

# Guidelines for the Municipal Partnership Programme

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# Contents

1. DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEMOCRACY .....	3
PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES, COOPERATION AREAS AND PARTNER COUNTRIES.....	4
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME .....	4
3. AREAS OF COOPERATION.....	4
4. PARTNER COUNTRIES.....	4
THE ROLE OF THE ICLD AND THE APPLICATION PROCESS .....	5
5. SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ICLD .....	5
6. THE APPLICATION PROCESS .....	5
STRUCTURE OF THE MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME .....	6
7. INCEPTION PHASE .....	6
8. STEERING GROUP.....	6
9. PROJECTS.....	7
10. THREE-PARTY COOPERATION .....	7
11. MULTI-PARTY COOPERATION .....	8
12. DEVELOPMENT/EXPANSION .....	8
13. DISSEMINATION .....	8
PARTICIPATION AND FUNDING.....	9
14. ELIGIBILITY FOR ICLD FUNDING FOR MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS.....	9
15. PARTICIPANTS .....	9
16. FUNDING .....	9
REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT .....	11
17. REPORTING .....	11
18. ASSESSMENT AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.....	12
Assessment .....	13
Regarding project planning.....	13
Decision-making process.....	13
Simplified decision-making process when applying for an inception phase .....	14
OTHER .....	14

## 1. DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Municipal Partnership is a Sida<sup>1</sup>-funded programme aimed at contributing to sustainable democratic development in Sweden's partner countries for development cooperation, and in Sweden, through the exchange of knowledge and experience. Participation in the programme involves no costs for Swedish actors. Swedish actors can be primary devolved neighbourhood councils, city district councils, county councils, regional local government associations, statutory joint local authorities, joint local authority committees, regions and federative local government organisations such as local authority organisations.

The programme is based on the UN's Agenda 2030 and the Policy for Global Development approved by the Swedish parliament (Government Bill 2002/03:122) in which emphasis is placed on partnership and the importance of broad participation by new actors engaged in Swedish international cooperation. The Policy for Global Development asserts that Swedish municipalities, county councils and regions are important actors in the context of Swedish development cooperation. Thanks to a long-standing tradition of local self-government and responsibility for delivering most of Sweden's social services, Swedish municipalities, county councils and regions have a great deal of knowledge and experience which can be shared with local and regional politically controlled bodies in low- and middle-income countries. Support at local level is essential to effective poverty reduction. Strengthening the capacity of local and regional politically controlled bodies responsible for delivering services at local level thus becomes a crucial instrument in poverty alleviation. Participation in the Municipal Partnership Programme also gives Swedish actors access to new tools and experience which they can use to develop their own activities. Mutual relevance and common ownership are key perspectives in the programme.

The overall objective of Swedish development cooperation is to contribute to equitable and sustainable global development. All efforts must be based on the needs, interests and prospects of poor people. Poverty is not merely a question of insufficient material resources; it is also about lack of power, influence and other opportunities for poor people to improve their living conditions. The programme contributes to poverty reduction by improving access by poor people to services provided by local and regional politically controlled bodies, and by expanding opportunities for people to take part in local political processes, thereby creating conditions conducive to democratic development.

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<sup>1</sup> Sida – The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency is a government agency working on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government, with the mission to reduce poverty in the world. Through their work and in cooperation with others, they contribute to implementing Sweden's Policy for Global Development.

# PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES, COOPERATION AREAS AND PARTNER COUNTRIES

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The overarching goal of Swedish development cooperation is to contribute to equitable, sustainable global development that will improve living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression.

The objective of the Municipal Partnership Programme is to reduce poverty by promoting functioning, democratic local and regional politically controlled bodies, within which local residents can influence local and regional political processes. Issues relating to human rights, climate and the environment, gender equality and women's role in development form an integrated perspective in local decision-making. In Europe, programmes will focus particularly on promoting closer alignment with the EU and its basic values.

## 3. AREAS OF COOPERATION

Cooperation under the Municipal Partnership Programme may involve all municipal and county council areas of responsibility.

The project cycle, from problem and goal definition to implementation and follow-up, must be characterised by reciprocity. Projects must be based on the cooperation partner's needs. However, cooperation must benefit both parties. This means that Swedish actors will also be expected to develop in line with the programme's objectives.

Cooperation should have clear, well-defined goals and objectives directly related to sustainable local democratic development.

## 4. PARTNER COUNTRIES

The programme seeks to coordinate its activities with other Swedish development cooperation initiatives in order to concentrate and deepen efforts towards local democratic development in partner countries. Partnerships are aimed at contributing to long-term, lasting results. Municipal partnerships can lay the groundwork for continued cooperation between Sweden and partner countries by engaging in various forms of multi-actor cooperation and through business contacts.

Cooperation is possible with countries on the OECD:s DAC-list . The following countries are eligible for Municipal Partnerships (divided into 4 clusters;)

**Europe** – Kosovo, Serbia and Ukraine (\*Bosnia and Hercegovina, Georgia, North Makedonia, Moldavia and Turkey)

**Asia** – Indonesia and Vietnam (\*China)

**East Africa** – Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda

**Southern Africa** Botswana, South Africa and Zambia (\*Moçambique and Namibia)

(\* these countries are only covered for partners who already have an established relationship. New collaborations with organizations in these countries will not be approved).

The list of countries eligible for the Municipal Partnership Programme is reviewed annually in line with established criteria. Reviews of the list of eligible countries occur every third year, according to a defined system, in consultation with Sida, the ICLD Advisory Group and other relevant actors.

## THE ROLE OF THE ICLD AND THE APPLICATION PROCESS

### 5. SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ICLD

In addition to conducting qualified assessments of applications for funding from the Municipal Partnership programme, ICLD administers and develops the programme and disburses funds. Other forms of support extended to cooperation partners include the dissemination of outcomes and examples of successfully implemented partnerships, coordination with other Swedish development cooperation initiatives, education and training, guidance/advice, and networking. ICLD can help locate and link local and regional politically controlled bodies in Sweden with suitable cooperation partners in partner countries and vice versa.

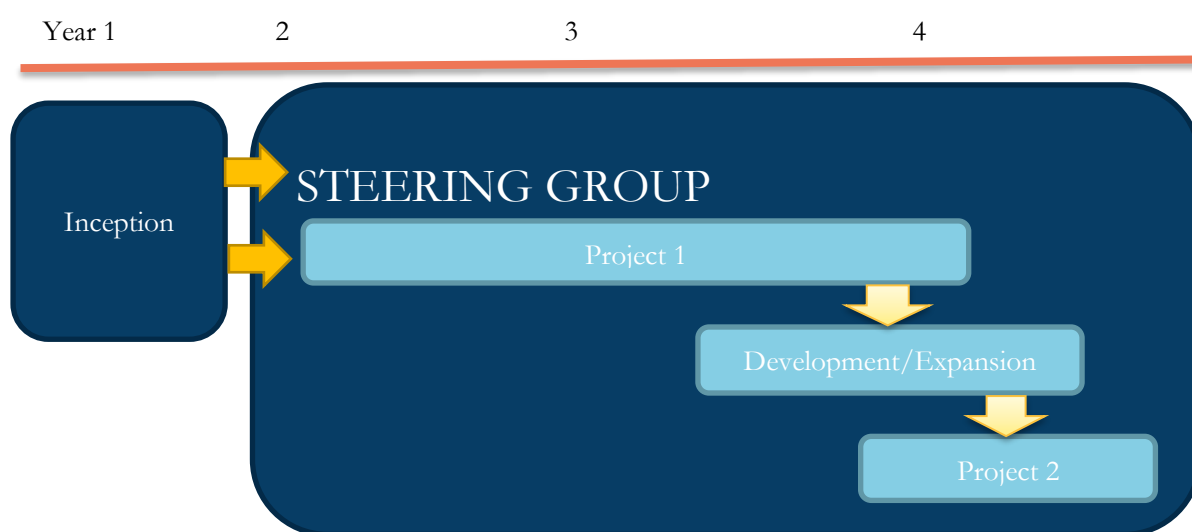
### 6. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The first stage in applying for funding from the Municipal Partnership programme is the signing of an agreement binding the parties to an agreed period of cooperation. Applications are to be drawn up jointly by the applicant parties.

Detailed information on the content of an application can be found on the ICLD website. ICLD will not process applications which are not drawn up in accordance with the instructions for applications for Municipal Partnership. Application periods are announced on the ICLD website.

## STRUCTURE OF THE MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

A description of the programme follows. The diagram below is an example of how a partnership can be structured.



### 7. INCEPTION PHASE

The purpose of an inception phase is to firmly establish cooperation and lay the groundwork for continued collaboration. Funding for this activity normally covers travel expenses to both party-countries for approximately four participants. Participants must include two politicians - preferably from both the political majority and opposition - and the appointed contact, plus an optional fourth person. Funding for this activity may only be sought once per municipal partnership.

Before applying for funding for the inception phase, prospective parties must have made initial contact, e.g. via email or telephone, and discussed ideas regarding possible avenues of cooperation. ICLD can help parties contact suitable cooperation partners in partner countries.

Normally, during the inception phase, cooperation agreements are signed, project plans are drawn up and a steering group is appointed. It is important to choose a working method which will facilitate both parties' active participation in the development of project plans, goals and objectives. Project planning must be based on the programme's stated objectives and address a clearly defined problem or priority development area for the parties.

The maximum period for an inception phase is one year.

### 8. STEERING GROUP

The parties are required to set up a partnership steering group composed of elected representatives of the current governing majority and political opposition (where the latter exist) and leading public officials from both party-countries. Each party is required to appoint a coordinator who will also

form part of the steering group. Primary responsibility for maintaining contact with ICLD rests with the Swedish coordinator. Each party must appoint a substitute coordinator.

The steering group's primary task is to act as a guarantor of local support for the partnership. The presence of representatives of the current governing majority and political opposition is designed to ensure sustainable cooperation over the long term. Specific tasks for the steering group may include assessing project plans, project follow-up and quality assurance.

Applicants for funding for a Municipal Partnership are required to enter into a cooperation agreement that will remain in effect for at least a year after project completion. This will guarantee the parties a certain level of commitment, coordination and follow-up for a period beyond the project span.

Two annual meetings should be held during the project period: one in Sweden and one in the partner country. Notes must be taken on both occasions.

The existence of a steering group is a mandatory requirement during the project implementation period. A steering group may direct and coordinate several projects concurrently. Parties may also apply to set up more than one steering group if the need arises.

## **9. PROJECTS**

The project proposals should be drawn up jointly by the parties and be based on a problem or developmental requirement at institutional level within the parties' operating spheres, and should be intended to establish efficient and democratic local and regional politically-managed organisations.

A project plan detailing the project's goals shall be drawn up. Every project application shall specify anticipated effects and changes, who will benefit from the change, how the project will be conducted, and the format for goal fulfilment work. The project's progress shall be presented in the form of yearly results reports where the focus should be on the results achieved by the project in relation to the goals set. The reports shall be drawn up using ICLD's forms and instructions, shall refer back to the goals and indicators presented in the application, and shall clearly show the relationship with the programme goals.

Funds may be sought for projects with a duration of three years or, if special circumstances dictate, for one- and two-year projects. Partners may apply for funds for multiple projects during a single application period.

## **10. THREE-PARTY COOPERATION**

Three-party cooperation is aimed at cooperation with countries in Eastern Europe, where a Swedish local or regional politically controlled body cooperates with two foreign parties, one of which is located in a country which is not a partner country in the programme. The third country can in such cases serve as bridge between the Swedish party and the partner country with respect to language, culture and activity-related issues. A condition of such an arrangement is the existence of a cooperation agreement between all participating parties. Three-party cooperation is currently applicable to the following EU member states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia. These countries may have experience of immediate interest and value to countries wishing to establish closer ties with the EU.

## 11. MULTI-PARTY COOPERATION

In certain cases, it may be of value for several Swedish parties and more parties in partner countries to create a steering group and/or run projects jointly. This applies, for example where several parties have similar priorities, where cooperation advantages exist, where problems are not confined within local or regional boundaries, or where a number of smaller actors can support one another. Under such conditions it may be appropriate to apply for multi-party cooperation projects. Although frameworks for such projects are drawn up in consultation with ICLD, parties are normally required to adhere to the guidelines for the programme as a whole. All parties must be represented in a steering group composed of politicians from the governing majority and political opposition (where possible), and a coordinator from each party. Primary responsibility must rest with one of the Swedish parties appointed for this task. Budgets for these partnerships and projects of this type must be drawn up in consultation with ICLD.

## 12. DEVELOPMENT/EXPANSION

Funding for development/expansion can be applied for within established partnerships, where parties wish to cooperate in a new area of activity and with new participants. The purpose of this process is to lay the groundwork for joint and relevant project planning and project application. The parties involved in the process agree on whether the existing steering group needs to be expanded in order to accommodate a person relevant to the new activity. A possible alternative is the creation of an additional steering group. In some cases when a project and steering group have ended, a development/expansion can still be approved. Funding should normally cover travel expenses to both party-countries for four participants. One person should be designated to maintain contact with ICLD.

The development/expansion process differs from an inception phase in that it takes place within a previously established partnership, i.e. between parties which have already appointed a steering group. Where political support has already been established, participants in the development/expansion process may be exclusively officials. Parties may also apply to engage in more than one development/expansion activity. In addition, the process is of shorter duration than an inception phase.

The maximum period for development/expansion within the programme is six months.

## 13. DISSEMINATION

Participants can apply for funding to disseminate information on relevant practice examples of local democratic development through the Municipal Partnership Programme. Participants in municipal partnerships from municipalities, regions and county councils are the programme's main knowledge bearers, and the purpose of dissemination is to share the knowledge and experience they have acquired within the programme. Applications may be made during an ongoing project or following its completion. Examples of activities designed to spread information include participation in workshops, trade fairs or meetings with local authority associations in partner countries and in Sweden, and production of information material. Activities funded under this section do not preclude the normal work of dissemination and communication undertaken within each project. The primary target groups for information dissemination are other local and regional politically controlled bodies in partner countries. It may also be of value to disseminate information to other actors.

Funding for follow-up research on municipal partnership is available on application. Such applications are dealt with separately by ICLD.



## PARTICIPATION AND FUNDING

### 14. ELIGIBILITY FOR ICLD FUNDING FOR MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS

All Sweden's municipalities, county councils/regions, devolved neighbourhood or city district councils, statutory joint local authorities, regional local government associations, joint local authority committees, federative local government organisations such as associations of local authorities, may apply for funding for municipal partnership projects together with a cooperation partner.

Even in cases where responsibility for and delivery of social services in a partner country is organised differently than in Sweden, a municipal partnership between a Swedish local or regional politically controlled body and its counterpart in the partner country can prove worthwhile.

A number of Swedish and/or foreign local authorities may take part in the same partnership provided that one of the Swedish parties exercises overall responsibility (see information under Subsection 11, Multi-Party Cooperation, above).

### 15. PARTICIPANTS

As municipal partnerships are aimed at reducing poverty through effectively functioning, democratic local and regional politically controlled bodies, these must include politically elected representatives as well as public officials. Partnerships can also benefit from participation by people outside these bodies as these can help secure broad-based support in their local communities. Examples include people in local businesses, universities and institutions of higher education, local associations, state employment – such as the local police force or employment offices – and pupils and students. Compensation for travel and accommodation expenses may in certain cases be payable to a limited number of people in this category. Compensation for loss of income is not payable.

### 16. FUNDING

Approved funds are disbursed to the Swedish party on submission of the financial accounts accompanied by an audit certificate. The Swedish party is thus responsible for distribution of funds among the parties involved and for the project's financial accounts. Activities begun or completed before funds have been approved will not be funded. Fifty per cent of the approved funding may be paid in advance to the Swedish party if the total amount for the project exceeds SEK 1 million per annum (this may occur in cases where the Swedish party is engaged in several projects concurrently).

#### **Inception phase for Municipal Partnership, two parties:**

Europe: Max. SEK 240 000

Africa/Asia: Max. SEK 300 000

#### **Inception phase for Municipal Partnership, three-party cooperation – EU countries:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 300 000

Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 360 000

Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Inception phase for Municipal Partnership, multi-party cooperation:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 300 000  
Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 360 000  
Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Steering group, two parties:**

Europe: Max. SEK 300 000 per annum  
Africa/Asia: Max. SEK 350 000 per annum

**Steering group, three-party cooperation – EU countries:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 400 000 per annum  
Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 430 000 per annum  
Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Steering group, multi-party cooperation:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 400 000 per annum  
Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 430 000 per annum  
Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Project, two parties:**

Europe: Max. Reference point 450 000 per annum  
Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 500 000 per annum  
Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Project, three-party cooperation – EU countries:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 600 000 per annum  
Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 650 000 per annum  
Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Project, multi-party cooperation:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 600 000 per annum  
Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 650 000 per annum  
Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Development/Expansion, two parties:**

Europe: Max. SEK 240 000  
Africa/Asia: Max. SEK 300 000

**Development/Expansion, three-party cooperation – EU countries:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 300 000  
Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 360 000  
Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Development/Expansion, multi-party cooperation:**

Europe: Reference point SEK 300 000

Africa/Asia: Reference point SEK 360 000

Budget level to be set in consultation with ICLD.

**Dissemination:**

Max. SEK 100 000

All expenditures for cooperation within the Municipal Partnership Programme, namely travel expenses, including transfer costs, board and lodging; interpreting and auditing costs, and wage costs for participants from Swedish local and regional politically controlled bodies, are funded by Sida. Cooperation partners will be expected to meet their own wage costs, travel/local transport expenses in the partner country, hire of premises (where applicable) in the partner country, and various other expenses.

Budgets must comply with ICLD budget rules and procedures and be drawn up in accordance with ICLD's budget template

All costs financed by the programme are related to the work activities that are to be carried out. If the parties, when in Sweden or the cooperation country, choose to stay extra days in addition to what is required for work activities, costs for; food, accommodation, activities, per diem and salaries during these days are not reimbursed. An extension of an official trip must not increase travel costs.

**Other costs that are not mentioned in the Budget Guidelines and may arise for a variety of reasons, are not funded by the programme.**

## REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

### 17. REPORTING

Inception phases, steering groups, projects, development/expansions and disseminations is required to submit an annual report to ICLD. The report must include an account of results achieved and a financial report. The financial accounts must follow the template for the reporting of municipal partnerships. The Swedish party carries the main responsibility for the financial report. In the performance and outcome evaluation, the results achieved must be assessed against the stated objectives in the application. Indicators of goal achievement by both parties are to be followed up. Actual costs must be stated and attested in the financial accounts.

In the case of multi-year projects, a somewhat simplified performance and outcome evaluation and financial report may be submitted annually to ICLD during the course of the project. In this type of reporting, results achieved by the date of the report must be checked against stated objectives. If these results show that the parties are not approaching their stated objectives, the parties are required to indicate what measures they intend to adopt to ensure their objectives are fully achieved. If deemed necessary, ICLD can require parties to draw up a full report. If the parties wish to receive funding on an annual basis, a full financial report accompanied by an audit certificate must be submitted to ICLD.

Final reports must be audited by a certified local government, authorised or approved auditor. An audit report must be submitted along with final reports on the inception phase, steering group, project(s), youth democracy and development/broadening activities. The simplified form of the performance and outcome evaluation and financial report need not be audited by an auditor.

Compensation for actual expenses up to the maximum specified amount will be paid out following approval by ICLD of the various reports.

Swedish parties must be familiar with the instructions for reporting municipal partnerships before initiating the inception phase, work on the steering group, project work, development/broadening activities or information dissemination.

Applications from parties that have not submitted final reports on previously approved projects will only be processed if the parties concerned submit a report showing the current status of the unconcluded project(s) and results achieved, and state when these projects will be completed and a final report submitted. As a rule, no decision on funding of activities is made in connection with a new application before an abbreviated performance and outcome evaluation and/or final reports have been submitted and approved.

The reports shall be reviewed by an authorised public accountant and shall comply with ICLD's instructions for auditors. The review shall be performed in accordance with good auditing practice and the auditor's opinion shall, with regard to the correspondence of the financial reports with the local authority's accounts and agreed budget, be expressed in accordance with the applicable standard for associated services, SNT 440. A report on the audit performed shall be submitted together with reports on preparatory work, the steering group, the project, development/expansion or dissemination.

Compensation for actual costs up to the approved maximum amount will be disbursed by ICLD when the accounts have been approved by ICLD.

The parties shall familiarise themselves in full with the Municipal Partnership reporting instructions before preparatory work, establishment of the steering group, work on the project, or the development/expansion or dissemination of the project begins.

Applications from parties who have not submitted final accounts for previously approved projects can only be assessed if the parties append a report detailing the current situation of and results achieved by the incomplete projects and stating when these projects will be completed and final accounts submitted. No decisions on the financing of activities as part of a new activity will, as a rule, be taken until summary reports on results and/or final reports have been submitted and approved.

## **18. ASSESSMENT AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

ICLD assesses applications, quality assures the documentation, and takes a decision. Sida confirms that the process has been carried out in a quality-assured manner and in accordance with the programme guidelines. ICLD evaluates strategic considerations in conjunction with every round of applications and prioritises the distribution of limited funds. The priority bases for the strategic considerations may be geographical, thematic, and/or relate to a topical challenge or overall objective in collaboration with ITP and/or KC.

Applications for programme funds shall be drawn up in accordance with the application instructions for the Municipal Partnership programme. Applications are approved in competition for available funds.

### Assessment

ICLD checks that all formal requirements have been met in accordance with both the application instructions set forth in the application form and the programme guidelines. ICLD's quality assessment of an application is based on relevance, viability and sustainability.

The primary criteria in assessing an application for approval are whether it:

- will lead to greater local democracy and thereby contribute to poverty reduction in the partner country
- relates to a challenge or problem at organisational level
- promotes gender equality, addresses environmental and climate concerns and advances human rights
- benefits both parties in the project
- seeks to coordinate its activities with other Swedish development cooperation initiatives with the aim of concentrating and deepening efforts towards local democratic development in partner countries
- contributes to closer alignment with the EU in Eastern Europe.

### Regarding project planning

- Does the application couple project proposals with a clearly defined set of problems?
- Is the project proposal realistic and capable of being implemented within the project period?
- Are the proposed activities linked to goals and sub-goals?
- Is the project concrete and can it yield lasting results?
- Does the application include plans for follow-up, with goal-related indicators?
- Does the application include plans for disseminating the project's effects?

ICLD gathers opinions and takes advice, both internally and externally, e.g. from Sida's national team/Sweden's embassies.

ICLD produces input on which to base its decision to approve or reject applications for funding.

### Decision-making process

- ICLD's draft decision to approve or reject applications for funding constitutes the input used by a meeting of a specially appointed council. The input includes case-by-case motivation of each draft decision. ICLD can discuss strategic considerations and priorities with the council. The council can ask questions about the decision-related recommendations made. The council comprises at least four representatives, with the Chairperson and one member appointed by ICLD, and two members appointed by SKR.
- ICLD prepares and compiles the municipal partnership applications received and submits them to Sida, together with an assessment and an overall analysis. Sida confirms that the

process has been conducted in a quality-assured manner and in accordance with the programme guidelines.

- ICLD then takes a decision, informs the coordinators of the applicant Swedish organisations of the decisions in writing, and issues a contract. The coordinators are responsible for informing the international partners of the decisions.
- ICLD sends copies of the decisions, together with summaries of the applications, to Sida's national teams/Sweden's embassies in the partner countries in question and/or other partners and actors deemed relevant by ICLD.

### **Simplified decision-making process when applying for an inception phase**

In addition to the decision-making process outlined above, ICLD may also make ongoing decisions regarding inception phase applications according to the procedure described below:

- When ICLD receives an inception application, the Municipal Partnership Programme Unit (MPP unit) revises the application and proposes whether to approve or reject the application. Together with this proposal the MPP unit shall deliver their assessment criteria of the application to the Secretary-General.
- The Secretary-General decides on each individual inception application. The chairman of the board upholds the decision and approves the allocation of funds. This decision must be reported to the board at the next board meeting.
- The Secretary-General informs the Swedish coordinators with the written approval along with the agreement documents. The Swedish coordinators are in turn responsible for communicating the decision to the international partner. ICLD informs the Swedish Embassies concerned or other relevant organisations with a summary of the application along with a copy of the decision document.
- Sida is informed of the decisions made through the regular process.

## **OTHER**

Applications, reports, and budgets shall be written in English. Exceptions may be made if the international partner is not English-speaking and translations from Swedish to the language in question provided. Applications and reports shall be submitted digitally via ICLD's website – [www.icld.se](http://www.icld.se) – where instructions and information on mandatory appendices and application period dates can also be found.

For questions about the application process, please contact:

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Phone: +46498 – 29 91 00