

## #16 CAPACITY BUILDING IN CITY TWINNING

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### Abstract

A common problem in city twinning is that interventions in solid waste often do more harm than good. The Dutch – or more generally, Northern – partner in the twinning has many preconceptions and prejudices about South and transitional countries that prevent them from “seeing” local conditions or listening to local stakeholders. In the Dutch LOGO South twinning programme, Dutch municipal officials look and see with Dutch eyes – and often draw incorrect conclusions. There is also a tendency in exchange visits in city twinning for the Northern municipality to show all that is good, and working well, and the Southern municipality to show all that is a mess, insufficient, or shameful, in the hopes that this will wring more money and support from the partnership.

The paper describes the way *Integrated Sustainable Waste Management* (ISWM) has been used to strengthen the capacities of both Northern and Southern partners within the LOGO South programme, to improve outcomes and introduce sustainable change. The programme has financed seven Dutch municipalities to work with Southern partners. In 2007, there were also separate training programmes for the Dutch officials without their Southern partners being present. Similar training has also been used for delegations visiting the Netherlands from the South partner cities.

### 1. Introduction and Background<sup>2</sup>

VNG *International* is the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). The Local Government (“LOGO”) South Programme seeks to strengthen local government by developing capacity. LOGO South has a strong focus on human capacity – target groups include local governors (politicians and decision-makers) and civil servants (policy-makers and implementers). The programme consists of three main components: Municipal International Cooperation, Association Capacity Building and Research.

The Municipal International Cooperation component, currently being implemented in 11 countries, involves municipalities implementing projects on a specific subject with their Dutch partner municipalities in so-called twinning relationships. Regular exchanges between the partners and dissemination of the lessons learned from these projects to other municipalities are key elements. Apart from the 11 country programmes, there are four

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2 Some of the text in the Introduction has been taken from the 2008 VNGI publication “Closing the Circle, Bringing Integrated Sustainable Waste Management Home”.

‘Thematic Programmes’ in which South-South exchanges are a central element. The Thematic Programme on Solid Waste Management (henceforth referred to as “the Thematic Programme SWM”) is one of these programmes, and serves as a framework for bilateral projects with one or more of seven Netherlands municipalities. The objective of the programme is to enable the participating local governments to deliver improved services in the field of waste management. Currently, two municipalities in Indonesia, three in South Africa (joined by a fourth in 2008), five in Sri Lanka and one in Nicaragua participate in the programme. Drafting the LOGO South Thematic Programme SWM was a participatory process in which all the stakeholders were involved.

All activities in the Thematic Programme SWM fall under one of the three main focus areas:

1. Integration of solid waste management into municipal policies
2. Financial sustainability
3. Community education concerning waste and health issues.

WASTE was asked by the staff of the Logo South Thematic Programme SWM at VNG International to prepare and deliver the training component of the Exchange Activity planned for 2007, and again in June 2008. In parallel, WASTE training staff were also engaged to train participants in the exchanges directly by the Dutch partner municipalities, and also by the Hague Academy – a VNG International project to train Dutch participants in training activities. The overview of the work for VNG International is shown in **Table**.

**Table 1 Capacity development for the Association of Dutch Municipalities**

Year	Form	Description
2004	2-day training	Focus on ISWM and small- and medium-scale composting for Gouda and Elmina, Ghana
2006	1-day training	Focus on home composting for Gouda and Elmina, Ghana
2006	2-day workshop	2-day ISWM and community participation training in Tilburg and Eindhoven for a delegation from Emfuleni, South Africa
2006	2-day workshop	2-day ISWM and community participation training in Leiden for a delegation from Buffalo City, South Africa
2007	Exchange activity	2-day classroom training in the Hague, four days assignment in host municipality, one day debriefing in the Hague
2007	Hague Academy	2-day classroom training for representatives of Dutch municipalities on ISWM in the South
2007	Twinning Velsen-Galle	2 days training and several coaching sessions for the NGO and professional staff of Velsen to support its twinning with Galle, and four other municipalities in the Southern Province, Sri Lanka.
2007	Sri Lanka training	Two days of ISWM training on-site and several days of technical support for municipalities in Southern Sri Lanka
2008	Sri Lanka National Platform	Facilitation of the formation of a national solid waste platform in Sri Lanka
2008	“Closing the Circle”	Authoring of a publication on the use of ISWM in North-South exchanges, based on the three LOGO South focus areas
2008	Exchange Activity	Three days of workshops, training, and new project formulation in South Africa

## 2. Some reflections on peer exchange programmes and city twinning

The exchange programmes within Logo South fall under the general label of “Peer exchanges.” A peer exchange is based on the idea that professionals in one city, country or part of the world learn from their peers – that is, their equals and counterparts – in another city or country.

WASTE has some experience with study visits in both directions, but also with training, peer exchanges and programme meetings both in North and South, where the same tendencies operate as in the exchange visits described above. Some of this experience has been contracted by South organisations, to prepare orientations for Brazilians, Bulgarians, Costa Ricans, East and West Africans, and others, to the Dutch situation. WASTE staff have also been on study and exchange visits to many South and some other EU and OECD countries.

We regarded the study visit as a rather small, but significant part of a larger project and project relationship. The study visits took place in the early phase of the project, but not at the beginning. They benefited from a critical element that is often lacking in study visits: the visiting group or organisation prepared terms of reference for the visit, articulating their goals and the desired results, and WASTE designed the study visit to meet these goals. Two study visits in particular, one on electronic waste in 2002 which brought a delegation of Costa Ricans to the Netherlands, and one in 2003 on management of household hazardous waste for a group of Bulgarians, showed that a different approach to study visits can improve their usefulness and contribute to achieving larger project goals.

A key ingredient in making peer exchanges successful is the concept of the counterpart or peer – the basic assumption of equality. In North-South exchange relationships, this equality is tempered and in some sense disturbed by undeniable issues of geopolitical inequity. While the mayor of Nairobi may have more responsibility than, and be technically equal to the mayor of Delft (to use two fictional examples), the real situation is coloured by the fact that the Netherlands is a high-GDP, so-called “developed” country and Kenya is a low-GDP so-called “developing country.”

This influences, or even negates, the principle of the “peer” in the peer exchanges, and introduces strong power and status inequities which influence every part and aspect of the exchange, and overpower the explicit thematic focus. There is a tendency, on the part of both the South partners and their North counterparts, to slip into a general comparison of material well-being on the one hand, and to consciously or unconsciously promote the idea that the real goal is for Kenya to strive to turn into the Netherlands – if not now, then at least in some indefinable future. This is not specific to Logo South, and it may in fact not be true in all cases, because we are talking here of tendencies.

The practical result of this mental slip is that exchange activities in the North tend to become exhibitions of how mature and modern everything is in the Netherlands (or Canada or Denmark or Australia), how well it functions, and how attractive it is to strive to be like this – baldly stated, a celebration of geopolitical superiority. Problems in the Northern partner municipality are glossed over or unconsciously hidden from Southern visitors.

Exchange activities in the South tend to be the complement: a kind of celebration of chagrin in the fact that nothing works, a plea for help, and an acknowledgement of geopolitical inferiority. The tendency is for the North partner not to see what is working in the South.

The Northern representatives in exchanges are often not familiar with Southern realities. They arrive in the South municipality unprepared for geopolitical contrasts: slum areas, heaps of waste on the street, street children, and uncontrolled dumpsites. The geopolitical shock is so great that their professional judgement is shut off, at least at first, and they tend to see only the problems, and to assume that they are the result of incompetence, lack of capacity, or lack of experience. This produces, in general, a tendency for the North partner to assume that they “know better,” and to come to believe that their expertise – however limited or modest in their own context – elevates them to the status of a demi-god in the situation they find in the South. Conversely, it tends to lead the South partner to accept anything that is offered uncritically and with exaggerated humility and gratitude, without the application of professional judgement or strategic thinking about their real needs, and whether the kind of help being offered is useful.

When South partners come to the North, they are not assisted to understand either the institutional context or the problems that lie behind the apparently smoothly functioning systems that they observe. Generally the South partner does not come in contact with the aspects of the system that are problematic or not working in the North, and comes away with the idea that everything is perfect – and unattainable. The result of such exchanges is all too often that the South delegation returns home feeling they have been on another planet that has no relationship to their own situation. They may think that the gulf between their reality and the reality in the North is so great that they can never bridge it, and see no purpose in trying to bridge it.

It is hardly necessary to say that this defeats the purpose of the peer exchange. More serious is the fact that neither partner realises that the activity has had counterproductive impacts. The Southern partner is demoralised and demotivated rather than inspired. The Northern partner tends to be frustrated that so little is happening in the South municipality, and this stimulates a sense of superiority. She or he simply never imagines that the exchange may have contributed to this stalemate. These are general trends, which might, to some extent, also be found in Logo South.

Moreover, traditional study visits have the following characteristics:

- ◆ Most study visits focus on things, that is, physical infrastructure, without adequate, or – in some situations any – attention to socio-political, legal, or institutional boundary conditions or other factors which have actually created the physical infrastructure and without which it would never have existed.
- ◆ Study visits are usually structured around the visit itself, not around the larger project or context, that is, they become ends in themselves, rather than means to achieving something else.
- ◆ The study visit itself is seen as the capacity building intervention, and there is insufficient structured preparation for the visit – or perhaps none.
- ◆ The result is that a study visit reinforces passivity, rather than motivating activity.

Of all of the programmes presented in **Table**, the most successful and interesting were the facilitation and training in the 2007 exchange activity, and the preparation of the publication

“Closing the Circle, Bringing Integrated Sustainable Waste Management Home” in 2008. The publication can be downloaded from the WASTE website, so the rest of this paper focuses on the approach and process in the 2007 exchange activity (EA).

## 2.1 The 2007 Exchange Activity

Lessons from earlier study visits led to the application of the insights and approaches gained from these and other exchanges to the Logo South 2007 Exchange Activity. These approaches can be described as follows:

1. If possible, the South participants should have the opportunity to prepare terms of reference, or at least communicate their learning goals, before the visit is organised, and these should contribute to the design of the visit and its activities.
2. Preparation for the visit and/or training during the visit should focus equally on (a) how to look, (b) what there is to see, (c) what the meaning is of what is seen in the local context, and (d) how to relate this to the situation in the home country.
3. The most effective study visits are actually structured as small projects for the participants: they have a beginning, a middle, an end, and specific products or deliverables;
4. The products or deliverables should be relevant to – and useful to making progress towards – the goals of the larger project or programme, and
5. The study visit should build trust and acquaintances that are necessary for progressing towards the goals of the larger programme or project.

WASTE proposed to structure the exchange activity in 2007 using these insights. This meant that the focus of the exchange activity was divided between four sub-activities, or levels, which were related to the South partner’s goals for the Logo South project and the exchange itself. The four levels were:

**Table 2 Four levels or phases**

Level 1:	tools for seeing and analysing solid waste systems
Level 2:	information useful in understanding what you see: principles and elements of well-functioning solid waste systems
Level 3:	critical analysis and goal-setting
Level 4:	process tools for changing, improving, modernising SWM in your own city

Both the 2007 and 2008 exchange activities were a mix of all of these. The 2007 training was structured in the following four phases.

### 2.1.1 Phase 1: South partners formulate their own goals for the Exchange Activity (EA)

Each Dutch partner invited their South counterparts to prepare terms of reference (or a similar document), as a means of defining their goals for the EA.

### 2.1.2 Phase 2: Two-day classroom training

The structure of the programme is shown in Table 3 and the details of the two days of training are presented in Annex 1.

**Table 1 Structure of the two days**

Level 1	Tools for seeing and analysing solid waste systems	The ISWM framework; stakeholder and aspect analysis
Level 2	Information useful for understanding what you see: principles and elements of well-functioning solid waste systems	Where is the boundary between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ public and private,</li> <li>◆ formal and informal,</li> <li>◆ obligations of providers and users,</li> <li>◆ recovered and disposed.</li> </ul> <p>Who are stakeholders in, and necessary parts of, a SWM system, how are they found in practice in the Dutch and South partner cities?</p> <p>Waste system analysis, informal sector study, organograms of North and South SWM systems</p>
Level 3	Critical analysis and goal-setting:	What works and what doesn't in the Dutch city and in your own city; what does this say about what is present and what is missing in the Dutch partner city, and by comparison in your own city; what are the goals for solid waste in your city; what has to be changed to reach those goals?
Level 4	Process tools for changing, improving, modernising solid waste management in your own city	What is the process that your Dutch partner has gone through to make change; what were for the Dutch city the roles of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ communication; the basic structure of the governance system and ways of decision-making;</li> <li>◆ stakeholder mobilisation and consultation;</li> <li>◆ participation in priority-setting, negotiations, law-making;</li> <li>◆ institutional development, creation of new legal and financial boundary conditions; channels for feedback and multi-directional communication?</li> </ul> <p>How were stakeholders involved in making the change? What can the Dutch city's system suggest to you about relationships between providers and users; private and public stakeholders; the formal and informal sectors; buffering or mediating institutions; financial and economic instruments?</p>

2.1.3 Phase 3: Exchange “internships” in the host municipalities

**Table 2. Field exercise based on the four levels:**

Level 1	Practising tools for seeing and analysing solid waste systems	Place the Dutch system into the ISWM framework; what are its goals and principles; what elements are present; what stakeholders are active and how to you analyse them; where does the money come from; which stakeholders should be interviewed to gain further understanding?
Level 2	Information useful to understanding what you see: principles and elements of well-functioning SWM systems	Make a process flow diagram of the Dutch municipal waste system – with or without material balances – with special attention to private vs public, and formal vs informal dimensions, and the flow of money.
Level 3	Critical analysis and goal-setting	Interview at least five different types of stakeholders, asking them what they want (what are their goals), what works and what doesn't in the Dutch city: what is present and what is missing in the Dutch SWM system? Compare this in your mind to the system in your own city; reflecting on the goals for SWM in your city and what should be changed to reach those goals.
Level 4	Process tools for changing, improving, modernising solid waste in your own city	Research the process that your Dutch partner has gone through to make change. In the Dutch city what were the roles of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ communication,</li> <li>◆ basic structure of the governance system,</li> <li>◆ culturally acceptable ways of decision-making,</li> <li>◆ stakeholder mobilisation and consultation,</li> <li>◆ participation in priority-setting, negotiations, law-making,</li> <li>◆ institutional development, creation of new legal and financial boundary conditions; channels for feedback and multi-directional communication?</li> </ul> <p>How were stakeholders involved in making the change? Be prepared to discuss what your Dutch city's system suggests to you about your own change process?</p>

2.1.4 Phase 4: Debriefing, preferably with the Dutch municipal representatives

The debriefing was organised along the same four levels. The programme for this day is also included in Annex 1. The debriefing was attended by the South visitors, and in almost all cases, by least one of the Dutch staff involved in the programme.

### 3. Discussion, results and conclusions

The participants in the 2007 Exchange Activity were extremely positive about its impact. The delegations from the South municipalities were able to “see” the situation in their Dutch host cities in a very different way. This in turn gave them energy and new enthusiasm for the exchange projects. Feedback from the Dutch participants was also positive, and was reported to contribute to a more demand-driven approach to implementation of twinning activities.

Once home, most of the projects in Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, South Africa, and Indonesia made significant progress towards their chosen goals. The other municipalities suffered from changes in personnel and elected officials, and this was reflected in their somewhat less satisfactory participation in the next exchange activity in 2008.

A persistent difficulty, which was discussed in the 2008 EA, was the lack of institutional memory that occurs when a member of staff leaves either the Dutch or the South municipality. Vesting the project in an NGO, as has been done in Velsen-Galle and Vlissingen-Ambon twinning arrangements, provides a vehicle for continuity but may create problems with legitimacy and institutional coherence.

Overall, the use of the ISWM approach and a focus on equality of status appears to have a positive impact on the relevance and impact of the solid waste programmes. Specifically:

1. Whereas the 2006-2008 programme was formulated in a “supply driven” way by the Dutch partners, the planning for the 2009-2010 extension has followed the ideas and wishes of the South municipalities.
2. The 2008 Exchange Activity provided a facilitated environment for formulating the programme continuations.
3. The expectations for hard investment and equipment have shifted to an appreciation of the value of support in understanding concepts and the policy context of solid waste management.
4. The priorities of the municipalities in the South appear to be shifting from simple technical equipment donations to support with cost analysis, tariff-setting, and the governance aspects of sustainable waste management.
5. For the first time, in 2008 the South municipalities expressed strong criticism of some of the aspects of the LOGO South programme. This has been welcomed, in the sense that the use of critical judgement indicates a certain maturity in the exchange relationship and a sense of empowerment in the “peer-to-peer” relationship.

What can be concluded from this? Like many interventions, city twinning for solid waste management projects is about process, more than about machines. The impacts of the soft interventions, such as the exchange activities and the books, are reflected in the level of critical thinking that is practised in the South municipalities, and the progress that they make in new initiatives for budgeting, fee collection, planning, and the like.

## Annex 1. Programme for the 2007 Exchange Activity

Time/Level	Subject	Description
<b>Day 1</b>		
9.00-10:00	Welcome, Introductions ToRs and goals of the seven delegations Orientation to the four levels of training	Presentation 1, Welcome Short PowerPoint presentation, group introduction and questions
10:00-11.15	Tools for looking (Level 1), with a focus on Dutch and South realities Exercise in stakeholder analysis Making stakeholder cards	Presentation 2, Introduction to the ISWM concept Interactive PowerPoint and small group work
11.15-11.45h	Coffee/tea break	
11.45-13.00	What is there to see? (level 2): Introduction to process flow –diagramming Public and private sectors in South realities: Exercise: represent a city in a PFD, present PFDs Exercise: organogram of public and private actors	Presentation 3, Making a process flow diagram (PFD) Short PowerPoint plus group work/presentations
13.00-14.00	Lunch	
14.00-14.45	Tools for change (level 3-4): Community participation concepts Short exercises if time	Presentation 4. Community participation part 1 plus possible short exercise
14.45-15:45h	Tools for change (level 4): SWM Platforms	Pres. 5. Institutionalising Communication, the SWM Platform
15:45-16.15	Fruit, juice, soft drink break	
16.15-17.15	Summary and processing of the day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Learning to look</li> <li>◆ What do you see</li> <li>◆ Critical thinking and setting priorities</li> <li>◆ Making change</li> </ul> What does the PFD tell us about community participation and strategies for communication? Who has to be in the process? What are your communication priorities and goals?	Plenary discussion referencing the four levels
17:15-17:30	Closing, homework assignments	
<b>Day 2</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	Guest presenter, plus questions
9.00-9.30	Check-in and review of the previous day	
9.30-10.30	Tools for looking (level 1): ISWM Assessment, window into the solid waste system and how it works	Pres. 6. ISWM assessment in 7 steps
10.30-11.00	Coffee/tea break	
11:00-12:30	What we saw, how we changed it, and the role of communication (level 2-3-4) Communication as part of Dutch waste management	Pres. 6. Arianne Kuijt, information specialist, City of Leiden
12.30-13.30	Lunch	

13.30-14.15	Why you see what you see in the Netherlands? (level 2). The role of consultation, participation, communication and awareness-raising in the 1980s in modernising solid waste and increasing recycling	Presentation 7. Communication in the modernisation of SWM in the Netherlands, 1975-Present
14.15-15.15	Exercise: Using the ISWM Assessment to analyse needs for participation and communication	Group work
15.30-16.00	Fruit, juice, soft drink break	
16.00-16.45	Tools for communication (level 4): how to operationalise participation and communication.	Presentation 8. Community participation Part 2
16.45-17.15	Orientation to the assignments for the week	Explanation and hand-out of assignment sheets
17.15-17:30	Closing	
<b>Day 3 – Debriefing five days later</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	
09:30-10:00	Coffee available	
10.00-10:30	What did you see (level 2)? Check-in and free discussion about the internship and its results	Welcome and warm-up discussion
10:30-12:30	What did you see and what did you learn? (level 2-3): Debriefing on the Dutch SWM system and communication approaches, and what it suggests to you for participation, change-making, and communication in your city? Presentation by delegations	7 x 15 minutes presentation per delegation. Level 1-2-3-4 Delegations may use PowerPoint presentations
12.30-13.30	Lunch	
13:30-14:14	Tools for looking (level 1): How was it to use the ISWM framework and assessment and how can you use it at home? Tools for change (level 4): What new ideas about participation and communication? About priorities?	Facilitated discussion
14:15-15:00	Making change (level 4). Bringing it home: What are your (new) priorities for change, if any? What do you want from your Logo South partners in bringing about positive change in SWM? What do you have to do on your own? Small group action planning	Groups per delegation
15:00-15.30	Evaluation and Closing	