of UN-HABITAT professionals who guided the project and products to fruition; and the principal authors of the series, Dr. Fred Fisher and David Tees.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka'.

Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

Preface

First published in 1994, the initial edition of this Local Elected Leadership (LEL) series has been translated into twenty-five languages and used in many regions of the world. Hundreds of trainers worldwide have been trained to facilitate elected leadership workshops and several hundred thousand local elected and appointed officials have participated in leadership programmes using the materials. In addition, the LEL series has been used by hundreds of non-governmental and community-based organizations to strengthen their management and leadership skills and competencies.

Based on the success of the original series and the changing nature of local governance, urban challenges, and the growing wisdom and understanding about issues like governance and sustainability, UN-HABITAT decided to revise and update the LEL series to meet the learning needs of a new generation of local elected leaders. A global written survey of users was conducted and a representative team of elected officials, trainers, and governance specialists was convened at UN-HABITAT headquarters in late 2002 to review the survey data, reflect on their own experiences in using the original series, review the materials in-depth to determine how best to improve on them, and reach consensus on a comprehensive list of recommended actions that should be taken to revise the materials based on changing times and growing demand.

Several factors dictated the development of this new series of local elected leadership materials.

- ❑ There was confirmation that the roles and responsibilities covered by the initial series were, in large part, still valid. The basic competencies required of elected officials to perform leadership roles within their jurisdictions have not changed.
- ❑ While the basic competencies may not have changed, the need for greater depth of understanding about these competencies and the skills to apply them had grown in the intervening years. The world is much more complex and the challenges of local elected leadership more demanding than they were a decade or so ago.
- ❑ A reservoir of valuable experience about governance, elected leadership, and the issues confronting local leaders in today's complex urban environments has been growing over the last decade. It was time to tap this reservoir of experience and knowledge as resources for significant elected leadership learning and development.
- ❑ Finally, there has been a profound shift in the understanding of what constitutes good governance and effective elected leadership over the past decade or so.

Issues of equity, inclusion, subsidiarity, civic engagement, accountability, transparency, and the old standards of effectiveness and efficiency, have gained new significance, understanding, and importance as elected leadership mandates and criteria for measuring governance performance.

Based on these factors and the wisdom of all those who helped contribute to this new series, there are several key changes that mark this new series.

- ❑ It recognizes representation and leadership as the core roles and responsibilities of the elected official. They must represent their constituents and they must provide leadership in their representation. Both of these roles are complex and demanding.
- ❑ In order to fulfill these core roles and responsibilities, the elected leader must be knowledgeable and skilled in the following competencies: communicating, facilitating, using power, decision making, policy making, enabling, negotiating, financing, overseeing, and institution building.
- ❑ These competencies must be exercised within the principles of good governance as defined by international standards. These principles establish the context within which each of the competency skills should be applied.
- ❑ The roles of trainer and training manager are recognized as central to the success of elected leadership development. An extensive User's Guide has been developed to support their initiatives. In addition, nearly ninety individual training and governance tools are available to assist them in designing relevant experiential learning experiences based on the needs of their learning constituents.

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