

# Pro-poor Urban Governance Lessons from LIFE 1992-2005



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Front Cover: From unhygienic to clean water supply through the installation of tube wells and water pumps in Rayer Bazar Beribandh slum (Bangladesh)

Back Cover: Site of the Environmental Streets project in Abou-Kharouf (Egypt)

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# PRO-POOR URBAN GOVERNANCE

LESSONS FROM LIFE

1992-2005



Democratic Governance Group, Bureau for Development Policy,  
United Nations Development Programme

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACHR	Asian Coalition of Housing Rights
ANBEP	National Association for the Well-being of the Population, Senegal
AOYE	Arab Office of Youth and Environment
BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
CASSAD	Centre for African Settlement Studies and Development
CBO	community based organization
CBEM	Capacity Building for Environment Management, Tanzania
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CODI	Community Organizations Development Institute
DGG	Democratic Governance Group, UNDP
EE	Eastern Europe
ENDA-TM	Environmental Development Action in the Third World
FIPERJ	Fisheries Institute Foundation of Rio de Janeiro
GAC	Global Advisory Committee
GEF-SGP	Global Environment Facility - Small Grants Programme
GIS	Global Imaging Systems
GROOTS	Grass Roots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
HIC	Habitat International Coalition
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IPD	Initiative for People's Development
IULA-EMME	International Union of Local Authorities, Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East
JSFFA	Jurujuba Sea Farmers Free Association
LIFE	Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment
LPP	Lodhran Pilot Project
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MLT	Municipal League of Thailand
NC	National Coordinator
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSC	National Steering Committee
OPP-RTI	Orangi Pilot Project Research and Training Institute
RAED	Arab Network for Environment and Development
RHDS	Rural Health and Development Society, Bangladesh
SSP	small-scale project
TAO	Tambon Administration Organization
TATAO	Thailand Association of Tambon Administration Organizations
UNCAP	Thai-United Nations Collaborative Action Plan
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

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## FOREWORD

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) present the global community with an unprecedented opportunity to concretely address the most urgent needs of the poor while strengthening democratic governance and upholding human rights and environmental sustainability. It has become increasingly evident that for the aspirations of the Millennium Declaration to become reality, the global Millennium agenda must be translated into meaningful and actionable agendas at sub-national levels as well. In other words, localizing of the MDGs is imperative if the Goals are to be achieved at all. Localizing the MDGs entails investing in democratic governance processes at the local level, including engaging participation by the people who are most likely to be affected by the achievement of the MDGs in the relevant planning and decision-making processes, and simultaneously encouraging responsive and participatory action by local governments and other actors.

These are areas in which UNDP has built up considerable expertise, in no small part due to the efforts of programmes such as the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE), which have tested participatory approaches to local governance and local development in different contexts and over long periods of time. LIFE is a unique UNDP global programme, which has generated knowledge in these areas for the development practice at large, while successfully demonstrating ways in which results can be realized at the local level in a cost-effective, partnership-intensive manner. Although LIFE long predates the Millennium Declaration, it has worked directly and indirectly in many of the MDG areas since its inception. For example, it has addressed poverty and environmental sustainability, as well as gender equality and empowerment, child mortality, maternal health and diseases. Launched at the Earth Summit, LIFE presented its findings to the Habitat Summit and was further recognized at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio + 10).

This publication presents LIFE's methodology and the experiences it has accumulated over 13 years of operations. We hope that this book is an important step in the direction of bringing relevant and time-tested lessons to bear on the important discussions underway regarding effective methodologies for localizing the MDGs.

During its decade-plus of operations, LIFE has depended upon a wide array of partners, donors and members who have sustained the programme and helped it achieve its notable record of success. We owe a debt of gratitude to each of these partners. Our deep appreciation especially goes to the governments of the Netherlands and Sweden for their substantive and financial commitment to this programme over the years. We hope this publication demonstrates the immense value of all the investments that have been made in this global programme in helping to improve the lives of the poor.

Gita Welch  
Director, Democratic Governance Group  
Bureau for Development Policy  
UNDP, New York, November 2005

## P R E F A C E

In 1992, the Rio Earth Summit brought the concept of environmentally sustainable human development to the foreground of development practice and underlined the interconnectedness of human rights, population, social development, women and human settlements. It was at this historic event that the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) found its origins. In the ensuing 13 years, LIFE has sustained and built upon the Summit's energy and principles, making a difference to the lives of millions of human beings and instituting processes that will make a difference to the lives of many more.

This publication is primarily intended to report on, after over a decade of implementation, LIFE's experiences in strengthening participatory local governance to improve the conditions under which the urban poor live. It thus complements a 1997 publication on the first five years of LIFE's lessons. This publication seeks to inform those who are involved in making large-scale, sustainable improvements to the urban environment to benefit the urban poor. It is aimed at local governance actors, from civil society and local government, who daily face and address the challenges of urban environment and urban governance; the staff of development organizations and donor governments who must constantly inform their investment strategies and priorities; and national and global policy-makers who must oversee the process of policy change to reflect the lessons of experience. It is also intended for LIFE members, partners and affiliates to reflect on the achievements of the programme and the challenges it faces as they look to the future.

Chapter 1 situates the LIFE programme within a global context where local governance has increasingly come to the fore, and local concerns and voices have taken precedence. It explores how LIFE, through small-scale grants to community-based initiatives, strengthens participatory local governance for achieving sustainable human development. Chapter 2 describes the programme, its objectives, methodology and history. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 look at the process of implementing the programme at each stage of its 'upstream-downstream-upstream' process, and describe LIFE's experience and impact at the country level. Chapter 6 reports on the global, regional and inter-regional mechanisms and partnerships for knowledge generation, knowledge sharing and global policy influence. Finally, Chapter 7 reflects on the comparative advantages of LIFE and its future directions and challenges. It also distills the overarching lessons on participatory governance and urban environment. The publication is illustrated throughout by case studies from the LIFE countries.

This publication is the culmination of the efforts and contributions of many people over several years. It was conceived and overseen primarily by Pratibha Mehta, Global LIFE Coordinator 1998-2004. We are truly grateful for her leadership and vision, which guided the programme for six years and fostered the environment in which LIFE has been able to realize many of the results from which this publication draws. The publication draft was originally based upon an evaluation of the global programme, conducted in 1999-2000 under Ms. Mehta's supervision, by a team comprising Meera Bapat (team leader), Marlene Fernandes, Salimata Wade, Babar Mumtaz, and George Walters.<sup>1</sup> We gratefully acknowledge this group for their in-depth analysis and extraordinary effort. Our thanks also go to Kristin Helmore, who adapted the evaluation and edited the draft publication at an early stage, preparing and incorporating summaries of dozens of case studies that had been prepared by local consultants. We acknowledge the crucial contributions of the recent LIFE National Coordinators (NCs) – Tanzina Haque Hossain (Bangladesh), Zaida Salas (Colombia), Emad Adly (Egypt), Sheila Grant (Jamaica), Muratbek Koshoev (Kyrgyzstan),

<sup>1</sup> The global evaluation is available separately upon request.

Mirvat Abu-Khalil (Lebanon), Fayyaz Baqir (Pakistan), Bachir Gaye (Senegal), and Sompong Patpui (Thailand), as well as past LIFE NCs, who together provided detailed inputs on every aspect of the programme. They are the backbone of the programme, and to them we are truly indebted. Important inputs at various stages during and after the evaluation have been provided by the concerned UNDP country offices, whose support moreover, is vital to LIFE's credibility and staying-power on the ground. Finally, we are deeply grateful to Tripti Thomas, who brought this publication to fruition, through substantial editing, writing and updating, and invaluable structural and technical contributions.

While this publication will cover almost every aspect of LIFE, an important achievement that will probably go un-remarked if not mentioned here, is the close-knit family that has coalesced around the programme over the past 13 years. This family consists of the energetic, dynamic and resourceful LIFE NCs, the Global Coordinators, the UNOPS financial management team, many dedicated consultants both local and international, and the committed representatives of donor governments, who have met over many Global Advisory Committee meetings and interacted by any means available to inspire each other and sustain LIFE's work and learning. We mention two special people in particular: One is Shabbir Cheema, who is one of the principal founders of the programme. In a different spirit, we mention Hartmut Schmetzer from Sida, who until his untimely passing in 2004, was an integral member of the LIFE family, and an enthusiastic advocate of the programme for so many years. The global family is mirrored in each LIFE country by dedicated and voluntary National Steering Committees, UNDP country office focal points and champions including Resident Representatives, technical and funding partners, and last but most importantly, the residents of low-income communities who have designed and carried out LIFE projects and are at the core of the programme. The publication is dedicated to this extended LIFE family, which has invested its efforts in continuing to respond to the commitments made in Rio.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Background* LIFE was launched at the Earth Summit in 1992 as a UNDP response to the environmental problems of the urban poor. The overarching goal of LIFE has been to strengthen local governance by focusing on urban environmental problems — in water and sanitation, solid and liquid waste management, air and water pollution, occupation of hazard-prone zones, environmental health and education and urban planning — as an entry point.

*Context* LIFE operates today in a global context that has changed radically since the programme began. The last decade-and-a-half has witnessed dramatic increases in democratization, decentralization, urbanization and globalization. The attention to global commitments on human rights and environmentally sustainable human development has also increased, finding concrete impetus in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have committed the global community to achieving quantifiable targets in eight critical areas for poverty alleviation. Together, these developments have increased the focus on local concerns, local action and local voices. They have raised the importance of participatory local governance as a key means not only to address local development but also to achieve human development results more broadly. The global context provides a powerful rationale for programmes such as LIFE that seek to strengthen local governance.



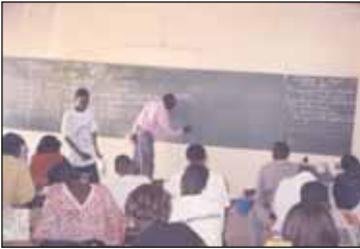
LIFE Global Advisory Committee meeting in Bangkok, 2003

*Approach* LIFE uses a unique ‘upstream-downstream-upstream’ methodology centred on small-scale grants to support local solutions, local empowerment and local governance. The methodology is so named because it begins **upstream** at the policy-making level, to formulate a national framework and strategy for identifying and prioritizing urban environmental objectives, and to create a partnership structure for implementing and managing the national LIFE programme. It then moves **downstream** to the local community level, to select and provide small grants to local entities for participatory environmental projects in poor urban neighbourhoods. These small projects act as catalysts for bringing various partners together in dialogue and collaborative efforts; for developing the specific skills and capacities of various actors; and for initiating the process of improving living conditions. The projects are also fundamentally intended to be ‘policy experiments’, as their results are documented and the extracted lessons are then **upstreamed** to influence policies, to support up-scaling, and to foster the transfer and generation of new local and community-based initiatives for improving local governance and urban conditions. Through this three-stage approach, LIFE promotes micro-macro linkages for policy advocacy and reform.

The primary tools of LIFE are small-scale projects and local-local dialogue, which aim to generate extensive participation and partnerships at all levels. Other important features of the programme include multi-stakeholder National Steering Committees (NSCs), National Coordinators (NCs) who are integrally involved in the communities that LIFE seeks to serve, and a Global Advisory Committee (GAC) that provides strategic direction to the global programme. LIFE’s simultaneous regional and global activities strengthen the efforts overall and facilitate knowledge transfer between the programme and its partners.

Since its initiation, LIFE has demonstrated a way of dealing directly at the sub-national, local and community levels with stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and local authorities, even at a time when this was a departure from the way UNDP and other development organizations functioned.

*Achievements and impact* Although a small programme, LIFE has accumulated a record of notable achievements. The 2000 global evaluation found that LIFE had benefited over six million people directly and indirectly. Through programmes in 12 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Thailand) and with partnership projects in many more, LIFE has drawn upon a global learning laboratory of over 40 countries to test partnership approaches, community-based innovations and participatory local governance in a variety of contexts to facilitate the process of scaling-up solutions to the tremendous environmental challenges faced by the urban poor. LIFE has undertaken over 300 small-scale projects and operated in over 120 cities. It has catalysed significant resource mobilization. With a budgetary allocation of US \$1.7 million in 2001-2004 alone, for example, eight LIFE countries mobilized over US \$6.8 million of resources in cash and kind from diverse sources including national and local government and local communities themselves. LIFE has also contributed to the growing acknowledgment of participatory local governance as a key mechanism for sustainable development.



Educating communities about public health issues (Senegal)

With a small pool of funds and staff, and along with many partners from all sectors at the local, national, regional and global levels, LIFE has had significant impact at both downstream and upstream levels.

- It has directly benefited the urban poor living in slums and informal settlements by improving living conditions; improving access and infrastructure for water, sanitation and waste management; reducing air and water pollution; increasing knowledge and awareness about environmental health and practices; increasing access to income generation opportunities; and increasingly addressing issues of land tenure and resettlement. These results have had indirect consequences which have also benefited the urban poor, such as creating the conditions for improved health, incomes and income earning capacity.
- It has empowered poor communities (including women and youth) by investing in their assets; supporting their innovations and initiatives; and strengthening and catalysing the formation of their networks, community-based organizations and NGOs.
- It has helped build the capacity of thousands of people, from civil society to government, in technical areas related to urban environment, in project preparation and management, and in participatory processes.
- It has helped build partnerships and channels for communication between the various sectors: public, private and civil society.
- It has demonstrated the effectiveness of community-based and local initiatives, often influencing and transforming the orientation of NGOs and local authorities towards community participation.
- It has channeled funds as small grants to the poorest, and enabled the mobilization of greater resources from all sectors, including the poor communities themselves, to benefit the urban poor.
- It has accumulated a valuable body of knowledge in all these areas and facilitated learning in many forms and at many levels.
- It has affected some level of policy change in favour of participatory processes, pro-poor resource allocation, improvements for the urban poor, and environmentally friendly technologies.
- It has contributed significantly at the local and global levels to local governance by enhancing local level service delivery and service delivery mechanisms, encouraging participatory processes, improving accountability, providing information channels, and putting in place processes and systems for ongoing, sustainable development.

*Lessons learnt* LIFE's methodology and tools have demonstrated ways in which large-scale results can be influenced and achieved in a cost-effective manner, not just in the areas of urban environment (such as water and sanitation, solid waste management, human settlements and urban greening), but in other areas of human development as well (such as social capital, capacity development, women's empowerment, income generation and public health), primarily through the mechanism of strengthened participatory local governance. This experience underscores some lessons for programmes that share LIFE's objectives and for broader development efforts. A few key lessons are quoted below:

- Local communities must be at the centre of processes for achieving sustainable environmental improvements for the urban poor. Poor communities are closest to the problems of urban deprivation and degradation. Time and again, they have demonstrated that not only are they potential beneficiaries of external assistance from donors or governments, but also, their proximity to the problems and their understanding of the local context and needs make them creative resources, active participants, discerning investors and willing initiators in the process of change. It is therefore vital that community-based approaches are supported.
- For community-based solutions to achieve sustainable and large-scale impact, they must be linked to local governance processes. The effectiveness of these efforts depends upon multi-sectoral partnerships. No one sector – civil society, government (local or national), private sector or the international development community – holds all the answers. It is in the partnerships formed among these sectors that sustainable solutions can be found. Programmes such as LIFE have an important role to play in brokering these partnerships and in providing a neutral space and opportunity for the dialogue that engenders partnerships.
- Although there is much knowledge and creativity at the local level, there also exist debilitating capacity constraints. While solutions to such deficits must be tailored to fit the context, the best investments often include strengthening the capacity of local government to undertake participatory processes; the capacity of communities to organize and form inclusive associations; and the capacity of all sectors to engage as partners rather than as adversaries. These capacity investments have spill-over effects that go well beyond the problems originally targeted. One consistent example from LIFE has been the increased capacity of local groups to move from addressing access to water and sanitation for example, to taking on the underlying problems of property rights and institutionalized inequity. The process of implementing small-scale projects can catalyse such capacity development.
- Another severe constraint among poor communities and the local organizations and governments intended to serve them is that of financial resources. Small-scale projects that successfully demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based efforts can help reprioritize resource allocation, mobilize untapped resources – financial and in-kind – of the community and of local government, and attract the attention and services of NGOs and the private sector.
- In the face of capacity and resource deficits at the local and community levels, decentralization poses both opportunities and challenges for achieving improvements in the urban environment. Processes that strengthen participation in local governance are essential for ensuring that decentralization benefits rather than harms the poor. Where decentralization and local governance processes are underdeveloped, community-based initiatives must be intensively supported so that the poorest can, without delay, access the services to which they have a right.



Greening urban areas through the Environmental Streets project (Egypt)

- Knowledge on participatory local governance and on technical and community-based solutions to urban environmental issues is constantly evolving. Poor communities are too busy, and local governments too resource-strapped to make documentation and knowledge-transfer a priority. Development programmes such as LIFE have an important role to play in facilitating the transfer of this knowledge, particularly in locally-accessible languages, so as to spread and up-scale small-scale innovations, enhance capacity, and influence policy. Effective mechanisms for achieving knowledge transfer include learning-by-doing (through small-scale projects), and peer-to-peer learning.

- It is well recognized that the problems of urban environment posed by the inexorable trend of urbanization are immense. They are often described as a ticking time bomb. Large scale, country-owned solutions require policy changes that institutionalize, among other things, participation, community-centred approaches, and also decentralization processes that truly empower local government and local people. Micro-level experiences that demonstrate the success of these approaches can be linked to macro-level policy change. This micro-macro link however, is not automatic, and programmes such as LIFE must proactively make the connection between mechanisms such as small-scale projects and policy advocacy.

- Programmes such as LIFE also have an important role to play in increasing information and accountability, two major pillars of good governance. The MDGs pose a particular challenge and opportunity in this area. While the signatories to these commitments have been national governments, it is now well recognized that the MDGs must be localized in order to be achieved. LIFE and similar programmes that have on-the-ground credibility, social capital and extensive local networks, must use these assets to inform local people and local governments about these commitments, so that they can hold their national authorities (and donor partners) to account for making the policy decisions, resource allocations and fiscal arrangements needed to achieve the Goals.

*Future challenges and directions* While LIFE has achieved much success, it faces some critical strategic challenges stemming from its need to transition to a more sustainable and institutionalized modality. It simultaneously faces some critical global development needs: (i) the challenge of urbanization, which poses an immense and growing crisis in some of LIFE's focus areas (for example, the problems of slum dwellers); (ii) the ongoing need for reality-tested knowledge in decentralization and local governance, areas of rapidly growing importance for UNDP; and finally (iii) the imperative of the MDGs which must be localized to be achieved.

Although several strategic options should be considered for LIFE's future, there is a strong case to be made for continued investment in mainstreaming its methodology: (i) LIFE has always worked directly and indirectly in many of the MDG areas. Directly, it has worked on poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability, specifically related to slum dwellers and water and sanitation (in fact, LIFE's approach is keenly in line with the recommendations made by the Millennium Task Force Reports on Slum Dwellers and on Water and Sanitation). Both indirectly and directly it has also addressed child, maternal and public health, as well as gender equity and empowerment. (ii) Over 13 years, LIFE has accumulated knowledge in these areas, and demonstrated how cost-effective results can be achieved at the local level. (iii) LIFE has also garnered invaluable assets on the ground: trusted networks, social capital, community-based knowledge, experience, and most importantly, concrete results. These assets can now be harnessed to help realize the MDGs in LIFE's focus

areas, to spread local-level accountability for the MDGs, to improve local-level capacity for achieving the MDGs, and to provide a methodology for localizing the MDGs.

LIFE thus has the potential to be harnessed in the MDG effort by contributing:

- directly to Goal 1 on poverty and Goal 7 on environmental sustainability, specifically Target 10 on sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and Target 11 on improving the lives of slum dwellers;
- indirectly to other goals such as Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment and Goal 4 on child mortality; and
- by providing a methodology and approach by which the MDGs overall (Goal 1 on poverty and hunger, Goal 2 on universal primary education, Goal 3 on gender equality and empowerment of women, Goal 4 on child mortality, Goal 5 on maternal health, Goal 6 on HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and Goal 7 on environmental sustainability) can be localized.

With this discussion in mind, the following strategic options for LIFE are being considered:

- *Option A* Phasing out the global programme while institutionalizing and decentralizing the country programmes and mainstreaming the LIFE methodology to contribute to the MDGs.
- *Option B* Phasing out the global programme as above, and in addition, forming a knowledge network of LIFE affiliates including the institutionalized country programmes.
- *Option C* Reinventing LIFE as a facility for localizing the MDGs.

The path eventually selected should ensure that LIFE's knowledge, assets and methodology continue to contribute to the ongoing struggle for sustainable human development in the most efficient and effective way.



Community members learn how to operate a sinkhole for waste water disposal (Senegal)

## Chapter One

# Strengthening local governance

### **LIFE - An overview**

The Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) was launched as a global pilot programme at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as a UNDP response to the environmental problems of the urban poor. The primary objective of the programme was to promote and demonstrate local-local dialogue and participatory, community-based solutions to environmental problems in poor urban areas and to help influence policies for participatory local governance. The premise of LIFE is that communities and their organizations can best determine which environmental problems need urgent attention, and that local solutions to local problems have a better chance of creating lasting change.

Although environmental and poverty problems in developing countries are prevalent both in rural and urban areas, LIFE chose to focus on the urban because of the rapidly increasing numbers of the urban poor and the complex nature of their environmental deprivation. Issues of urban poverty are intrinsically linked to the environmental conditions in which the urban poor live. Overcrowded living conditions and inadequate-to-nonexistent basic services such as drinking water, drainage, sanitation, garbage collection and disposal, latrines, etc., often result in severe health problems leading to loss of working days, decreased productivity and less income for the urban poor. Moreover, because of the high population densities in urban areas, there is the ever-present risk of diseases spreading as epidemics to the entire city or town and affecting the whole population.

The LIFE programme saw in this challenge an opportunity to facilitate highly visible and immediate changes in the lives of the urban poor, and to use urban solutions as an opportunity for bringing various local stakeholders together to reach greater mutual understanding.

LIFE has operated in more than 120 cities in 12 countries around the globe, funded over 300 projects, and supported many regional and global non-governmental organizations' (NGO) networks and cities associations concerned with local urban environmental problems. Since its inception, LIFE has had substantial and important impacts: From solid waste management in Senegal to water supply in Jamaica, from sewage systems in Pakistan to urban agriculture in Kyrgyzstan to the installation of latrines in Egypt, the tangible effects of this global programme have been seen in improved living conditions in poor urban communities worldwide. Yet the most important effects of LIFE cannot be measured only in terms of rehabilitated urban infrastructure or a cleaner environment, or even in the employment opportunities that many LIFE projects generate.

LIFE's overarching goal and primary impact has been the promotion of participatory local governance, to build people's capacities to tackle the problems that beset their communities

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through new partnerships with government and the private sector. LIFE has used the methodology of funding small-scale projects (SSPs) and a unique, three-stage ‘upstream-downstream-upstream’ approach to stimulate local-local dialogue between poor urban communities, NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other local actors, such as local authorities and municipal entities. These small, community-based projects supported by LIFE have been the focal-points around which multi-sectoral groups have organized and taken action together to solve urban environmental problems and improve their own lives. Using this approach, LIFE, with other partners, has tested the viability of participatory methodologies for improving the lives of the urban poor through strengthened local governance, providing UNDP with a unique mechanism for engaging all parties in local development, rather than focusing either on communities or on local government alone.

### **The growing significance of local governance**

The LIFE programme operates in a global context in which the concept of local governance has come to the fore. Local governance has become an important aspect of development theory and practice, and there is growing evidence of the successes of dynamic local experiments in budgeting, planning, service delivery, multi-sector partnerships and participation. It has become clear that these examples are not isolated successes, but part of a broader political and social trend based upon the growing predominance and power of local concerns. Research increasingly demonstrates that good local governance has tremendous potential for addressing the challenges of sustainable and equitable human development and democratic transition by introducing participation, transparency and accountability to the interface between government and its constituents.

### **Why local governance has emerged to the foreground**

The move towards increasing self-determination and governance at the local level has been fueled by a number of factors. Some factors, though widespread, are essentially nation-specific, for example, democratization, urbanization and decentralization. Other factors relate to global trends and norms including globalization, global agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and donor support and initiatives. An important cross-cutting factor has been the growing understanding of the link between participatory governance and development.

*Democratization* There was a wave of democratization in the last two decades of the twentieth century, following the collapse of dictatorial regimes, the fall of the Soviet Union and the proliferation of newly independent states. The world today is more democratic than ever before, with 121 countries in 2000 possessing some or all features of formal democracy, compared to only 54 countries in 1980. Although the spread of democracy has not since continued at the same pace, and although much remains to be done to deepen and strengthen democracy in many states, the experience of democracy has demonstrated the power of popular participation. Most democratic transitions of the last two decades in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa and in parts of East Asia, have been fueled by civil action.<sup>2</sup> These experiences with democratic revolutions, multi-party elections and participation have given citizens a new understanding of their own potential for self-determination and for engendering responsive governance. They have created new expectations for the relationships among public, private and civil sectors, and of the responsibilities of each sector in establishing and maintaining functioning democracies. The lessons learnt nationally are being mirrored by democratic transitions at the local level. This is significant particularly because it is at the local level that democracies find their sustenance. It is here that government is closest to its constituents and where the two groups can most powerfully interact.

*Urbanization* The world's urban population has increased twenty-fold in the twentieth century. As reported by a Worldwatch Institute publication, it is estimated that almost 90 percent of the 2.7 billion people who will be added to the world's population between 1995 and 2030 will be located in the cities of the developing world.<sup>3</sup> In its report, the Millennium Project's Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers synthesizes the trends projected by a number of UN sources:

- "The world's urban population is projected to grow by more than 2 billion by 2030..."<sup>4</sup>
- "Ninety-four percent of this urban population growth will be in less developed regions, and by 2030 the urban population will have far surpassed the rural population..."<sup>5</sup>
- "More than 900 million people can be classified as slum-dwellers, most living under life- and health-threatening circumstances."<sup>6</sup>
- "According to [a] pessimistic no-action scenario, the slum population in low- and middle-income countries is likely to double in less than 30 years."<sup>7</sup>

The current and future challenges that these demographic trends pose to the urban environment and social fabric cannot be underestimated. It has become increasingly clear that it is only in good and inclusive local governance and in the partnerships between local authorities, local representatives and local communities that appropriate solutions to these unique challenges can be tailored.

*Decentralization* Decentralization, which is the transfer of responsibility and authority – political, administrative and fiscal – from the national to sub-national and local levels of government, is a public sector phenomenon that has rapidly been adopted by growing numbers of countries, regardless of the form of government and regime.<sup>8</sup>

Central governments are motivated to decentralize for a number of reasons, including meeting the increasing needs of citizens and alleviating the fiscal burdens imposed by phenomenon such as urbanization. Perceived as a significant way in which to make governments more responsive to constituents, decentralization is also a governance arrangement that has been increasingly supported by the international development community. For example, an evaluation in 2000 of the role of UNDP in decentralization and local governance efforts showed that the resources committed by UNDP to such efforts increased steadily from 1992 to 1999, with the resources committed in the period 1997-1999 being an 81 percent increase over those committed in the period 1992-1996.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the Multi-year Funding Framework report on UNDP for 2004 reported that the greatest concentration of work in the democratic governance practice, itself the second largest practice area in UNDP, is in decentralization and local governance.<sup>10</sup>

Recent research and literature has underscored that where decentralization has worked, it can increase responsiveness; allow for the prioritization of local needs; improve accountability and transparency of governments to citizens; improve political representation and participation of previously marginalized groups such as women, ethnic minorities and the poor; and result in more sustainable development outcomes by allowing new levels of information-sharing about the true nature of problems on the ground. Decentralization thus both builds upon and influences the existing conditions of local governance. Where decentralization has been designed effectively, i.e., where local conditions have been carefully considered, and where administrative functions and responsibilities have been appropriately devolved and adequately backed by fiscal and political authority, it has built upon and strengthened good local governance.

*Globalization* It would seem paradoxical that in an era of globalization, when power and deci-

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sion-making seem to be increasingly consolidated at levels above the nation state, the demands for local empowerment and the assertion of power and decision-making at the local level have only strengthened. And yet it is possible that globalization is one of the very forces from which local empowerment draws its impetus. This is conceivable in several different ways: First, globalization has given rise to information sharing at levels previously unimagined, through global information and communication technologies such as the Internet and the media. Together with mass migrations of human capital across national and continental boundaries, these phenomena have exposed once isolated communities to the ideas of democracy and development. Local actors have become increasingly aware of their rights, particularly of their right to make demands on their governments to fulfill new expectations in each of these areas.

Second, the same information technologies that have increased awareness at the local level are also plugging local actors into global social movements, which may be driven by transnational networks of civil society and NGOs sharing the same values and concerns. These movements have often been organized around problems that may be encountered locally but pose challenges to the world at large (diseases such as HIV/AIDS, for example), and around norms and values that are increasingly accepted worldwide (such as human rights, further discussed below). Local actors are emboldened and empowered by such global interconnectedness, and find strength in the global networks to which they belong. Shack/Slum Dwellers International, a global network of slum dwellers, is one example of how these networks are being utilized even by the poorest.

Finally, localization may be seen as a backlash or a reaction against the perceived, inexorable move towards a globalized economy and culture, with local communities reasserting their presence, concerns and uniqueness.

*Global concern for human rights* Since the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, an international system of human rights has increasingly emerged, and countries of diverse cultures have adopted commitments to these rights. As articulated in the 'Human Development Report 2000', what the human rights approach can add and has already added to human development work is a focus not just on overall development outcomes, but on the processes by which such outcomes are achieved; not merely the achievement of national development goals, but the achievement of human development at the individual level. A human rights approach has also integrated the achievement of political and civil rights and democratic freedoms such as participation into the development dialogue. Furthermore, by introducing the language of entitlement to certain development goals, it has allowed the apportionment of responsibility and accountability when human rights are not fulfilled." Accountability has become one of the defining elements of good governance, among both countries and donors. Based as it is upon the individual, the human rights approach has focused attention upon marginalized groups such as the poorest, thus increasing the importance of governance at the local level, because it is here that the poor have the greatest hope of participating, and of holding their governments accountable for the fulfillment of these rights.

*The MDGs* At the Millennium Development Summit in 2000, the largest-ever gathering of heads of state pledged to halve world poverty by 2015. This unprecedented global consensus was subsequently articulated in a commitment by the signatories to the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Designed to realize the vision of the Declaration, the MDGs attempt to focus national and global development activities around a set of concrete goals and targets in the areas of poverty and hunger, education, gender equality and empowerment,

child mortality, maternal health, major diseases and environmental sustainability. From the onset of this initiative, it has been recognized that ownership at the country level, with grass-roots support from both the state and from its citizens, are essential for success. As articulated in the ‘Human Development Report 2003’, “The Goals will succeed only if they mean something to the billions of individuals for whom they are intended.”<sup>12</sup>

Decentralization and participatory local governance have explicitly been espoused as enabling strategies for the MDGs for several reasons. Most importantly, the achievement of many of the goals is dependent upon the effective delivery of services at the local level, and it is primarily at the local level that citizens can meaningfully hold their leaders accountable for fulfilling these goals. This is particularly true for the poorest populations. Any strategy for the equitable achievement of the MDGs must involve appropriate accountability alignments between the responsible government employees, elected local authorities, and the constituents whom they serve. The adoption of the MDGs as a global strategy has thus only increased the importance of local governance.

*Landmark global events and initiatives* Local governance has received additional focus due to a number of major global initiatives and donor efforts in the last 10-15 years. At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the last Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), over 178 governments adopted a historic declaration to address the urgent need for environmentally sustainable development. Out of this agreement was born Agenda 21, an action plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century. Significant in the implementation of Agenda 21 was the recognition of the roles and responsibilities of local government and civil society. Broad public participation in decision-making and access to information were strongly endorsed. As stated in Agenda 21, “Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and sub national environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.”<sup>13</sup> It is envisioned that every local authority will consultatively prepare a Local Agenda 21.

The principles of Rio were reaffirmed in the Habitat II Declaration of 1996 and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg (South Africa) in 2002. Capacity 2015, which was launched to build capacities for achieving both Agenda 21 and the MDGs, pushes the support for local governance even further: Every one of the proposed areas of action contains a concern for capacity, empowerment and efforts at the local level to achieve the results envisioned in the Millennium Declaration and in Agenda 21.

Global initiatives such as these have drawn enormous attention to localized approaches to development, and coalesced resources, both national and international, around building the institutions and capacities to achieve the potential of local governance.

*A growing understanding of participatory governance and development* Perhaps the most important factor that has fueled the rise of local governance is the growing understanding of the centrality of participatory local governance to development.

The crucial role of the public sector in achieving sustainable development has long been recognized. What is relatively new to the development discourse is the concept of governance, which enlarges the scope of public action and responsibility to the private and civil sectors as well. Good governance is seen as being based upon robust public, private and civic institutions,

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as well as upon balanced interactions among these groups. Governance is thus increasingly understood to include non-state sectors in ensuring that the state meets the needs of the people, and that it is held accountable for doing so.

Participatory governance involves, among other things, the engagement of civil society in a broad spectrum of activities including planning, voting, referenda and other opportunities for people to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. Indeed, participation in governance is now virtually considered a right. Participation is seen as fundamental to the social transformation necessary for development for several reasons: it builds ownership and commitment to the reforms and changes that are central to achieving development; by providing avenues for involvement in the decision making processes, participation allows for the sustainability of development outcomes and decisions; participation also enables the type of learning, independence and confidence that is essential for sustainable development in the 'knowledge economy'.<sup>14</sup>

The increasing embrace of participatory approaches in governance has given added impetus to governance at the local level, because, again, it is at the local level that communities can most effectively participate to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

This global context – the trend and needs at the country level, and international commitments related to human rights, sustainable human development, and the MDGs – provides a powerful rationale for programmes such as LIFE, which support participatory local governance, and most importantly, strengthen the links between local governance and sustainable human development.

### **Participatory local governance and the role of LIFE**

To understand the role of LIFE in strengthening local governance, it is useful to take a close look at the definition of this often-used term. Local governance comprises the set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level. Good local governance depends upon a few basic building blocks, which include:

- **participation** of citizens in the public processes and decisions (including planning and budgeting) that affect their lives;
- **partnerships** among local governmental institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector for transparent, accountable and equitable service delivery and local development;
- **capacity** of local actors across all sectors: of the civil sector, especially poor communities, to organize, to participate, to hold government accountable, to articulate needs and to articulate and implement solutions to local problems; of the private sector to organize, articulate its needs, and participate in competitive service delivery; and of local government to respond to the needs of the people, harness and facilitate participatory local development and governance processes;
- **information channels** for two-way information-flows between the state and non-state sectors;
- **accountability**, both vertical and horizontal, including accountability arrangements between local representatives and their constituents, local government and citizens, among the many arms of local government, and between local governments and other levels of government in the state structure; and finally,
- appropriate **administrative, fiscal, political and legal frameworks** for local governments to function effectively.

In reality, the effectiveness of local governance as an end in itself and as a means for con-

tributing to sustainable human development may be hampered by a number of challenges in each of these areas. Often, the underlying problem is that the process of decentralization has been incomplete, contributing to many deficits at the local level. These deficits, commonly present at the level of local government, are often even more acute at the community level, preventing communities, especially poor communities, from participating in local governance. This is where the LIFE programme comes in.

Due to its unique methodology and approach, LIFE strengthens local governance by empowering local governments, communities and community organizations; building partnerships among diverse stakeholders; increasing avenues for participation and information; strengthening capacity and accountability; and expanding and channeling the financial resource base at the local level. By maintaining a pro-poor focus, LIFE also plays a role in linking local governance to sustainable human development for the most marginalized segments of society. This is particularly the case where decentralization and local governance processes have so failed the poorest that support to community-based efforts allows them to access urgent services without delay. Even under these conditions, however, LIFE works to mitigate the trade-offs between fulfilling immediate service needs and long-term institutional development, by putting in place processes for developing local governance institutions. In all these areas, LIFE is aided by many partners, each of which has its own comparative advantages in addressing local governance and urban poor needs.



Secondary sewerage lines being laid by the municipal authorities in Lodhran (Pakistan)

### Box 1: Strengthening institutions and community participation in Lodhran (Pakistan)

Lodhran, a city of 65,000 in southern Punjab, had suffered for decades from a woefully inadequate sewage system. Streets and lanes were often flooded with sewage. To compound the problem, residents believed that the government should be responsible for fixing the system, and apathy, frustration and helplessness prevailed.

In 1999, representatives of the Orangi Pilot Project Research and Training Institute (OPP-RTI), a Pakistani NGO experienced in providing sewage systems, visited Lodhran. According to its mission statement, OPP-RTI seeks to “evolve replicable models for environmental sanitation based on collaborative efforts among different development actors, to eradicate institutional denial of services to the poor or disadvantaged communities.”

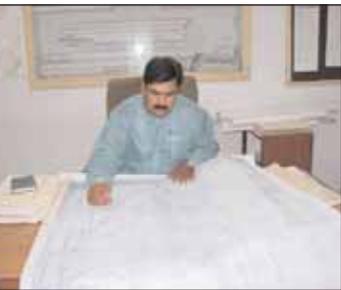
Since no suitable organization existed in Lodhran, OPP-RTI established the Lodhran Pilot Project (LPP) as an NGO, with support from LIFE. LPP in turn set out to create partnerships with government agencies such as the Municipal Committee, as well as with the private sector. It also began mobilizing the local community to take responsibility for maintaining a viable, low-cost sewage system.

LPP’s strategy was to create a platform in a community – a public statement of principles, objectives and policy – around which a range of development partners could be organized to invest their resources and work to solve community problems. Moreover, through the demonstration of a viable project, government agencies and officials could be convinced of the social and economic benefits of this approach so as to influence their future policy making and planning processes. Thus downstream success could help shape upstream policies.

In Lodhran, LPP and its partners laid 9,505 running feet of sewer lines, making 60 non-functioning sewers operational in 73 lanes of the city, serving 3,416 households. Yet even more important than the environmental improvements has been the capacity building among the local government officials and neighbourhood actors who planned, organized and carried out the work.

LPP’s key partner in this work was the Municipal Committee. In the past, the Municipal Committee lacked the capacity to operate, maintain, and expand the city’s sewage facilities to meet growing needs. This was partly due to technical problems, and LPP set out to solve these with the help of expert consultants. There was no base map and no sanitation map for the city. There were bad home connections and clogged lines, haphazard street connections of sewage lines, improper connections with the main lines, improper use of manholes and lack of disposal stations. While helping the Municipal Committee solve these problems, LPP promoted organized community involvement in the city sanitation system, and also helped produce Lodhran’s first complete city map.

Community involvement is the key to the continued success of the project. LPP has learnt from experience how to identify and overcome the psychological, economic, technical and social obstacles that often stand in the way of community-financed, community-managed sanitation systems. One obstacle is the perception that it is the duty of government authorities to provide sewage lines free of charge. Another is the fear that a modern latrine system and an underground sewer are not affordable. A third is the



A municipal engineer, trained during the Lodhran project, prepares documentation and surveys of the area (Pakistan)

notion that community members lack the necessary technical skills for such a 'technologically complex' project. And a fourth is the absence of an organized group at the grass roots level who can take up collective action.

Through initial contacts with 27 District Councillors, local leaders and organizations, LPP motivated local communities in Lodhran to construct and maintain sanitation facilities at the lane level on a self-help basis. Thus, it is the people's responsibility to construct and maintain, with their own resources and under their own management but with technical support from LPP, sanitary latrines and underground sewage lines with manholes, house connections and collector drains. It is the responsibility of the central authority to construct and maintain main drains or trunk sewers, disposal stations and sewage water treatment plants.

This division of responsibilities is designed to foster increased dialogue and collaboration between government and communities. It establishes a foundation of transparency in project execution and a system of mutual accountability.

The motivational and mobilization process became easier after the sewer in one street was completed. One success story in which working with LPP produced a functioning underground sewage network helped motivate others to adopt the LPP approach.

LPP also trained local activists and officials, and extended technical support and institutional capacity building to the Municipal Committee. For example, at the invitation of LIFE, the Chairman of Lodhran's Municipal Committee and his team visited OPP's successful sewage project near Karachi, to orient themselves to the OPP model and to define the responsibilities of the Lodhran municipal engineering team.

In order to endow the Municipal Committee with a sense of ownership and to reduce costs, a municipal engineer was trained to undertake complete documentation of the Lodhran project, conduct level surveys, take precise measurements and review construction standards and schedules of rates. This involved shifting these activities from the Public Health and Engineering Department, hiring a surveyor and a draftsman and training a sub-engineer, with the understanding that he would not be transferred from Lodhran for at least three years.

LPP's work is not a substitute for that of government service providers. Rather, it acts as a support organization to strengthen the existing capacities of the municipal authorities in developing and implementing an effective sewage system. The idea is that a joint pooling of resources can enhance the financial, technical and institutional capacities of the official service delivery organizations.

The project has already had an effect on local politics. One District Councillor was recently elected because of the leadership role he played in the completion of the sewage system in his area.

As for LIFE's goal of upstreaming this partnership approach at the national level, the process has begun. Dissemination of information on the achievements in Lodhran has been underway for sometime. The LPP has also become a provincial resource centre, providing training and advice to organizations interested in the strategic sanitation methodology. Based on the success of LPP, the Government of Japan has provided funding for replication of LPP's work in 100 surrounding villages.

***Strengthening participation, partnerships, dialogue and information***

The main components of a governance system are the state, the private sector and civil society, and it is the effective interaction among these groups that allows for good governance. The reality in many countries however, is that partnerships among these sectors and participation by private and civil sectors are often weak. In emerging democracies, for example, civil society participation in governance may be a novel concept. Lacking historical precedent, civil societies in such countries may be deficient in the needed organizational capacity, the know-how, or the motivation to participate in political processes and to demand accountability and results from both government and from political representatives. Citizens may even be unaware of their rights and responsibilities in the governance paradigm. The public sector on the other hand, may lack the capacity or the incentives to involve citizens in setting development priorities, to accept the role of citizens as watchdogs, to engage in participatory planning or budgeting, or to engage in productive partnerships.

Establishing dialogue, partnerships and a participatory approach among these groups is one of the main goals of LIFE, and every stage of the LIFE process responds to these challenges.

LIFE's participatory process calls for partnerships between various actors and stakeholders in all its activities and at all levels. The National Steering Committee (NSC) is the main multi-stakeholder partnership mechanism at the national level. NSCs are broadly representative, with NGOs and CBOs being the most highly represented groups, and women being members of every NSC. The initiating workshops for LIFE at both national and municipal levels engage participants from all sectors – NGOs, CBOs, communities, private sector, and government, both local and national. At the community or municipal level, the SSPs are the basis for developing community-based and municipality-based partnerships. Participation is encouraged during the project identification, design and implementation phases. These projects involve new actors and develop a culture of collaborative work using local-local dialogue.

Through experience with LIFE, local authorities have often become open to adopting participatory practices in their work. In many cases, local authorities, unused to proactivity on the part of the communities they serve, initially opposed community-initiated projects, but were later convinced of the merits of this approach. They become open to supporting community-based projects, and engaging the communities in local planning processes. By demonstrating that NGOs, CBOs and private entities can provide services, LIFE helps update the traditional public sector model. Often, municipal authorities have begun sub-contracting service delivery to such organizations, with more efficient results.

LIFE promotes local-local dialogue among communities and their local counterparts in the prioritization, identification, design and implementation of projects to address the needs of a community. In post-conflict areas, this process of dialogue helps build social capital and trust. Local-local dialogue is also enabled when communities share with each other the lessons learnt during exchange visits. LIFE promotes local-national dialogue both at the upstream stage when it is being established in a country, and at the stage when lessons are being drawn from the LIFE experiences to influence policy. Through a Global Advisory Committee (GAC), it also facilitates partnership and dialogue at the global level, so that lessons and knowledge may be shared across countries, and from donor to beneficiary and vice-versa.

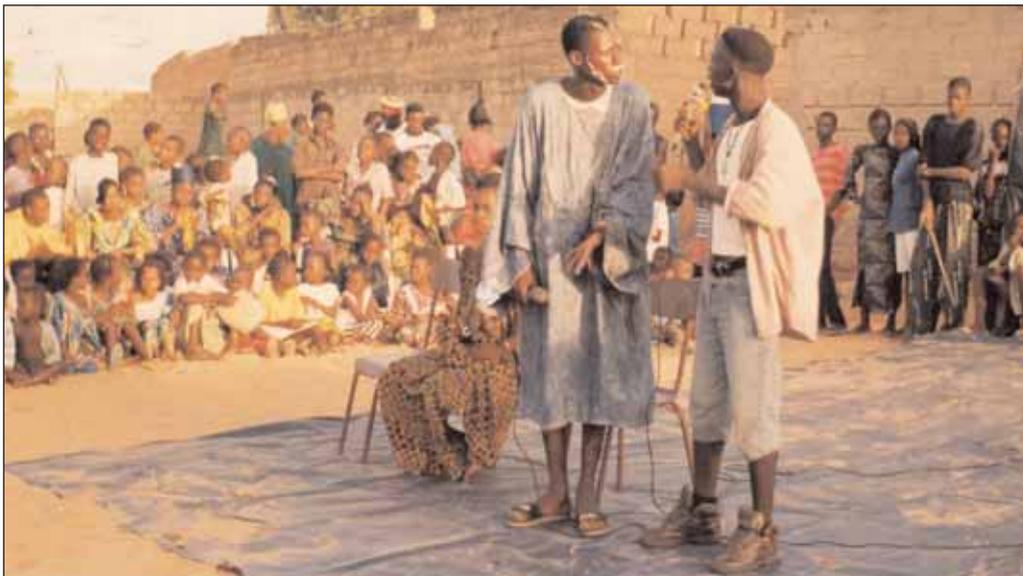
By providing venues for dialogue and partnership, LIFE also enables the flow of information between government and communities, which is essential for good local governance. These information flows enable local authorities to gain a clear understanding of local preferences

and needs, and to gauge their own performance. They allow citizens to become informed about their rights and about the laws, policy decisions and processes that affect their lives. In many areas that have been recently decentralized, or where local governance is weak, information flows are poor or non-existent. Among the urban communities that it serves, LIFE improves knowledge of rights and rules. The SSPs often facilitate awareness about citizen's environmental rights, and establish a mode of communication between citizens and the relevant government agencies on local environmental problems and concerns. A free media, another key element for information and transparency, may be underdeveloped or undermined by state ownership or intervention. LIFE's activities often include the media as active partners and enhance their role and capacity.

### *Developing capacity*

The promise of decentralization and local governance often comes up against the brick wall of capacity deficits at the local level. These deficits are typically more pronounced in poorer areas, exacerbating existing problems of exclusion. NGOs and communities at the local level may lack the skills, organizational capacity and the confidence to participate in governance. Local authorities may have only a poor grasp of the technical skills needed to deliver or out-source services, engage participatory processes, and manage projects and resources. Central and sub-national governments in newly decentralized systems may know little about managing relationships with local authorities or lack faith in the capacity of local authorities, and continue traditions of control that severely inhibit the ability of these local authorities to deliver on the expectations of their constituents.

Capacity development is thus an integral part of the LIFE programme. All LIFE projects have in-built training mechanisms for local organizations, community members and local authorities. LIFE increases the capacity of local authorities to engage in participatory processes. LIFE strengthens the capacity of CBOs and NGOs to design and manage projects and prepare proposals. It strengthens the capacity of communities to organize for collective action, and increases the technical know-how of communities to implement sustainable solutions to the problems of the urban environment. In countries where civil society is nascent, the LIFE programme may be the first experience that a community has with organizing to address a common concern. The experience of organizing around project proposals has often helped establish and strengthen local CBOs and NGOs, many of which go on to become active participants in local governance. The experiences of learning-by-doing during project design and implementation are powerful not just in terms of building capacity, but also in building the confidence of local organizations and communities to find appropriate and sustainable solutions to the problems that beset them.



Sensitizing the public to sanitation issues through street theater (Senegal)

### **Box 2: Waste management and women's empowerment in Arab Salim (Lebanon)**

In a small settlement in southern Lebanon, within a zone of conflict, local women had long been fed up with the failure of municipal authorities to collect solid waste in their area. "We are constantly being shelled and our windows shattered, but it's the piles of rubbish collecting by the roadside that have become really unbearable," explained one woman. "We may not be able to do anything about the shelling, but we have to try and live like human beings."

Finally, the women decided to take it upon themselves to do something, and from initial meetings amongst a few women, started to look for help in tackling the problem. Their search came to the notice of the LIFE National Coordinator (NC), who advised them to form an organization and helped them to formulate a project proposal.

Initially, 13 women formed this group and accordingly they divided the village into 13 zones for waste collection. Each woman was in charge of one zone, accompanying the driver to collect the recyclables from the houses. The women used their grant to buy containers and organize a sorting site. While they were not able initially to sell (or even give away) their neatly sorted piles of potentially recyclable wastes, they improved their local environment and gained confidence and experience.

The CBO subsequently became a registered NGO, and changed its name from Women of Arab Salim to Call of the Earth, since the men of the community, seeing their success, became interested in getting involved as well. The group succeeded in mobilizing grants from other foreign and local donors. It also gained national publicity and fame, and villages and towns from all over the country have been inspired to embark on similar activities.

#### ***Addressing local-level resource constraints***

One of the most debilitating challenges to effective systems of decentralized governance is the lack of an appropriate and predictable resource base. As discussed earlier, central governments undertake decentralization for many reasons. Sometimes the reason may be to achieve better development outcomes, but more often, decentralization is pursued as a political strategy or to offload excessive fiscal burdens. Under such conditions, while administrative functions may be devolved, local authorities may find themselves without the financial resources or mandate to undertake these responsibilities. They may lack the mandate to raise resources locally, and may be unsupported by vitally needed intergovernmental systems of resources transfers. Unmet expectations lead to reduced participation by civil society and harm the local governance dynamic.

### Box 3: A community secures access to potable water in Suluctu (Kyrgyzstan)

Suluctu, a city of about 16,000 inhabitants, lies hidden among the high mountains of southern Kyrgyzstan. A coal mining city during Soviet times, Suluctu has since faced widespread economic depression and unemployment due to the increased costs of transportation, which have made mining uneconomical. Nevertheless, the local population has clung on, surviving on the hope that coal mining will become competitive again given the rising prices and perennial shortage of electricity.

As in many parts of the country, the problem of water supply here is acute. Because of its geographical location, the city has no natural water resources. The population uses water from a water pipe constructed in 1949. This is the only waterway for the city and it is in a state of serious disrepair.

The population living along Bakybek Street – 73 families consisting of 573 people, 75 percent of whom are children – has long suffered due to the city's inadequate and deteriorated water supply system. For more than 30 years, Bakybek's residents, particularly the women and children, have had to walk eight kilometers every day to fetch water for household needs from the city centre. Local authorities have not been able to find any solution to this problem, given the absence of basic funds.

The idea of public construction of the pipeline was generated by the people of Bakybek Street themselves, as they recognized that their circumstances could only be improved by their own initiative. The public foundation Karchygabek organized the Street's inhabitants to apply for a LIFE grant to construct their own water supply pipeline. Because the project would help mitigate the risk of water-borne infectious diseases among the children and adults of the town, the project had the support of the local government. The office of Suluctu's mayor submitted a petition to LIFE to support the project. It also committed to connecting the new pipe to the central line and offered technical support and labour. A LIFE grant of US \$3,800 was awarded, enabling the mobilization of approximately US \$3,000 from the city authorities and US \$4,500 in cash and kind from the local population and from Karchygabek.

At the inception of the project, each household committed to digging 110 metres of pipeline trenches and to take turns cooking meals for the trench diggers. Work started in September 2002, and the residents prepared the pipeline trenches within a month. Almost all members of the community were involved: 30 percent of those who dug the trenches were children, and 20 percent were women, most of whom cooked meals for the workers. Installation of the water pipes and valves was done by experts and local inhabitants following the standards and requirements of the appropriate state bodies. Within 10 days, all the pipes were laid and the trenches were closed. In December 2002, the 8 km-long pipeline was officially commissioned to be operated by Karchygabek. This public organization has signed an agreement for water provision with the municipality. Karchygabek and the local population have agreed to maintain the pipeline and cover all related expenditures themselves. All necessary funds are being collected as water fees from the local population. This is a key achievement of the project, as it is essential for sustainability.

This kind of project, where a public organization obtains the right to construct a water pipeline on land provided by the authorities, is unique in Kyrgyzstan and provides a



The city of Suluctu (Kyrgyzstan)

The rugged landscape across which the Bakybek Street community constructs an 8-km water pipeline

After the project, the children of Bakybek Street no longer need to carry water over long distances

model for other cities in the country. In fact, Suluctu's administration representatives intend to disseminate the project experience elsewhere, because the provision, maintenance and upgrading of urban infrastructure is beyond the capacity of many small city administrations in the country.

LIFE facilitates resource mobilization in several ways. First, it provides seed funding to support locally-designed solutions to local problems, problems that would otherwise be ignored by local authorities that may be under-resourced or negligent. Second, while these seed funds are modest, they create opportunities for demonstration projects, which then attract resources from many sources. In fact, a significant trend in recent years is that the successes of LIFE and the merits of the process it follows have increasingly attracted resources in cash and kind, including counterpart funding from national and local governments, and from the beneficiary communities as well (see Table 2). Third, in many cases, the LIFE experience has led to a practice of fee-for-service, thus generating resources to sustain the solutions that the communities have chosen and adopted.

### ***Strengthening accountability***

Decentralization is often undertaken without the necessary changes in political structures. Local governance is undermined particularly when provisions are not made for local elections, which is one of the principal ways in which constituents can hold local authorities accountable. Keeping in mind the diverse challenges posed by individual country contexts, LIFE supports accountability in many ways. First, it enables community groups to organize and become political bodies that can make demands on their governments. Second, in the project implementation phase, LIFE creates forums for sustained interactions and dialogue, where local authorities and elected representatives come face to face with their constituents. Third, the direct linkage to electoral political accountability is clearly demonstrated in some areas, where representatives have been keen to link the project successes to the election cycle. Appropriately timing the projects may result in getting champions among elected representatives, and creating the link between results and accountability.

The MDGs pose yet another challenge and opportunity with respect to accountability. While the signatories to these commitments have been national governments, it is now well recognized that the MDGs must be localized in order to be achieved. LIFE and similar programmes that have on-the-ground credibility, social capital and extensive local networks, can use these assets to inform local people (and local governments, which are often in the dark) about these global commitments, so that they can hold the relevant authorities – national or local – to account for making the policy decisions, resource allocations and other fiscal arrangements needed for achieving the Goals.

### ***Intensifying a pro-poor focus at the local level***

As emphasized in the 'Human Development Report 2003', "there is nothing automatically pro-poor about decentralization."<sup>15</sup> In both new and existing democracies, there often exist entrenched systems of power and privilege, both at the national and at the local level. At the local level, decentralization without appropriate controls can further exacerbate the problems faced by the very poor, as local governance processes may be captured by local elite to their own advantage. This is particularly true where the poor may be a national majority, but a powerless minority at many local levels. Their needs may be further neglected when power is devolved away from the centre, where some of their rights may be safeguarded, to the local level where their rights may be neglected.

LIFE addresses this challenge by focusing intensively on harnessing participatory local governance to empower the urban poor and address their concerns. Environmental deprivation of the urban poor is an entry point for achieving sustainable human development, focusing on services such as water, sanitation and garbage disposal. While LIFE seeks to improve the living conditions of the urban poor, it also aims to strengthen their organizations – CBOs and NGOs – and promote partnerships between them and local government. It further empowers the poor and women by involving them in all phases of the programme, promoting their social and political empowerment, participation and integration in development and local governance processes.

LIFE thus helps to encourage a pro-poor orientation within the system of local governance in many ways. It has a tangible positive impact on the incomes of the poor, as well as on their living conditions and health. By focusing on the urban poor and demonstrating the success of pro-poor projects, LIFE raises the visibility of the needs and potential of poor communities among local and central authorities. It strengthens the capacity of both the authorities and of poor communities and catalyses partnerships that allow them to better interact with each other. It helps poor communities mobilize around common environmental concerns, and this has spill-over effects in other areas. The alliances and organizations thus formed are often able to begin addressing other development issues relevant to the poor.

### **LIFE's overall impact and potential**

When the LIFE programme was launched 13 years ago at the Rio Summit, the central role of local governance in achieving sustainable development was not yet recognized. Today, localization is understood as the most important way to strengthen the democratic landscape and achieve development results, particularly the MDGs. While many factors have contributed to this paradigm shift, LIFE has played a role as well, by contributing to the political reform process and to community empowerment, and underscoring the importance of local communities and local authorities. Through small initiatives, LIFE has been able to make big changes, mobilizing so-called small-actors, building trust, respect, and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships, and forging the link between micro and macro levels. Although LIFE started as a small-grants programme, it is estimated to have benefited over 6.5 million people both directly and indirectly (see Table 5), and has now become an integral part of the movement to achieve sustainable human development through strengthening local governance.

With its wealth of experience, assets on the ground, and a tested methodology, LIFE has much to contribute, particularly at a time when the global community is being mobilized to achieve concrete development goals. The ensuing chapters take an in-depth look at LIFE's objectives, organization and methodology, describing in detail the programme's experiences and lessons at each stage of its upstream-downstream-upstream approach, and drawing upon examples from each LIFE country to illustrate its impact.

Production of coal slack molded briquettes to generate income and reduce air pollution (Kyrgyzstan)



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- 4 UN-HABITAT, 'The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003', (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003) and UN-HABITAT, 'Slums of the World: The Face of Urban Poverty in the New Millennium', (Nairobi, 2003). In UN Millennium Project Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers, 'A Home in the City', (London: Earthscan Publications, 2005) 11.
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- 6 UN-HABITAT, 'The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003', (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003) and UN-HABITAT, 'Slums of the World: The Face of Urban Poverty in the New Millennium', (Nairobi, 2003). In UN Millennium Project Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers, 'A Home in the City', (London: Earthscan Publications, 2005) 12.
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- 8 UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2003', (New York: Oxford UP, 2003) 134.
- 9 UNDP-BMZ, 'The UNDP Role in Decentralization & Local Governance', (New York: UNDP, 2000) 8.
- 10 United Nations, Multi-year Funding Framework report on UNDP performance and results for 2004 (New York, UNDP, 2004) 46.
- 11 UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2000', (New York: Oxford UP, 2000).
- 12 UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2003', 1.
- 13 Agenda 21, 1992, Paragraph 28.1
- 14 Stiglitz, Joseph E, 2002, 'Participation and Development: Perspectives from the Comprehensive Development Paradigm', Review of Development Economics, Blackwell Publishing, vol. 6(2), pages 163-82. (164-169)
- 15 UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2003', 140.



New facilities for solid waste collection and disposal, Rayer Bazar slum (Bangladesh)

## Chapter Two

### How LIFE works

#### LIFE's origins and objectives

The LIFE programme was designed using a participatory process involving consultations among mayors from developing countries, NGO networks, cities associations, the United Nations, the World Bank and bilateral donors. Through this consultative process emerged the LIFE Programme Document. Support for its approval came in April 1992. In it, three broad objectives were identified:

- To demonstrate local solutions to urban environmental problems and strengthen institutional capacities and collaboration through SSPs involving CBOs, NGOs and local authorities at the community, city and national levels.
- To facilitate advocacy and policy dialogue based on local initiatives at local and national levels involving NGOs, CBOs and authorities at the community, city and national levels.
- To promote the exchange of successful participatory approaches and innovations for local urban environmental improvements at the sub-regional, regional and inter-regional levels through NGO networks, cities associations and international agencies.

The following areas were selected for LIFE's environmental focus:

- increasing the provision of water supply and sanitation;
- improving solid waste and liquid waste management;
- decreasing air and water pollution;
- addressing the occupancy of hazard-prone areas;
- eliminating the use of hazard-prone or environmentally damaging technologies;
- improving environmental health;
- providing environmental education; and
- utilizing environmental considerations in urban planning.

These broad objectives and action areas have remained the same ever since the programme started. However, as new global landmarks such as the Habitat II Agenda and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) have come into existence, the approach and thrust of the programme have been sharpened and modified over the years to include the acquisition and sharing of new knowledge. Indeed, LIFE views itself as a global learning laboratory where new knowledge and ideas can be generated, applied and tested.

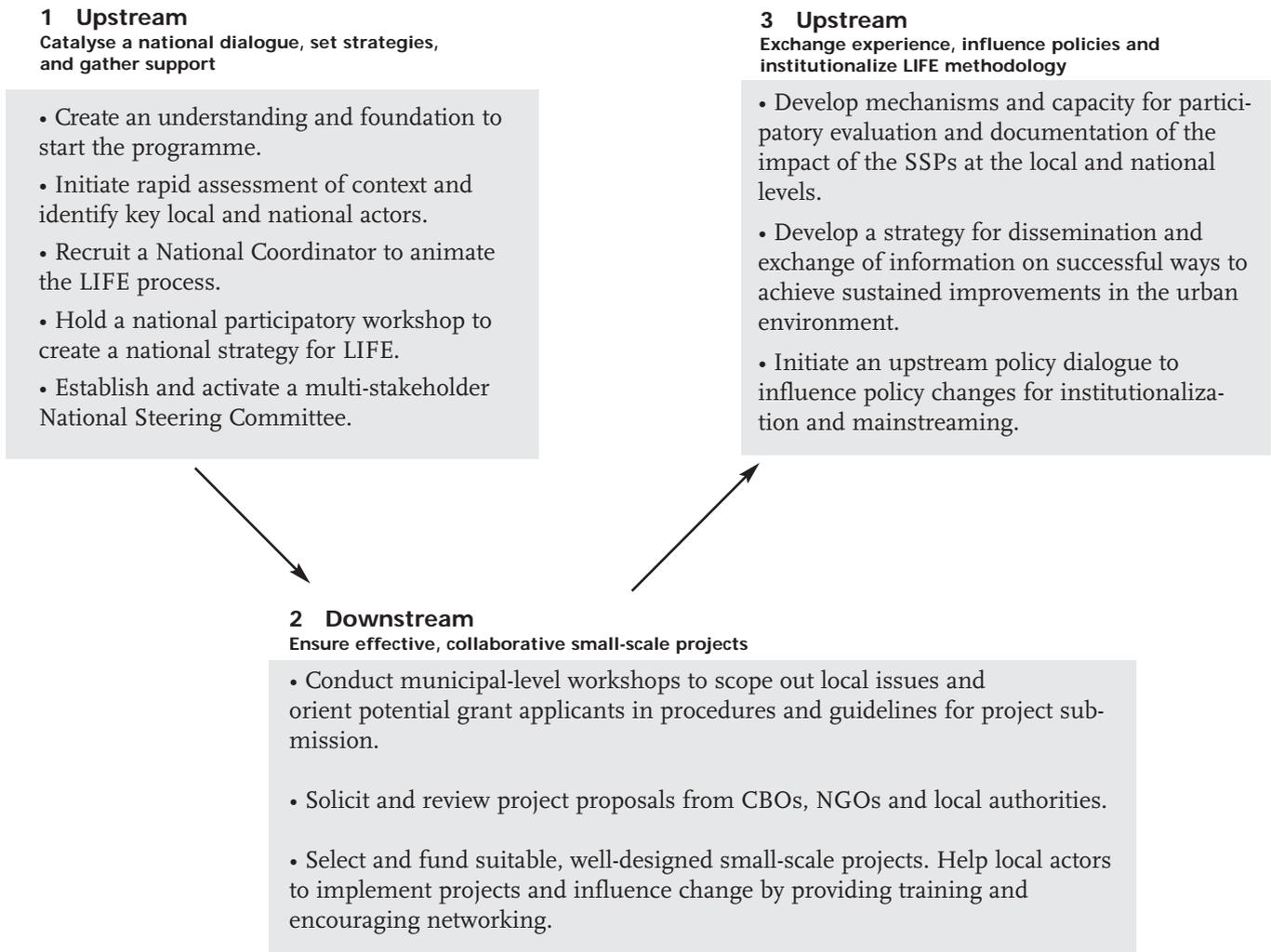
#### LIFE's approach

LIFE's three-stage upstream-downstream-upstream approach and the mechanism of local-local dialogue facilitate micro-macro linkages and promote policy changes that are grounded in reality. At the core of this approach are SSPs designed, implemented and operated by local CBOs, NGOs and local authorities.

The upstream-downstream-upstream approach is so named because it begins **upstream** at the policy-making level, to formulate a national framework and strategy for identifying and prioritizing urban environmental objectives, and to create a partnership structure to imple-

ment and manage the national LIFE programme. It then moves **downstream** to the local community level, to select and provide small grants to local entities to implement participatory environmental projects in poor urban neighborhoods. These small projects act as catalysts for bringing various partners together in dialogue and collaborative efforts; for developing the specific skills and capacities of various partners; and for initiating a process of improving living conditions. The projects are also fundamentally considered to be policy experiments, as their results are documented and the extracted lessons then **upstreamed** to influence policies that could support further scaling-up, transfer and generation of new local and community-based initiatives for improving local governance and the conditions of the urban poor. Through this upstream-downstream-upstream process, countries promote micro-macro linkages for policy advocacy and reform. The regional and global activities of the LIFE programme strengthen the process.

**Figure 1: The three-stage LIFE approach**



The SSPs and the local-local dialogue method (described in detail in the 1997 LIFE publication, ‘Participatory Local Governance, Technical Advisory Paper 1’) are the primary tools of the LIFE programme. The objective of local-local dialogue is to generate extensive participation and partnerships at all levels. A unique feature of the LIFE programme is the mutually supportive dynamic it creates between upstream (national level) activities and downstream (community level) activities, by promoting advocacy and policy dialogue among stakeholders to institutionalize participatory local governance and improve the lives of the poor.

Since its inception, LIFE has demonstrated a way of dealing directly with sub-national, local and community level stakeholders such as NGOs, CBOs and local authorities, even at a time when this was a departure from the way UNDP and other development organizations functioned.

### **Programme organization**

The LIFE programme is designed to operate at multiple levels. First and foremost, LIFE operates at the country level to meet the programme objectives and to maximize learning. LIFE simultaneously operates at the regional, inter-regional and global levels, so as to enable cross-country learning within the programme, and to draw upon and influence participatory approaches for urban environmental improvements that are being developed and implemented by other organizations such as regional, inter-regional and global NGOs and cities associations.

Globally, the programme is coordinated by a Global Coordinator located in the Democratic Governance Group of the Bureau for Development Policy (DGG/BDP) at UNDP headquarters. Within a country, each country programme is managed by a National Coordinator and a National Steering Committee. A Global Advisory Committee steers the programme, meeting annually for workshops to review, reflect, assess and make proposals for the future. The GAC is comprised of the Global Coordinator, donors, NCs, members of NSCs and representative of regional and global NGOs and cities associations.

Global financial support has come from UNDP and from donors, which have included the governments of Netherlands and Sweden. The bulk of the funds are disbursed in grants for SSPs in the LIFE countries and for regional and inter-regional projects. At the country-level, additional support is mobilized from domestic public and private organizations (including the communities themselves), as well as bilaterally from donors.

At every level, LIFE is assisted by numerous partners that help LIFE work towards its objectives. Partnerships at the country programme level are explored in Chapter 4, while the partnerships of the global programme are described in Chapter 6.

#### ***At the country level: demonstrating and testing LIFE’s three-stage approach in diverse contexts***

In the pilot phase of the programme, LIFE countries were selected to meet the following broad criteria:

- presence of an active NGO/CBO community;
- presence of a democratic government with legal local authorities;
- presence of local authorities with a willingness to collaborate with NGOs and CBOs;
- presence of serious urban environmental issues with existing improvement initiatives;
- contributing to regional balance and prioritization for the programme; and
- contributing diverse socio-economic demographics for the programme.

Twelve countries were selected from the five developing regions of the world: Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Tanzania, Thailand, Pakistan,

## 22 Pro-poor urban governance

Senegal, and South Africa. These countries represent a wide variety in geographical size, demographic and economic characteristics, socio-political situation and the level of maturity of their democratic institutions. In some of the countries, participatory institutional mechanisms were in place, while others were in the process of reforming the operation of local governments to create greater space for popular participation in decision-making. Each country, therefore, has presented a unique case for testing the LIFE approach and methodology, and has provided opportunities for longitudinal, in-depth learning over a period of time.

### ***At regional, inter-regional and global levels: institutionalizing processes for learning and sharing***

LIFE's activities and partnerships with regional, inter-regional and global NGOs and cities associations enables cross-fertilization between tested approaches and new experiences and achieves many goals: it enhances country-level technical and methodological approaches; promotes regional experience sharing; and extends the global-level transfer of successes and methods.

In consultation with the UNDP regional bureaus, over two dozen organizations have been selected to receive grants to document and share successes, innovate and test new methodologies, build regional capacity and initiate regional, inter-regional and global dialogue on cutting-edge urban environmental issues and issues related to participation and partnerships.

Global-level operations, the Global Coordinator, the GAC and the annual GAC workshops provide support and substantive advice to strengthen the demonstration efforts of the LIFE countries, and assist in the processes of evaluation, documentation and experience-sharing and learning among the countries.

Children from a low-income condominium where LIFE works (Kyrgyzstan)



## A brief history

**Table 1: LIFE countries**

Initiation	Asia-Pacific	Africa	Latin America	Arab States	EE/CIS
1992-94	Thailand	Senegal	Brazil	Egypt	
	Pakistan	Tanzania	Jamaica		
1994-95	Bangladesh	South Africa	Colombia	Lebanon	Kyrgyzstan

Since its initiation in 1992, the LIFE programme has had four broad implementation phases. Each phase has encompassed global and country level planning, SSPs, dialogue workshops, capacity development, regional and interregional activities, evaluation and dissemination of results to promote learning and interchange, and GAC workshops. A brief timeline follows:

*Phase I (1992-1994)* During phase I, LIFE was initiated in seven pilot countries: Thailand, Pakistan, Senegal, Tanzania, Brazil, Jamaica and Egypt. These countries focused on the first, upstream stage of the LIFE approach. A selected number of regional and inter-regional projects were supported.

*Phase II (1995-1996)* During this phase, LIFE was initiated in five additional pilot countries: Bangladesh, Colombia, South Africa, Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon. While these new countries focused on the first upstreaming stage, the phase I countries focused on downstreaming to create a critical mass of experience. Again, several regional and inter-regional projects were also supported.

*Phase III (1997-1999)* This phase focused on completing projects begun previously; initiating new projects; documenting and evaluating the projects; and disseminating the lessons learnt. The phase I countries focused more on the third stage of the LIFE approach, i.e. upstreaming the community results through national policy dialogues, dissemination, and institutionalizing and mainstreaming the LIFE methodology. The countries that started LIFE in the second phase focused more on downstreaming.

Two major documentation exercises were undertaken at the global level during this phase: A global publication was produced, covering LIFE's experience from 1992-1997; and an independent global evaluation was conducted (completed in January 2000), covering the period 1992-1999. The evaluation of the first three phases of the LIFE Global Programme highlighted the significant contribution of LIFE in directly reaching the poorest and marginalized populations and addressing their immediate problems; empowering communities and local actors; promoting local-local dialogue and partnerships; and establishing processes and mechanisms for micro-macro linkages. It reinforced the importance of LIFE's upstream-downstream-upstream approach as a way to influence policies that are grounded in reality. The evaluation recommended the continuation of the global programme to further consolidate its experiences and strengthen the practice of and policies for participatory local governance. A bridge period (2000-2001) ensued, with a focus on consolidating LIFE's activities and repositioning the programme.

*Phase IV (2001-2004)* Building on the external evaluation, phase IV focused on promoting community-based initiatives, local-local dialogue and partnerships in the five countries that started LIFE in phase II, and upscaling LIFE experiences in municipal-level initiatives in the

seven phase I countries. Another area of focus was documenting and packaging LIFE's lessons and disseminating them to mainstream methodologies for participatory local governance at the local, national, regional and global levels. Phase IV culminated in a GAC meeting, where a decision was made to undergo a strategic planning exercise to transition LIFE to a new modality with a broader funding base, while retaining its core identity and methodology. 2004-2005 was declared a bridge period for the purposes of strategic planning.

*The status of LIFE country programmes* Since the LIFE country programmes began at different times, they are each in a different stage of progress. In keeping with the upstream-downstream-upstream approach, in each country the first period focused on starting-up; the second period on developing projects; the third period on influencing policy; and the fourth period on mainstreaming LIFE more widely. Two countries, Tanzania and Brazil, have graduated from the programme and the LIFE methodology has been mainstreamed within their respective UNDP country programmes to varying degrees. The other countries continue to maintain distinct LIFE programmes, either hosted by local NGOs, or by UNDP, or as independent entities. Along with the global programme, they have collectively graduated from pilot status. Given the wealth of experience that LIFE has gathered, the 'learning laboratory' that it maintains through the existing country programmes, and its accumulated assets, LIFE is poised to mainstream its lessons and approach globally.



'Garbage for Eggs', a LIFE project, is celebrated on World Environment Day by the Khlong-teoy Environmental Group (Thailand)



Dilapidated sidewalks repaired and paved during a project in El Arish (Egypt)





Women's political-empowerment workshop in Tripoli (Lebanon)

## Chapter Three

### Upstream: launching LIFE at the national level

#### **The overarching goal: to catalyse a national dialogue**

The first stage of the LIFE approach takes place at the upstream or national level. The main objective of this stage is to catalyse a national dialogue. The process of dialogue is initiated at the outset of establishing LIFE in a country. The emphasis on dialogue is a hallmark of LIFE and sets it apart from many other small-grants programmes. The purpose of dialogue in this context is to generate extensive participation and partnerships at all levels of the programme. It seeks to bridge gaps in understanding among potential partners in the governmental, non-governmental and private sectors and to stimulate project designs with a common focus around which effective partnerships can be formed. Indeed, every aspect of LIFE activities supports this overarching goal, which remains a focus of the programme through all its preparatory and operational phases.

#### **Key steps during the upstream stage**

The upstream stage at the country level involves setting strategies, gathering support for the country programme, creating an understanding and a foundation to start the programme, and assessing context and identifying key local and national actors. It begins with an exploratory, initiating mission by the Global Coordinator involving briefings, group meetings, brainstorming sessions with various stakeholders and site visits to low-income urban settlements. Important steps at this stage include establishing a multi-stakeholder NSC; identifying a host organization (such as an NGO or the UNDP country office); identifying a focal point in the UNDP country office; selecting a NC and supporting his or her role; anchoring LIFE in a national priority through national-level and municipal-level workshops; partnering with donor agencies; and mobilizing resources.

#### ***Establishing multi-stakeholder NSCs***

The NC and the multi-stakeholder NSC bear the overall responsibility of managing LIFE at the country level. All decisions relating to programme strategy, implementation and management are taken locally by the NC and the NSC, which includes a representative of UNDP.

*The multi-dimensional role of the NSC* The NSC is a unique feature that furthers LIFE principles. It facilitates the sharing of expertise, encourages partnerships, links projects to policy formulation, introduces broad-based accountability, and influences change. Members of the NSC are strategically selected to influence changes at various levels. The role of the NSC is thus one of great importance (see Box 4). This body not only manages and implements the country programme, but its mandate also includes the formulation of the country action plan; the selection, monitoring and evaluation of SSPs; provision of technical assistance; dissemination of information about the LIFE process; dialogue and policy formulation on institutional issues; and resource mobilization. Moreover, it also performs a crucial function in the downstream-upstream matrix by serving as a link between community-based and local activities and the national policy level.

The role of an NSC varies during the three LIFE stages. In the first upstream stage, the NSC's priorities include setting policies, reviewing the selection criteria for SSPs, advocating for national and local government support, mobilizing resources from funding agencies and potential donors, and networking with organizations with similar objectives. During the downstream stage, the NSC concentrates on project review, approval and monitoring, and on actively pursuing sustainability objectives. In the second upstreaming stage, the focus of the NSC is on creating policy dialogue and policy change, and realizing sustainability for the programme and the approach.



A meeting of the LIFE Senegal NSC

#### **Box 4: The NSC promotes expansion of LIFE in Senegal**

The presence of several government officials on the LIFE NSC, as well as the successful track record of LIFE pilot projects in Senegal has led to an innovative partnership between LIFE, UNDP and the Senegalese government's Poverty Eradication Programme.

In 2000, UNDP Dakar provided new funds to the government of Senegal to enable the LIFE programme to launch projects in three additional cities not covered by LIFE pilot activities. These projects have focused on household garbage collection in Bambey, Diourbel, and Tambacounda, and include other components such as income-generation and poverty eradication. The amount of money involved is actually greater than that provided for the initial LIFE programme. LIFE has been the implementing agency, carrying out the projects on behalf of both UNDP and the government of Senegal.

All NSCs face constraints such as limited time available to members because of other commitments, and limited funds for travel to attend meetings and visit projects. Lessons emerging from the experiences of several NSCs reveal that certain factors can help overcome these constraints and sustain NSC engagement:

- a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities among the NSC members;
- the relevance of programme objectives and methodology to the national context;
- stimulating leadership from the NSC chairman;
- positive evaluation of the results achieved;
- flexibility to respond to local realities (such as a context of conflict as in Colombia); and
- delegation of management activities to an NSC support committee.

With increases in geographic coverage and activities, NSCs alone may not be able to cope with all the functions required of them, and there is sometimes a need to set up support committees. These committees can take several forms. In Jamaica, management activities are delegated to an Executive Committee consisting of nine NSC members appointed by consensus. The Committee meets monthly and screens projects before they are submitted to the full NSC for approval. It also looks at annual work plans and financial issues and deals with management problems that are brought to its attention by the NSC. The Executive Committee thus brings efficiency to the NSC decision-making process, helps to ensure good performance of the programme, and is judged to be a 'best administrative practice' of LIFE in Jamaica. In Colombia, instead of an NSC, multi-sector local selection committees were set up in several provincial cities as the programme evolved and expanded. These local committees have proved to be very responsive and supportive institutional mechanisms. In addition to the selection of SSPs, their members have been involved in

monitoring and technical assistance activities. LIFE Colombia has since established an NSC, given that the programme has been up-scaled.

*Multi-sectoral composition of NSCs* There is considerable variation in the size and composition of the NSCs, though the evaluation found that these factors did not appear to influence their effectiveness. The members of most NSCs are drawn from among the host country's intellectual capital and development practitioners, and all NSCs include women.

Members of NSCs are selected from diverse sectors in order to promote partnerships among different stakeholders. NGOs and CBOs have the highest representation on NSCs, followed by the national government, donor agencies, local authorities and the private sector.

Given the importance of the role of local authorities in promoting local governance, this sector needs to be involved more closely from the beginning in the NSC and supporting committees. In Tanzania, for example, systematic consultations between the NSC and municipal authorities led to an innovative arrangement. Participants in the programme set up a local committee to ensure regular contact between local actors and these authorities. The effectiveness of this mechanism in facilitating dialogue and the fruitfulness of the partnerships encouraged other communities working with LIFE to adopt this arrangement.

While the private (business/corporate) sector has had representation on the NSC in most countries at some stage, it has generally not been an active member of the NSC. Greater efforts are needed to partner with and involve the private sector in the programme. Developing a shared vision and goals between the private sector and other actors is an important first step towards promoting cooperation.

The media can play an important role in widely disseminating information about LIFE to help ensure its sustainability and scaling-up, yet Senegal is the only country that currently has a representative of the media on the NSC. However, Kyrgyzstan has used the meetings of the NSC as a major vehicle for publicizing its activities. The media are invited to, and attend, most NSC meetings. Furthermore, all meetings are followed by a press conference. This strategy has given wide coverage in the mass media to LIFE activities in Kyrgyzstan.

Overall, NSCs are a central mechanism for achieving LIFE's objectives. The NSCs have had varying degrees of success, with more ownership over the steering process in some countries than in others. Some clear lessons emerge, including the need for members to be selected very carefully to facilitate micro-macro linkages, the need for more financial support for the participation of NSC members, and the vital role of the NCs in facilitating an effective NSC.

### ***Selecting and supporting the NCs***

The NC plays a vital role in establishing and sustaining LIFE in a country. Given the nature and multiple demands of the programme, and the small staff that each country programme maintains, the NC must possess a diverse set of skills to manage a wide range of tasks and, if possible, be dedicated to the programme full time. The NC must work with community groups as well as deal with local and national government institutions and donor agencies. With the help of NSC members, the NC organizes technical support to ensure the success of SSPs and disseminates results for policy change. NCs have the autonomy to shape and focus a country programme around the concerns that they consider important, and each NC can make her or his mark on the programme. A change in NC, therefore, can change the focus of a country programme.

Historically, the backgrounds of the NCs have been varied. Some have had a long association with NGOs, some have been involved in social work and community development, and some have been academics or civil servants or have worked on UN projects. The main criteria for their selection include a commitment to community participation, a concern for the environment, experience in working on small-grant projects and entrepreneurial creativity. Hence the background, experience and concerns of the NC shape the programme within the given framework. In consultation with the NSC, they have the freedom to undertake activities under the programme.

Thus far, no special training or orientation has been imparted to NCs. LIFE's experience indicates that orientation in policy matters and training to perform as policy catalysts could make the NCs even more effective. While the NCs' autonomy enables them to innovate and experiment, more guidance on policy orientation, and training to assume the role of a UN quasi-official and to perform multiple functions would further prepare the NCs to undertake this demanding assignment.

Gender balance has been pursued in the selection of NCs. Four of the nine most recent NCs have been women, coordinating the programmes in Bangladesh, Colombia, Jamaica and Lebanon. The NC of Tanzania was also a woman.

*Pros and cons of part-time NCs* In view of the demands involved in coordinating the programme, a part-time NC can be a limitation. However, where full-time commitment is not feasible, NCs should be involved with other assignments that complement and enrich the LIFE programme. In Pakistan, Egypt and Kyrgyzstan, for instance, the NCs also coordinate the Global Environment Facility – Small Grants Programme. The Thailand NC, at one time, had the additional responsibility of being Advisor on Community Development to the Governor of Bangkok, and this proved to be an asset for promoting the objectives of the LIFE programme.

#### ***Selecting an appropriate institutional setting and location***

The LIFE programme performs a dual function. On the one hand, it relates to poor communities, CBOs and NGOs, while on the other it deals with national institutions and international agencies. The institutional setting is important for ensuring that all partners feel comfortable and are easily accessed.

*NGO-vs.-UNDP hosting* Currently, LIFE in Thailand, Senegal and Egypt are independently hosted by NGOs. LIFE Jamaica, once hosted by an NGO, has now formed an independent entity in partnership with another NGO. LIFE in Bangladesh, Colombia, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan are hosted by the UNDP country office. These different institutional arrangements have both pros and cons, and impact how the programmes function and how they are perceived.

In Thailand, LIFE is managed out of an NGO at the grass roots level, located in a slum and hence is easily accessible to the poor. In Jamaica, the NGO with which it was initially affiliated was not involved in LIFE activities directly, but being well respected and highly regarded by both government and civil society, it bestowed credibility on the LIFE programme. LIFE Jamaica's current NGO partner undertakes complementary activities, and the two programmes are realizing many synergies and efficiencies through their partnership. LIFE Egypt has been hosted for many years by an NGO – the Arab Office of Youth and Environment (AOYE) – and this has enabled LIFE to take advantage of AOYE's technical and administrative services. In Kyrgyzstan, LIFE is now hosted by UNDP, but was originally

hosted by an NGO that focused on ecology. At that time, LIFE was able to benefit from the services of a number of volunteers who worked with the NGO and provided assistance in gathering information, translation and organizing logistical support.

Depending upon the country context, locating LIFE within an NGO can afford the NC greater independence and flexibility, and additional support. Community groups, CBOs and NGOs accept LIFE more easily when it is seen as an NGO initiative. This can give the programme an image that is more conducive to working at the grass roots and with poor communities. When housed in an NGO, the programme may not have the daunting and off-putting security of many international organizations and national government establishments. This is particularly useful in encouraging casual visitors.

Being located within UNDP may be equated with the bureaucratic procedures that are not always compatible with the flexibility and spontaneous decision-making necessary for effective handling of SSPs, especially those involving community groups. Furthermore, it may not be conducive to long-run sustainability of the programme at the country level. Nevertheless, the 'UN label' and 'UN ownership' can bestow prestige and credibility on SSPs and community initiatives. In conflict contexts – such as in Colombia or in Lebanon where civil society mirrors social fragmentation – it also provides the neutrality necessary for accessing all parties and operating more safely. Not being within the UNDP office can mean the loss of these advantages. The resulting low institutional profile, loss of marketing advantages and neutrality can make dialogue with national and international agencies difficult and reduce the possibilities of scaling-up and mainstreaming LIFE. Being located within the UNDP office also facilitates face-to-face communications and meetings with other UN staff, visiting experts and nationals who may come to UNDP to discuss other related matters.

In general, most NCs agree that regardless of the institutional location of the programme at the country level, the UNDP umbrella at the global level has been essential for overall credibility, resource mobilization and policy impact.

*Balancing centralized location and decentralized decision making* Another important decision is the geographic location of the LIFE office. Experience indicates that in most cases, a non-central location hinders the achievement of LIFE objectives of policy influence and integration. Being far from the capital city where the UNDP country office, the ministries, national institutions and the donor community are located can contribute to the institutional isolation of the NC from the national policy and technical cooperation mainstream. A centralized location therefore appears significant, and most LIFE offices are now based in the capital city. However, in countries where projects are being implemented in several cities dispersed in different provinces, coordination from a centralized location becomes formidable, particularly given the small staff and low travel budgets that the countries typically maintain. This challenge can be mitigated by decentralizing decision-making to local-level committees as successfully experienced in Colombia and Tanzania, and by making greater budgetary allowances for the travel of major stakeholders such as relevant NSC members and beneficiaries, both to the centre and to the project areas.

### ***Anchoring LIFE in a national priority***

For LIFE to be effective and for its approach to be mainstreamed, it is imperative that LIFE becomes an instrument to promote a national priority or mandate, such as the national poverty strategy. One tool that LIFE has historically used to identify and anchor itself in such priorities is the national workshop or consultation, often used as a first step in activating dialogue about development needs and priorities among a wide variety of stakeholders. Such

workshops help develop a national LIFE strategy, which includes priority problems to be addressed, the criteria for selecting small projects, and geographic coverage. Municipal-level workshops are also held at this early stage to inform the national strategy and to invite proposals for SSPs from local NGOs, CBOs and local authorities.

In each of the LIFE countries, large numbers of people have taken part in national and municipal workshops, ranging from representatives of government organizations, local authorities, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector, UNDP, research and training institutions, and the media (the efforts in Colombia are described in Box 5). The purpose of these consultations has been to determine guidelines, areas of focus and a plan of action for the programme. In some countries, such as Lebanon, press coverage following the national consultations has also been instrumental in spreading the LIFE message.

LIFE's experience in conducting these workshops and catalysing a national dialogue has become particularly important since the new imperative posed by the MDGs. LIFE presents a way to widely publicize the MDGs in each of its countries at the national, sub-national and local level, and to develop and implement consensus-based strategies that are concretely linked to achieving MDGs in the areas pertinent to LIFE, namely poverty eradication (Goal 1) and environmental sustainability (Goal 7), but also more broadly. While LIFE has always worked in these areas, the MDGs need to become an explicit part of the national-level discussions and strategies of LIFE in each country so as to harness LIFE and its assets in the global effort.

Developing the capacity of LIFE's programme partners (Kyrgyzstan)



***Partnering with donor agencies***

Building partnerships with donor agencies at the country level is another important activity in the first, upstreaming stage. The country programmes' experience in building ties with several agencies – bilateral donors, academic institutions, central government and municipal initiatives, and regional and global programmes and NGOs – demonstrates that donors can provide support in a variety of ways. In addition to co-funding, they can provide technical support (for example in capacity development), the use of office space and facilities, and importantly, access to existing networks and social capital to further disseminate the LIFE model and to influence national, regional and global policy (Box 6 describes LIFE Egypt's partnership with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation – GTZ).

**Box 5: Capacity-building workshops in Cartagena (Colombia)**

When LIFE was launched in Colombia, the NC felt that people, especially at the community level, needed to be equipped to participate and take responsibility in the development process. As a result, the LIFE programme started its activities with intensive capacity-development efforts.

Nearly 100 workshops on topics such as environmental management, community organization and participation, project execution and management, environmentally sound household practices, citizens' rights and responsibilities, gender concerns and sensitivity, and teamwork were held for neighbourhood and community leaders from every low-income barrio in the Colombian city of Cartagena.

Approximately 1,500 neighbourhood men and women, as well as representatives of 50 CBOs and 40 NGOs, 82 municipal staff, 118 representatives of national agencies and 10 people from the private sector participated in these meetings between 1995 and 2000. These workshops were carried out under severe resource constraints. They were possible only because of the creativity of the NC in mobilizing support from a network of local organizations and from the members of the NSC on a pro bono basis. Most important for the success of these capacity-building efforts was the fact that they focused on clearly-defined objectives, were well planned, were relevant for the target group and used appropriate training methods and resource persons.

The impact of the workshops has been far-reaching. An early indicator was that in 1997, the outstanding success of these capacity-development efforts inspired the Governor of Bolivar (where Cartagena is located) to invite LIFE to participate in the development of a holistic 'Bolivar Peace Plan'. The NC was invited to develop social and environmental capacity in six municipalities traumatized by violence. In the fourth phase of the programme, another 140 workshops were conducted, and over 5,100 people received training.

**Box 6: In Egypt, a fruitful partnership with GTZ**

In Egypt, LIFE has benefited from a partnership with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), which has provided funding for a number of LIFE's SSPs and activities, enhancing them with technical assistance and capacity development.

GTZ had been operating in Egypt for many years, working to improve infrastructure and living conditions in some poor settlement areas. The partnership started through the German Ministry of International Cooperation (BMZ), which raised the GTZ funding with around 1.5 million Deutch Marks to provide parallel funding for the LIFE programme.

The agreement to channel GTZ funds to LIFE Egypt was taken at the international level and was not instigated by the national office. The primary reason for this funding was that LIFE was seen to be carrying out projects that fitted in with what GTZ was doing in Egypt and that this was a good way to take the process forward.

GTZ agreed to fund LIFE's second round of SSPs, using LIFE criteria, and to set up a small technical assistance programme to monitor and implement the projects in partnership with LIFE. This programme was housed in the same building as the LIFE programme to ensure close collaboration. Moreover, GTZ added an additional technical assistance and capacity development component to its four projects, offering to provide and upgrade general project management skills.

In the end, all five of LIFE's 'area upgrading' projects were funded by GTZ, three of them exclusively. The GTZ-funded projects had a technical support and capacity-building component of US \$26,500 not included in the overall Egyptian LIFE programme budget, and they were monitored by GTZ staff.

The advantages of this partnership have been significant. Much of GTZ's assistance has focused on general awareness and capacity building in the areas of management and monitoring, thus promoting implementation and sustainability and helping to strengthen the NGOs receiving LIFE grants.

GTZ-assisted projects have also shown good results in the area of community empowerment and leadership development. GTZ-assisted projects have tended to act as catalysts for the communities to focus on larger issues and embark on other activities, rather than merely resolving the immediate problems initially identified. The involvement of GTZ also helped to attract more country funds to LIFE and to similar programmes and projects.

### **Mobilizing resources**

*LIFE inputs and counterpart funding* The funding provided by the UNDP global fund to each LIFE country is modest. However, in each country the programme has used these funds to leverage funds from other sources. Table 2 shows the amount of funding that became available from different sources in eight countries during the phase IV period (2001 – 2004) of LIFE. While the allocation from the LIFE global fund to these countries was about US \$1.7 million, over US \$6.8 million were leveraged from local and national governments, NGOs, bilateral donors, international NGOs, UNDP country offices and programmes, and the communities and grantees themselves.

It is illustrative to take a brief look at some of the sources of leveraged funds in Pakistan, which was particularly successful at resource mobilization in phase IV. These sources included the national government, which allocated money for road and bridge construction and public works; city government, which handed over part of its budget for solid waste and sanitation management to a project and also made large contributions in the form of land and civil works at a project's composting site; the private sector, namely Waste Busters, a door-to-door waste collection service that contributed waste collection machinery such as trucks, mechanized sweepers etc.; and international donors and agencies including the Canadian International Development Agency and the World Bank (through the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund). Another source of funding includes the revenues estimated to be generated through the sale of recyclable waste and compost.

*Contributions in kind* A trend in the experience of the programme has been the growing amounts of in-kind resources made available to the country programmes and the SSPs. As these in-kind contributions cannot always be well accounted for, financial reports do not always give a true picture of the total extent of leveraged resources.

The participating communities typically donate their labour, take part in meetings and manage the projects without receiving any compensation for their work. The NGOs and CBOs invest time and effort, and take risks and suffer setbacks to build community organizations and develop the survival strategies upon which many projects rest. Without these in-kind contributions, SSPs could not achieve the level of success that they have.

Other in-kind contributions include the voluntary donation of time and effort by other organizations and individuals; free managerial and technical assistance from the private sector; and free use of vehicles, staff, land and other facilities from national and local authorities.

The resources raised at the country level, both in cash and kind, are a noteworthy achievement. Community and government contributions are in particular a testament to the high regard in which LIFE is held in its programme countries. They also underscore the importance of the small-scale grants which often act as seed funding, and are fundamentally responsible for catalysing resource mobilization. LIFE's experience reveals that SSPs that successfully demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based effort for development can help reprioritize resource allocation, mobilize un-tapped resources – financial and in-kind – of the community and of government, and attract the attention and services of NGOs and the private sector, thus helping to address the debilitating resource constraints faced by poor local communities and the local organizations and governments that are meant to serve them.



Pipes purchased by the community for the sewerage lines in Jaranwala (Pakistan)

36 Pro-poor urban governance

**Table 2: LIFE financial allocation and leveraged resources in phase IV (May 2001-April 2004)**

All figures are approximates and in US \$

Countries	LIFE Global	National and provincial government agencies		Local government (municipal and local authorities)		Local community and CBOs		Private sector	
		Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind
Bangladesh	300,000	90,000	15,000	48,000	6,000	87,000	12,000	39,000	9,000
Colombia	225,000			50,892			333,211		12,702
Egypt	150,000	55,000		5,000	100,000			30,000	
Jamaica	177,150	138,000		187,500		380,000			
Kyrgyzstan	225,000		3,456	7,125	14,258	12,587	24,568	5,623	8,104
Pakistan	150,000		1,756,273	704,943	65,632	7,590	31,352		340,948
Senegal	225,000								
Thailand	225,000	3,000		7,500	5,750	1,875	4,750		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,677,150</b>	<b>286,000</b>	<b>1,774,729</b>	<b>1,010,960</b>	<b>191,640</b>	<b>489,052</b>	<b>405,881</b>	<b>74,623</b>	<b>370,754</b>

Source: LIFE NCs

In Diourbel, a private sector operator completes the garbage collection work carried out by the community (Senegal)



Countries	Domestic NGOs		UNDP CO		Other international donors (multi/bilateral donor agencies)		Other (including partners, academia/ research centres, host agencies etc.)		Total	
	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind	Cash	Kind
Bangladesh	69,000				30,000	9,000	20,000	16,000	383,000	67,000
Colombia		12,701				112,894		46,663	50,892	518,171
Egypt	20,000	40,000			480,000			25,000	590,000	165,000
Jamaica					347,000		86,987		1,139,487	-
Kyrgyzstan	11,208	22,014		6,800	7,000	780		2,036	43,543	82,016
Pakistan	2,626	14,247			194,494		382,424		1,292,077	2,208,452
Senegal			255,000						255,000	-
Thailand	1,125	1,000					1,500	3,125	15,000	14,625
<b>Total</b>	<b>103,959</b>	<b>89,962</b>	<b>255,000</b>	<b>6,800</b>	<b>1,058,494</b>	<b>122,674</b>	<b>490,911</b>	<b>92,824</b>	<b>3,768,999</b>	<b>3,055,264</b>



Young volunteers plant trees in Old Cairo (Egypt)



Upgrading plans being discussed with members of a slum community (Pakistan)

## Chapter Four

### Downstream: ensuring effective, collaborative, small-scale projects

#### **Small-scale projects: a mechanism to reach the poor**

The second, downstream stage, involves working directly at the local level in the communities chosen for project activities. Here, LIFE seeks to strengthen participatory local governance through small, community-based environmental projects that can foster multi-sector partnerships, demonstrate local environmental solutions, and help influence policies and practices. At the downstream stage, these SSPs are a mechanism to reach the urban poor and develop the capacity of low-income communities, NGOs, CBOs and local authorities to design, implement and manage their own solutions to environmental problems. LIFE is aided in this process by numerous partners who provide essential co-financing, technical assistance and other resources.

The SSPs, which test the efficacy of the LIFE approach, are need-based and participatory. The maximum limit for funding provided for a project is US \$50,000. The small size of the LIFE grant is considered a core strength of the programme, as the grants are too small to be attractive to local power groups and instead work as intended, that is, as incentives for local stakeholders to come together to reach greater mutual understanding and implement solutions based on self-help.

#### **Downstream operations**

##### *Holding municipal-level workshops and supporting project submission*

During the downstream stage, the first step is convening municipal-level workshops to scope out local issues, and orient potential grant applicants in procedures and guidelines for project submission. Next, the LIFE NC solicits and reviews proposals for SSPs from local NGOs, CBOs and local authorities.

In some cases the LIFE programme provides technical support to small groups that are not adequately experienced in formulating project proposals, collecting data and preparing documentation. Costing-out projects and ensuring a firm financial basis for the proposals also pose problems for many groups. They need considerable assistance to bring clarity to their proposals. This problem has been especially prevalent in countries such as Kyrgyzstan, where few civil society groups existed when LIFE was initiated. Here, people who had no previous experience of either designing or implementing projects based on community involvement found themselves writing project proposals for the first time. As a result, most proposals were abstract, highly over-managed and bureaucratic in their approach. The groups needed extensive support and assistance from the NC and members of the NSC to bring the proposals in line with selection criteria. In fact, the process of identifying, developing and submitting project proposals actually helped establish and develop a number of Kyrgyz CBOs and NGOs, some of which are now actively participating in local governance issues.

Programme experience from Thailand shows that the format of project proposals must be simplified to enable inexperienced representatives of NGOs and CBOs to prepare them appropriately. The process of helping these actors prepare proposals contributes greatly to capacity development, and so it is important that LIFE is adequately staffed to provide this service.

***Selecting and funding suitable, well-designed, small-scale projects***

*Soliciting and reviewing project proposals* Although each country determines its own selection criteria, the LIFE Global Programme has certain minimum requirements. The projects must be need-based, participatory, address one or more of LIFE's priority environmental problems and promote women's participation. The review and selection of the projects is conducted by the NSCs, and the maximum limit for funding a project is usually US \$50,000.

The number of projects submitted and the number and proportion selected for funding has varied considerably across the countries. Poorer countries often face a larger number of requests for funding, due to widespread deprivation, acute scarcity of resources and the lack of funding sources for supporting community initiatives. Large numbers of proposals may also be received due to a tradition of active NGOs and CBOs; encouragement by the NCs or their networks; or press coverage of NSC meetings and the hosting of public events where information on LIFE has been disseminated and has helped to increase the interest of communities, CBOs and NGOs in participating in projects.

*Guidelines for project selection* Since the country context is a strong determinant of the options available for LIFE projects, there cannot be uniform guidelines on project selection. Large countries have a particularly difficult choice to make between intensive and extensive project implementation, since spreading projects over many cities in different provinces may diminish their local effect, while concentrating them in a smaller area may fail to create a national impact.

While the selection criteria used in different countries have differed slightly from each other in their details, the selected SSPs have commonly included the following elements:

- they are within the mandate of LIFE;
- they can produce tangible results and have a good chance of success;
- they reach the urban poor and promote community participation at all stages;
- they have in-built training and monitoring mechanisms;
- they involve local scientific and technical resources;
- they include the development of potential civil society organizations such as NGOs or CBOs; and
- the organization applying for funds is trustworthy, reliable, well-accepted by the community and is willing to involve various stakeholders in project activities.

While these criteria have served well thus far, experience suggests that a clearer SSP selection strategy is required, one that addresses the potential for encouraging innovation, scaling up, attracting resources and affecting institutionalization. For example, it appears that apprehensions regarding failure to secure favorable results may influence the process of project selection. For LIFE's objectives to be met however, care must be taken to ensure that improvisation, experimentation and innovation are not stifled when applying safeguards. By and large, it may be more fruitful to promote a variety of projects that are applicable in different situations so as to test and demonstrate the strength of community-based solutions to different environmental problems. In other words, projects could be selected strategically so that their overall impact is enhanced as is their total contribution to LIFE as a global learning lab-

oratory. This is all the more important since the funding made available for the programme is modest.

*Themes of LIFE projects* Among the themes that have formed the focus of the SSPs over the years, the largest number have pertained to solid waste management (see Table 3). Raising consciousness regarding the environment and ecological education have formed the focus of some projects, while other popular themes have included water supply, campaigns on environmental protection and tree planting. Improving sanitation and the construction of toilets has also been attempted. Projects that explicitly incorporated income-generation, while few in the past, have been steadily increasing as there is a great need for such projects.

*Project-level strategies that address people's immediate concerns* Developing project-level strategies that address people's immediate concerns, such as income-generation, creates a long-term perspective to sustain motivation and interest. Country experience shows that in some cases, communities have in fact requested an economic component to the project. This has taken the form of setting up savings and credit mechanisms to finance economic activities such as market gardening, producing seedlings, or operating public telephone booths, public toilets or laundries. Some of these activities have needed other inputs such as access to land, drilling a well or acquiring a water pump. Some existing projects have been reoriented during implementation to add an economic component, such as a poultry farm or an orchard, to the original focus.



Garbage carts being constructed by local artisans in Diourbel for community use (Senegal)

### **Box 7: Community-based hospital waste management in Dhaka (Bangladesh)**

Dhaka is a large city with a population of over 10 million. The city is serviced by more than 600 private clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres, which generate more than 200 metric tons of hospital waste every day. Due to the lack of awareness, skills and facilities, there is no system for the disposal of hospital waste, such as saline and blood bags, syringes, used plaster and bandages, and removed body organs.

These wastes are simply disposed with other waste material in the garbage bins of the Dhaka City Corporation, thus contaminating the overall municipal solid waste, and contributing drastically to air pollution, surface and underground water contamination and the spread of diseases. The used syringes, in particular, are routinely collected, sold and recycled, posing a serious threat to civic health with the high possibility of spreading diseases such as HIV/AIDS and jaundice.

The problem has assumed alarming proportions in recent years with the numbers of private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres in the city growing steadily. An immediate intervention was needed to raise awareness, influence policy and help avert disaster. A local NGO, the Initiative for People's Development (IPD), developed and implemented the project Community-based Hospital Waste Management with the support of LIFE UNDP. The aims of the project were to: (i) improve hospital waste in 10 small private clinics in Dhaka City; (ii) develop an alternative participatory system for the safe and environmentally-friendly disposal of hospital waste; (iii) raise the awareness and skills of medical staff on medical waste disposal and improve the internal environment of the participating clinics; (iv) reduce occupational health hazards for the staff of the participating clinics and partly reduce the environmental pollution caused by hospital waste; and (v) reduce the public health risk caused by hospital waste mismanagement.

IPD first conducted a needs assessment and accordingly selected the target areas of Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi due to the huge numbers of medical facilities concentrated there. Next, waste management committees were formed. This was followed by skills development and training for the staff of partner clinics, along with the distribution of suitable, colour-coded containers for waste segregation and the distribution of protective gear such as gloves and masks for decreasing their exposure to occupational hazards. Thereafter, arrangements were made for the wastes to be segregated at source, collected internally and stored safely. A venue was selected for waste management and a vehicle was procured for the safe transportation of the hazardous wastes to the venue, where among other things, wastes could be disposed and needles and syringes could be destroyed. A system was thus set up for the waste to be safely transported, managed and disposed. The implementation of the project was documented and shared with all stakeholders through seminars, workshops, dialogues and the media.

Thus far, the project has had the following impact:

- hazardous hospital wastes from the partner clinics are disposed properly and not dumped in the regular waste system, thus partly reducing environmental pollution and public health risk;
- the circulation in the market of used, disposable syringes in new packets has partly been arrested;

- the people and institutions involved in the process are now aware of their legal and social obligation to safely manage medical waste;
- the internal environment of the partner clinics has improved; and
- an alternative, participatory system has been developed for hospital waste disposal, and can be replicated in other areas.

*Factors that determine the number of projects implemented* The number of projects and geographical coverage has implications for replication and scaling-up. However, many factors determine the number of projects implemented in individual countries including, most importantly, the presence or absence of civil society groups and the credibility and capacity of these groups to undertake community-based work and to administer and account for projects properly. In some countries, LIFE needs to begin by encouraging people to come together to undertake SSPs, while in others there is a strong existing NGO and CBO movement capable of undertaking development work. The level and nature of effort needed to ensure satisfactory implementation of projects in the two cases is vastly different. Other important factors that influence the decision on the number of projects implemented are the total amount of funding available, including the local resources leveraged, and the strategy adopted by the NC and the NSC for developing projects. Some programmes may choose to intensively develop a small number of projects because of higher costs of project implementation, or political and social conditions of unrest or civic mistrust that necessitate focus on a small geographical area.

The experiences of four countries demonstrate this diversity. Brazil adopted a strategy of intensively developing a small number of projects that had a very good demonstration value, although they utilized more funds per project. Colombia initially opted to implement the programme in one city alone and, given the conditions of civic mistrust, gave priority to developing community capacity. Hence at this stage, Colombia could fund only a small number of projects. Senegal could fund only a small number of projects initially because the selected projects required a lot of attention and technical assistance to ensure success. Thailand, on the other hand, was initially able to implement a larger number of projects, because, in addition to the resources from LIFE, substantial resources were leveraged from other sources at the country level as parallel funding.

### **Box 8: Neighborhood cleaning, greening and environmental education in Osh (Kyrgyzstan)**

Osh is Kyrgyzstan's oldest and second-largest city. The districts of Tuleyken and Anar, in the western part of Osh, were agricultural areas before being transformed into urban micro-districts. Due to a lack of municipal funds, the construction of housing in Tuleyken and Anar was never completed and municipal services for maintaining public spaces, providing public street lighting and the removal of solid waste were never fully realized. As a result, community leaders decided to implement a programme to encourage local initiative and take responsibility for these services themselves.

The LIFE project involved planting trees and lawns around the central avenue and secondary schools of the Tuleyken housing area, and installing street lights along the central avenue. To do this, a great deal of solid waste that had accumulated over time had to be removed. Another focus of the project was involving and educating the public and the school children in the area where the improvements were taking place.

Key participants included the Tuleyken and Anar micro-district committee, a local NGO called Tabiat, instructors and pupils from the local kindergarten and elementary schools, and scientists from the Agro-Bio Station of Osh State University. Local women helped with quality control and children's education, the head of the city water and canal department issued licenses to use drinking water for irrigation, and the head of the city administration authorized the project and provided moral support.

To improve the general quality of life in the Tuleyken and Anar micro-districts, a Clean Saturdays and Clean Sundays programme was instituted to launch and maintain general cleanliness in the areas and to teach the local population to appreciate green lawns and tree-lined streets. Land was prepared for planting, garbage was collected and shrubs and hedges were planted to protect new saplings from being trampled. In the absence of a functioning irrigation system, drinking water from the local kindergartens was used to water the new plants. Improved lighting was installed along the central avenue between the kindergartens and the new trees and shrubs. Eighteen unemployed residents were temporarily employed as gardeners, lighting technicians and teachers.

In all, 6,000 square meters of land were prepared for planting using 40,000 kg of organic fertilizers, and 1,520 square meters were planted with various types of greenery. This landscape planting not only improved the quality of life, it also reduced dust in the area and created windbreaks. The new lighting made the streets safer at night. Today, garbage is no longer piled everywhere, and the cleaner streets have increased community pride. There is also an increased awareness among local inhabitants, especially school children, of their environment and the responsibility to maintain it.

The project also broke new ground in terms of networking and linkages among stakeholders. One example is the contracts between the Tuleyken and Anar micro-district committees and the city water and canal department to use city drinking water to irrigate the new plants. Another is the engagement of local women, a segment of society normally overlooked, in the quality control part of the project. Cooperation with the head of the city administration and members of the Osh State University Agro-Bio Station also helped make the project a success. In addition, the new ecological clubs organized in the kindergarten and elementary schools helped young people develop an environmental conscience.

Contacts were also established between project leaders in Osh and those in Bishkek, the capital, to discuss common problems related to successfully completing projects, and ways to secure grant money.

The project taught some important lessons. Among them is the understanding that sustainability can be achieved by involving school children and local inhabitants in general cleaning, planting and the maintenance of plants. After planting, adults and children should be encouraged to be individually responsible for the greenery around their homes and schools. Keeping the local population informed at all stages increases the potential for involving more people as the project unfolds. The more successful a project, the more city officials become interested in obtaining grants for replicating the success and initiating new ventures.



Community members of a district within Isfana city discuss a project that aims to improve public hygiene and sanitation (Kyrgyzstan)

New and modern public toilets constructed by the community (Kyrgyzstan)

**Table 3: Themes\* of the small-scale projects (phase I-III)**

Countries	Solid waste	Water supply	Drainage	Environmental Education	Air pollution	Latrines	Greening/urban agriculture & reforestation	Income generation	Technical capacity and infrastructure	Urban planning and settlements	Miscellaneous **
Egypt	4		1			1	1		2		2
Thailand	23		2	10	1		3	3		3	24
Pakistan	24		9	27				1		1	2
Jamaica	3	4	2			7			6	3	
Tanzania	7	16	4	2		5	4	4	8		7
Senegal	3	1	1	6			2	3			
Brazil	2			9		2	2	4			
Colombia	2	2	3	7							
Kyrgyzstan	7	3	2	1	1	2	5				2
Lebanon	5			7							
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>37</b>

Source: 2000 LIFE Global Evaluation

\*Primary and secondary theme of the SSPs. Many projects also had third and fourth objectives/themes that are not included here.

\*\*Miscellaneous includes project themes such as canal cleaning and improvement; historical site improvement; construction of access roads and footbridges; construction of pavements, and research.



Pre-project, garbage accumulates in the narrow alleyways of Rayer Bazar (Bangladesh)

### Box 9: Water and sanitation in Rayer Bazar Beribandh (Bangladesh)

Some 2500 families live in the slum called Rayer Bazar Beribandh on the outskirts of Dhaka. It is well known for its proximity to a large tannery, and for the polluted, unhealthy living conditions the tannery creates.

A few years ago, conditions in Rayer Bazar Beribandh were even worse than they are today. There was no clean water to drink, so people drank from ponds and ditches, some of which were filled with earth from construction sites. There were no sanitary latrines: children used the ditches and open drains and cleaned themselves in the same ponds and ditches where people washed utensils and clothing and bathed. At night, under the cover of darkness, adults used unhygienic and dangerous 'hanging latrines', rickety contraptions that perch on bamboo stilts 10 to 15 metres above drains or ditches full of stagnant water.

Access to affordable, safe cooking fuel was also a problem. Since kerosene is expensive, people burned twigs and dried leather crusts from the tannery for cooking. The fumes from the burning crusts emitted poisonous gases, causing coughing, lung diseases and burning in the eyes.

In 1998, a local NGO, the Rural Health and Development Society (RHDS), invited the LIFE NC to visit Rayer Bazar Beribandh. She suggested that RHDS submit a project proposal to LIFE.

As a result, five tube wells were installed that now provide clean drinking water to 25 families. Thirty sanitary latrines were built, serving 150 families. Households were also supplied with water purifying tablets, oral dehydration saline and anti-dengue oral doses for use during floods and natural calamities.

In addition, with support from LIFE, RHDS organized motivational and awareness classes for community groups in health care, hygiene, water management, sanitation and treatments for simple ailments and illnesses. Among other things, they convinced local people to stop using leather scraps for fuel.

Dialogues and meetings were also held with the tannery owners, staff, technicians and workers, which convinced them that the tannery was polluting the whole environment – water, air and land. Experts explained the practice known as 3R (recycle, reuse, reduce) for handling chemical wastes. The tannery owners accepted this in principal, until such time as their enterprises could be moved from the residential area.

The ongoing efforts of RHDS have ensured that this community has remained united and organized even in the face of adversities such as floods, fires and evictions, which have forced them to leave their homes three times, and to pick up the pieces with renewed vigour and resilience.

### **Implementing SSPs**

*NGOs and CBOs as implementers* Historically, NGOs and CBOs have implemented more than three-fourths of the SSPs, with local authorities, universities, research institutions, unions and social associations taking on the remaining responsibility. It has not always been easy for CBOs to manage the implementation process by themselves. Hands-on community experience has value, but it may not be sufficient to enable community leaders to manage conflicts and face stressful situations. The implementation of projects involves coordinating activities, negotiating with authorities and organizations, and taking difficult decisions. CBOs need to be capable of dealing with this variety of demands. LIFE's experience indicates that a combination of an NGO and a CBO as project implementers requires relatively less attention and technical assistance, and results in more effective implementation.

*The crucial role of local authorities* Local authorities have a key role to play in bringing about real and lasting improvements in living conditions in poor areas, and many need to be made aware of this role in order to create a firmer basis for sustainable improvements. LIFE addresses this need by closely involving them with the programme and process from the start.

While they are essential, local authorities often lack the capacity to mobilize and empower communities. LIFE's early experience in Thailand showed that projects implemented by local authorities could be somewhat limited in their impact on developing a community's capacity to use collective action to address other problems. Municipal staff tended to regard a project as an end in itself, rather than as an entry-point to achieving larger social objectives as envisaged by LIFE. Local authorities also did not always extend the popular participation approach to other areas of work in their organizations. There is clearly an ongoing need to build the capacity of local authorities to perform the role of facilitators more effectively and more widely.

Often, local authorities can be initially hostile to a project, either due to poorly managed inter-personal relations or to a sense of infringement on their responsibilities. Nevertheless, the success of the projects can sometimes help change their attitude towards community-based projects, and foster close cooperation. Thailand is just one example of where non-cooperation from municipalities and mayors changed into support after the project demonstrated visible improvements in the local environment.



The Slum Improvement and Health project realizes wider alleyways with facilities for garbage collection (Bangladesh)

### Box 10: New partnerships for service delivery in Jaranwala (Pakistan)

“Striving Hard for Effective Intergovernmental Relations and Improved Service Delivery” is the motto of the Tehsil Municipal Administration Jaranwala (TMAJ), District Faisalabad. Due to resource constraints, the TMAJ does not have the capacity or funds to provide all the basic services required by its citizens. Lack of an underground sewerage system has been identified as one of the main problems faced by the people in the town and to change the situation, the TMAJ has moved beyond intergovernmental cooperation and embraced the component-sharing methodology promoted by Anjuman Samaji Behbood (ASB), an NGO with experience in implementing similar projects in low-income areas in the city of Faisalabad. A formal MoU has been signed between the Tehsil Nazim of Jaranwala and LIFE UNDP, and the process of rehabilitating the environment was initiated in November 2002.

The project represents a true public-private partnership, where municipal resources are mobilized for the external (primary and secondary) sanitation system and communities are mobilized to invest their own resources in order to develop the internal sanitation system (i.e. at and below the lane level). Technical assistance is being undertaken by the ASB, which provides appropriate technologies and training to all stakeholders to ensure successful project results and effective operations and maintenance. In cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund of Pakistan, Geographical Information Systems is being used for mapping the city. Documentation of existing infrastructure, table planning and level survey mapping of the whole city is being conducted and paid for by the TMAJ.

The development of sewerage facilities for 14,211 houses will generate new revenue for the TMAJ. After the commissioning of sewer lines for all the houses, the TMAJ will receive Rs. 852,660 (approximately US \$14,290) per month as revenue. The connection charges at the prevailing rate will be another financial benefit for the TMAJ. It will be responsible for operating and maintaining all these sewer systems for the described monthly charges. The estimated income will be received once all houses get regular sewer connections and TMAJ takes on the full responsibility of providing operations and maintenance of the lane and trunk sewer lines.



GIS mapping of the city is undertaken during the Jaranwala Sanitation project (Pakistan)

The *Tehsil Nazim* (mayor) inaugurates the construction of the first sanitation line in Jaranwala



*Strategic timing of project launch* Local electoral processes can affect SSPs in both positive and negative ways. In Brazil and Thailand, for example, some SSPs faced problems after elections at the local or state level because new mayors or other elected members did not always abide by the decisions of their predecessors to support LIFE projects. Care should thus be taken to ensure that the duration of certain types of projects is not punctuated by elections, especially at the municipal level. On the other hand, in Tanzania, the successful implementation of SSPs impressed mayors so much that they wished to implement LIFE projects before elections in order to show these as concrete achievements. It appears that successful demonstration of improvements in the local environment through community efforts and, in the case of Tanzania, people's willingness to pay for services, engender wider support for SSPs on the part of local authorities. The suggestion that arises is to plan the launch of SSPs with the local level electoral cycle and election dates in mind.

### ***Monitoring SSPs***

While no formal performance criteria have been developed to guide project monitoring, LIFE has learnt from experience that monitoring is most effective when it is used to provide help and encouragement. This is a departure from conventional monitoring which is often characterized by an almost adversarial relationship between the donor and the recipient.

In most countries the NC and LIFE staff monitor the progress of the SSPs, while in a few cases NSC members also visit the projects. The 2000 global evaluation identified a range of experiences. In countries such as Lebanon where applicants were groups of interested and dedicated individuals, the NC's monitoring visits provided on-site capacity development and institutional development of CBOs. In the case of Colombia and Jamaica, regular and frequent visits to projects seemed to improve their performance. In Brazil and Thailand, on the other hand, infrequent visits did not seriously affect the performance of the projects, as the capacity of the implementing agencies was quite good. In several countries frequent visits were not possible as the projects were spread in several cities and LIFE staff members were too few. In such a situation it may help to decentralize monitoring by delegating this function to local committees or NGOs. Another solution is provided by LIFE Kyrgyzstan, which has recently included regional representatives on its NSC. The monitoring of projects outside of Bishkek by these regional representatives has been found to be quite effective.

### ***Sustaining SSPs***

It appears that projects that are designed to deliver multiple benefits (both environmental and economic), that integrate community participation and capacity development, and that are connected to local authorities, have the best chances for sustainability. As LIFE has matured, there have been increasing examples of projects that have become self-sustaining, either because of community demand or by providing income-generation activities. Mussel farming and waste recycling in Brazil and fee-based public toilets in Kyrgyzstan are some examples of the latter. In the case of service-delivery projects, levying user charges may cover running costs, although it is yet to be determined whether people will continue to pay in the long run. Experiences in Pakistan are encouraging, and show that communities are maintaining the service delivery systems developed through the projects. Once in place, households are keen to retain these systems, even where operational charges have increased. Kyrgyzstan too has some recent examples, such as the water pipes in Suluctu and Kyzylkija, where the communities have developed financial schemes to cover running costs (see Box 3).

It is important to note, however, that the sustainability of projects, such as those for solid waste management, is often dependent upon circumstances beyond the control of communities. Linkages to national policies and the national agenda are essential. In Lebanon, for

instance, external issues that have affected the sustainability of solid waste management projects have included the lack of a national plan for solid waste management until recently, and the lack of power and authority among the newly formed municipalities, which often cannot afford to finance the transportation of recyclables to factories. While projects have been successful in getting across their message of reduce-reuse-recycle to households, the recycling relies on national commercial plants and enterprises. Given the policy context, economic situation, and the relatively small size of Lebanon, the quantity of recyclable waste has been insufficient for commercial recycling. Consequently, in the project settlements, funds were being spent on acquiring and maintaining storage areas in the expectation that someone would eventually purchase the recyclable materials. Unless situations like these are resolved, households will lose their enthusiasm and will eventually stop sorting their waste. In Lebanon, it now appears that the private sector is gradually becoming more aware of the importance of recycling, and many recycling plants are re-opening after they were closed years ago. Furthermore, the recent development of an integrated solid waste management policy for the country is likely to improve the situation.

In other countries, the problem of not having recycling plants within a reasonable distance from waste collection areas can destroy the economic viability of recycling waste. Such situations illustrate the close linkage between community-level strategies and the larger question of environmental protection. They draw attention to the need to devise short-term strategies in relation to longer-term plans. In addition, these problems highlight the need to avoid supply-driven solutions, as well as the need to design SSPs carefully. Project managers need to be aware of these issues and the broader context in order to design sustainable solutions.

#### ***The crucial role of LIFE's partners***

Success and effectiveness at the downstream stage depend upon the partnerships that coalesce around the SSPs and other activities. Throughout, LIFE has been aided by innumerable partners who contribute to achieving both downstream and upstream impact in many ways, such as by providing co-financing and in-kind resources, providing technical assistance, undertaking or sharing project monitoring, undertaking project implementation, up-scaling and upstreaming projects and experiences, and participating on LIFE NSCs. These partners include local, provincial, and national governments and agencies, international and bilateral donor and development agencies (including UNDP's country offices), academic institutions and think-tanks, regional associations and private sector firms. Through their combined efforts, each partner is able to leverage its comparative advantages to achieve development results. Table 4 illustrates some recent national, regional and global-level partners of the LIFE country programmes (partnerships of the global LIFE programme are explored in detail in Chapter 6).

**Table 4: Some partnerships of the LIFE country programmes (phase IV)**

Countries	Partners
Bangladesh	<b>Global:</b> World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Cities Programme <b>National:</b> Mission for Rural Urban Development (MIRUD)
Colombia	<b>Global:</b> United States Agency for International Development (USAID) <b>Departmental and Regional:</b> Regional UNDP offices, departmental governments, environmental regional corporations <b>National:</b> Environmental Ministry, national planning department, the national training service (SENA), Ecopetrol, Minercol <b>Other:</b> Cartagena University, Colegio Mayor de Bolivar, La Paz University
Egypt	<b>Global:</b> Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Social Fund for Development (SFD), European Commission (EC), USAID, Ford Foundation, Global Environment Facility - Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) <b>National:</b> Arab Office for Youth and Environment (AOYE), Forum of Dialogue and Partnership for Development (FDPD) <b>Regional:</b> Arab NGO Network for Environment and Development (RAED), Kuwait Environment Association <b>Other:</b> Helwan University
Jamaica	<b>Global:</b> USAID/Coastal Water Improvement Project (CWIP), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Enhancing Civil Society Project <b>National and Regional:</b> Relocation 2000, Social Development Commission, People's Action for Community Transformation (PACT), National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), Inter-American Foundation, Government of Jamaica
Kyrgyzstan	<b>Global:</b> Urban Institute
Lebanon	<b>Global:</b> FES, YMCA, GEF, WHO, French Ministry, CIDA, Research Cooperation International, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, World Bank <b>National and Regional:</b> American University of Beirut, Center for Research and Training for Development (CRTD), Gender Linking Information Project (GLIP), Ministry of Environment, Lebanese Development Association, Lebanese Association for Democratic Election
Pakistan	<b>Global:</b> The Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI), CIDA, World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme <b>National:</b> Capital Development Authority, National Integrated Urban Development Programme <b>Other:</b> Waste Busters
Senegal	<b>Global:</b> Public/Private Partnership Programme for Urban Environment (PPPUE) <b>Regional:</b> Regional Center for Drinking Water and Sanitation (CREPA), African Institute of Urban Management (IAGU)
Thailand	<b>Global:</b> USA-Asia Environmental Partnership <b>National:</b> Thailand Environment Institute, Municipal League of Thailand <b>Regional:</b> Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)

### The downstream impact of LIFE

SSPs are the backbone of LIFE's contribution to environmental alleviation and participatory local governance. Enabled by small-scale grants or seed funding, these projects have resulted in material, environmental, social and economic improvements for the urban poor. They have empowered and built the capacity of poor local communities, civil society organizations and local authorities; they have targeted gender equity and advanced the empowerment of women; and they have catalysed partnerships and dialogue. In sum, the process of implementing SSPs has resulted in social, economic, environmental and organizational benefits that set in motion a process of continuous change and sustainable development.

These downstream results are particularly relevant within the context of the MDGs. As illustrated in the following sections, LIFE has always worked on critical problems that now fall directly within the MDG target areas of poverty (Goal 1) and environmental sustainability (Goal 7, specifically Target 10 on sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and Target 11 on improving the lives of slum dwellers). LIFE also contributes indirectly to other goals such as Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment and Goal 4 on child mortality.

### *Benefiting the poorest*

The urban poor are the main target group for LIFE. In all countries (except Lebanon), LIFE projects have by and large benefited the poor and the marginalized, in some cases affecting those who have never before been reached by any other programme or agency. In Lebanon, the focus has been broader due to the demographics and the situation of post-conflict reconstruction. Certain projects in other countries, such as Bangladesh's hospital waste management project (see Box 7) or Egypt's environmental hot-line service project have a broader impact. But although the benefits of such projects accrue to the general urban population, they have spill-over impacts that greatly benefit the poor, due, for example, to their location near urban waste-dumping sites, or their particular vulnerability to air and water pollution.

The following table, from the 2000 evaluation, which gives a conservative indication of the number of beneficiaries of LIFE's SSPs in nine countries during just the first three phases of LIFE (1992-1999), estimates that SSPs directly benefited more than 1.3 million people. The number of indirect beneficiaries is far greater. Although aggregate data of this nature has not been gathered since the evaluation, it is evident that the total number of beneficiaries is much greater, given the number of LIFE activities and SSPs undertaken since 1999.



Waste amassed on Boquilla beach pre-project (Colombia)

Boquilla beach is cleaned up during the project



**Table 5: Number of people who benefited from LIFE SSPs (phase I-III)**

Countries	Direct Beneficiaries	Indirect Beneficiaries
Brazil	7,364	Not available
Thailand	663,573	1,420,000
Jamaica	8,378	Not available
Colombia	34,000	24,000
Pakistan	207,656	Not available
Egypt	227,936	316,000
Kyrgyzstan	32,090	171,000
Lebanon	3,300	Not available
Senegal	6,580	24,200
Tanzania	166,809	3,366,479
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,357,686</b>	<b>5,321,679</b>

Source: 2000 LIFE Global Evaluation and LIFE NCs

An important lesson learnt through the LIFE process is that poor communities must be placed at the centre of efforts to achieve sustainable environmental improvements on their behalf. These communities are closest to the problems of urban deprivation and degradation. Time and again, they have demonstrated that not only are they beneficiaries of external assistance from donors or governments, but also, their proximity to the problems and their understanding of the local context and needs make them creative resources, active participants, discerning investors and willing initiators in the process of change. LIFE's experience has demonstrated that it is well worth supporting the efforts of these communities to help solve the problems that beset them.

#### ***Empowering civil society organisations and communities***

Experience in all LIFE countries shows that the most important impact and contribution of the process of implementing SSPs is on empowerment and leadership development among communities and the formation and strengthening of CBOs. In fact, these are some of the most valuable investments of the LIFE programme.

In each country, LIFE has helped create new CBOs and strengthened existing CBOs. While participating in LIFE, community groups have had to assume new roles in order to mobilize community members, manage the self-help process, monitor costs and prepare reports. Community leaders have thus learnt new skills such as engaging in dialogue with municipal officials, sponsors and private sector representatives. Some of them have participated on LIFE committees.

In countries such as Kyrgyzstan, where not many civil society organizations existed, communities came together to meet a real need. Their successful collaboration has helped provide a sense of social cohesion and empowerment, and there has been talk of extending this process to other aspects of their lives. In a country that did not have a tradition of community action and self-help when LIFE was launched, the process of establishing CBOs and the development and implementation of SSPs has had an empowering effect on communities. Some projects provided perhaps the first opportunity for people to gather and tackle problems that were previously considered the exclusive responsibility of state structures.

On the other hand, in Thailand, which has had a vigorous NGO movement, support from LIFE has extended and strengthened existing NGOs, CBOs and their networks. In Pakistan, tried and tested technologies and strategies developed by an NGO for providing sanitation and solid waste management were used by LIFE projects. This provided valuable experience and heightened the NGO's reputation for future activities.

Community groups in all the countries have appreciated the opportunity offered by LIFE to CBOs and NGOs to acquire technical, organizational and managerial skills and to enter into dialogue with a variety of actors. In most countries, even newly established community groups have gained experience and become capable of carrying on development work.

In Jamaica, LIFE is considered to be the first programme ever to reach the most marginalized communities, and SSPs have had significant empowerment impact. In several communities where SSPs were implemented, community development work has continued even after the projects ended. The communities are pursuing new, and sometimes more difficult development objectives such as securing land tenure, settlement upgrading, and improved services of water supply and sanitation. Conflict resolution through dialogue is also an important outcome in Jamaica. It has helped reduce the incidence of violence among youth.

In the absence of a satisfactory arrangement for waste disposal in Egyptian cities, people were willing to participate in solid waste management projects. Their interest and motivation were further strengthened and sustained by awareness-raising and environmental education programmes conducted by NGOs and CBOs. When LIFE started in Egypt there was effectively no involvement of civil society in local development issues. Yet today, thanks to the activities of LIFE and its partners, there is considerably more support for developing the capacity of communities where small projects are being funded.



The project in Yeumbeul provides new sinkholes for waste water disposal (Senegal)

### Box 11: Waste water management in Yeumbeul (Senegal)

Near Dakar, in a sprawling peri-urban hinterland called Yeumbeul (pop. 120,000), stagnant pools of discarded household waste water provide choice breeding-grounds for mosquitoes. Malaria sufferers, most of them children, account for more than 80 percent of all medical consultations. Yet today, the neighborhood of Houdalaye is the cleanest in all Yeumbeul. The lanes are dry and there are fewer mosquitoes. Forty percent of the families in Houdalaye now have drainage tanks underneath their homes for waste water disposal. Those without tanks who continue to throw water out of their houses have learnt to sweep it away with a broom to keep the ground dry. To illustrate the change in attitudes, an official in the Mayor's office describes a scene in which a young child scolded a woman for leaving water on the road. "If old Alpha Ndiaye saw you do that, you'd have some explaining to do. He says leaving dirty water in the street is forbidden. If you don't have a tank, you must sweep it away."

Alpha Ndiaye is President of a local CBO, the National Association for the Well-being of the Population (ANBEP), which joined forces in 1996 with a youth group, the local Health Department and the Mayor's office to carry out a project supported by the LIFE programme. Since then, 61 drainage tanks have been dug in Houdalaye for the disposal of household waste water. Only the poorest families were eligible to receive the tanks, and 15 percent of those chosen were female-headed households. The families were required to contribute either financially or in kind to the cost of building the tanks. In the end, the number of tanks dug was more than the 50 originally planned.

But the most important outcome of this project is that the very experience of working in partnership with other civil society organizations and local government has strengthened the capacities of ANBEP to become a potent force for local governance and problem solving. By mobilizing and educating large numbers of local people in the fundamentals of public health and hygiene, ANBEP has helped the community move away from a passive dependence on political patronage, which did little to solve their problems, to self-reliance and a better quality of life.

A quarter of the project budget was spent on training. Working through its 18 neighbourhood sub-groups, each with between 50 and 80 members, ANBEP organized 36 community meetings where Health Department officials provided instruction in household waste management, health and sanitation, water and nutrition to some 8,000 people. Three hundred unemployed young people were trained as informal public health workers, 102 of them women. “You have to talk to people to help them understand,” says Mr. Ndiaye, “You have to raise their awareness that all the houses and the streets must be kept clean. You explain how to maintain the waste water tanks, how to keep children and adults healthy. As a result of these discussions, people’s behavior has changed. When you walk around Yeumbeul today you see a big difference between the neighbourhoods where we have worked and other areas.”

Local ANBEP groups recruited masons and unskilled workers from among the unemployed to build the drainage tanks, while the Health Department provided technical assistance. The youth group used its local networks to organize a health committee that conducted six two-day workshops in waste management that were open to the general public. Most attendees only had a primary education, but they in turn held meetings to share their new knowledge with others. The ANBEP sub-groups also put in place local health monitoring committees responsible for maintaining sanitation in the neighbourhoods. Their members were elected democratically and represent all ages and both sexes. Since 10 percent of these were from outside of Yeumbeul, their influence on health and hygiene is likely to spread even farther afield.

LIFE’s priority of promoting dialogue among stakeholders at all levels brought about fruitful new partnerships. In the past, relations between ANBEP and the local municipal authorities were strained, but thanks to the intervention of the youth NGO, ANBEP is now on a friendly, collaborative footing with the neighbourhood Mayors’ offices and with the Health Department. The newfound partnership between ANBEP and the Health Department has spawned a programme to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. A 25-member health committee has been set up to monitor the use of the drainage tanks, thus helping the Health Department to maintain a clean environment. Disputes among neighbours over throwing dirty water into the streets, which used to be referred to the Health Department, have now been resolved.

According to a Health Department official, “The houses and their surrounding areas in Houdalaye have become very clean. Maybe it’s because these people are constantly expecting visitors from other areas who come to learn from their experience.”



Carts are constructed to collect and carry away garbage from the area (Senegal)

**Environmental impact**

*Improving living conditions* The SSPs have provided the financial incentive and basis for local groups to engage in development work aimed at addressing the urban environmental needs of low-income, underserved and un-served areas. Most projects have addressed a number of immediate environmental needs and contributed to improving conditions in poor settlements. Typically, the projects have resulted in improvements in health, significant investment in urban infrastructure for the poor, and material improvements including a cleaner environment, the construction of latrines, the provision of drainage, improved access to potable water, garbage removal and disposal, the cleaning of canals, the improvement of roads and the planting of trees. The boxes throughout this publication illustrate such efforts and related impacts, and many other examples are available.

In Bangladesh, for instance, 13 projects carried out during the last five years have resulted in marked improvements in the health of poor communities including their children; widespread hardware installation such as toilets, drainage systems, waste disposal systems and clean water sources in slum areas; and improved environmental education and health awareness among all the target groups. Egypt's Helwan University solid waste management project has resulted in a system of sustainable waste disposal for a campus of 100,000 students. A recent project in Jamaica resulted in the approval of a light bridge that will for the first time provide the community with an alternative to fording the river for outside access. The projects completed in Kyrgyzstan during 2004-2005 provided 70 families with clean water, and 500 people with improved sanitation and hygiene conditions.



A mushroom cultivation project provides employment for the disabled inhabitants of a low-income condominium (Kyrgyzstan)

*Encouraging community-based innovation and initiative* Another impact of the SSPs is that they encourage community-led innovations and local initiative in solving environmental problems. Kyrgyzstan offers a number of recent examples of community initiative (including the potable water project in Suluctu, see Box 3), as well as innovative income generators for the low-income handicapped, for instance through cultivation of mushrooms in a condominium for the deaf and the blind. LIFE Pakistan has allowed the testing of public-private partnership innovations, such as the 'component sharing model' in sewage systems, where communities are mobilized to pay for the cost of internal development (i.e. work at the home and lane level) and local governments are mobilized to pay for external development (work above the lane level, including final treatment and disposal, see Box 10).

**Social impact**

In addition to meeting immediate needs for a cleaner environment, SSPs have also had significant social impact. By reaching poor and marginalized communities, building their capacity for collective action and partnerships, and enhancing the credibility of community initiatives, the SSPs have lessened social exclusion of poor communities. They have also contributed to the self-confidence and self-esteem of these communities to address larger development issues, and demonstrated to them the value of greater involvement in local developmental activities, such as by paying fair fees for service delivery.

*Lessening social exclusion* In Pakistan and Thailand, LIFE has been able to build upon the foundations laid by some NGOs and CBOs that had already developed innovative strategies to deal with environmental deprivation. Projects supported in Pakistan showed that less experienced, small groups could successfully use the solid waste management and sanitation technologies and processes developed by an NGO. Similarly, in Thailand, the ongoing efforts of several NGOs and CBOs to improve the local environment were further consolidated by LIFE. In the case of canal settlements, assistance from LIFE for supporting meas-

ures aimed at stopping water pollution not only improved the environment but also contributed to removing the stigma on the residents of being polluters. They are now, in fact, beginning to be seen as protectors of the canals, which is a significant change in the general perception. In Brazil and Jamaica also, social exclusion of poor communities lessened as a result of such activities.

*Motivating the poor to pay for services* In Pakistan, the obvious inability or failure of local authorities to install and maintain working systems of solid waste management and sanitation was used to convince communities of the need for self-help and for paying for capital costs. In Tanzania, where people expected to be provided with services free of charge, changing the mindset and making it acceptable to pay for basic services was a major achievement. In both cases the LIFE experience encouraged many NGOs to undertake developmental activities by making funds available for such work.

### ***Economic impact***

The economic impact on the poor has been realized through two channels: direct impact on incomes through income generation activities, and no less important, indirect impact on incomes through the increased productivity as a result of environmental improvements.

*Direct economic benefits of income generation activities* Direct improvements in income have not historically been an objective of LIFE, and very few projects were initially related to income generation in an explicit manner. However, there has been a growing recognition that long-term sustainable outcomes, both project-specific and community-wide, require attention to income generation and wealth creation. The evaluation found, for example, that all actors in Senegal felt that income-generation was a prerequisite for the sustainability of any project. Such views have been endorsed elsewhere in LIFE, for example in recent feedback from Tanzania. Income generation has thus been and should remain an area of growing involvement.

The investment in generating wealth for community residents has been a long-term focus for LIFE Jamaica. Several of its SSPs, such as the Rae Town Fishing Cooperative and the Jeffrey Town Farmers Cooperative, have incorporated livelihood-enhancing activities that tap the communities' environmental opportunities. LIFE Colombia is also participating in many activities, particularly at the municipal and sub-regional levels, to harness environmentally sustainable practices for income generation. LIFE Kyrgyzstan has experimented in interesting ways of providing community groups with income-generating activities (shops, laundry services and urban farming) in order to enhance their capital base so that they might undertake and sustain improvements in their surroundings. In some countries, waste was recycled and income earned from its sale. Some projects reused waste and sold the products made. In Thailand, a few projects used these funds for setting up shops to sell rice at prices below market, so that the community could save money on this staple food. Projects in Brazil and Senegal that have involved income generation have been successful in improving incomes to a significant extent. According to the evaluation, in Brazil, tangible evidence indicated an improvement in the socio-economic status of families. Family income was reported to have increased on account of participation in productive activities (such as waste collection, recycling and mussel farming), and the organization of a community credit and microcredit fund (see Box 12). Although waste collection and recycling have been widely practiced, and are even thriving economic activities in most of the countries, LIFE has added management and organization to increase profit margins.

*Indirect economic benefits of improved living conditions* A large number of projects implemented under LIFE report improvements in the living conditions of the poor. Environmental improvement of degraded areas has economic benefits such as greater productivity of the people due to improved health and reduced expenditure on health care. For people living in poverty, even small improvements cannot be ignored. Experience generally indicates that factors such as community-level support structures, participation in savings and credit groups, and improved health as a result of better living conditions play an important role in alleviating poverty. In some cases, projects that secured a formal water supply reduced the higher costs of accessing water informally. In others, the use of banking facilities and savings and credit groups, established as a result of the projects, helped families to manage their money better. Reduction in the cost of project implementation achieved through the use of voluntary labour increased the capacity of LIFE to undertake more projects.

Residents of Jeffrey Town organize a 'Breadfruit Festival' to generate income (Jamaica)



### **Box 12: Income-generation through resource management in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)**

Fishing has long been a tradition in the coastal town of Niteroi near Rio de Janeiro, as has the extraction of mussels from rocks and corals near the shore for sale in local bars and restaurants. But over time, open-air mussel processing and poor waste management had begun to threaten the health of consumers and workers, and non-renewable extraction techniques were putting the mussel population at risk. Also, shellfish catchers suffered prejudicial treatment by the community.

In 1991, at the suggestion of the Fisheries Institute Foundation of Rio de Janeiro (FIPERJ), 23 families of shellfish catchers formed the Jurujuba Sea Farmers Free Association (JSFFA) to professionalize their business and improve their image in the community. With technical assistance from FIPERJ, JSFFA designed a mussel-breeding project to begin rebuilding the mussel population.

When LIFE got involved in 1994, its project objectives were first, to protect the shellfish biological reserves of Guanabara Bay while increasing production and quality by replacing mass extraction with a planned breeding and replacement programme; and second, to increase the shellfish extractors' incomes through improved extraction, processing and commercialization techniques, and to strengthen leadership and management capacity through project coordination and direct resource administration practices.

In addition to LIFE, project participants formed a broadly multi-sectoral group. FIPERJ provided technical support for shellfish breeding and leveraged financial support for materials and equipment – trotlines, droplines and a trawler to support activities. It also leveraged state financial support and the involvement of the Secretariats of Control and Planning, and Labour and Social Action, as well as the Niteroi Municipal Environment Secretariat. The Niteroi municipal government was involved too, as was the Institute of Urban Technology, a local NGO. Throughout the project, LIFE played a strategic role as an international presence working with the municipal authorities to leverage state support.

Technical assistance was provided through partnership agreements with the Departments of Oceanography and Hydrography at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, the Food Technology Department at Fluminense Federal University, the Brazilian Architects Institute, and Niteroi's Institute of Urban Studies.

The proposed activities for the LIFE project included an expansion of the mussel breeding programmes, the building of a community-based mussel processing centre, training in new work processes, and the purchase of new equipment, although some of these activities were delayed due to budgetary constraints and political changes.

Planning processes involved the various partners in meetings to review and propose solutions and approaches. Proposals were prepared at formal JSFFA Board of Directors meetings for presentation at the plenary meetings of all members, where they were modified and agreement was reached on how to proceed. Board memberships were open to women, one of whom was the most influential member on the Board.

The environmental impact of the project was considerable. There was an increase in the

natural mussel population, which filters water pollution. Gas replaced firewood in mussel processing, reducing air pollution. Sanitation improved through indoor processing with blast washing, stainless steel equipment, vacuum sealing, and proper waste treatment and disposal, and community environmental awareness increased.

On the social side, social acceptance of shellfish catchers in the local community increased, and partnerships with JSFFA were consolidated and expanded. The community rallied around the newly professionalized association. Its website, where customers could order mussels online, proudly announced the “cultivation, processing and marketing of the best and most delicious mussels on the Brazilian coast.”

On the economic front, improved quality and increased production generated higher revenues and incomes. The average sale price of mussels doubled, and the quantity of mussels sold doubled as well, with mussel workers earning as much as three times the minimum wage per month, and membership in JSFFA increasing from 180 when the association was founded, to 800 persons with sustainable livelihoods.

In addition to membership, the number of association members working in all aspects of the enterprise – breeding, extraction, processing and marketing – also increased. Strong working relationships were established with government entities, private sector and NGOs involved in project partnership.

Replication has occurred in two other shell-fishing communities, one involving UNESCO and the Inter-American Bank and including the training and qualification of young people entering the profession. One important lesson learnt through this project is that communities respond to activities that improve their overall technical capacity, economy, environmental awareness, social organization and sense of civic responsibility.

### *Developing capacity*

Capacity development is fundamental to fulfilling the objectives of LIFE, and is one of the most important factors contributing to the outcomes of the programme. The nature of capacity-development efforts undertaken in each country has been determined by several factors. These have included the presence or absence of community groups actively involved with environmental issues, the level of experience of NGOs, CBOs and local authorities undertaking the projects and the presence or absence of mature NGOs that can impart training and guidance.

For the most part, capacity-development efforts have been directed toward achieving successful results for the SSPs. They have been directed towards all actors and conducted through several modalities including active learning through project formulation and implementation, formal training and experience sharing or peer-to-peer learning. These efforts have contributed to capacity in various domains: technical skills in environmental problem-solving; training and awareness related to environmental health and good practices; capacity for project formulation, proposal writing, and project implementation; capacity for project management including grant management, accounting and financial reporting; and capacity to effectively engage partnerships and participatory approaches.

At the NGO/CBO level, the focus of capacity development has mainly been on project proposal formulation, submission and management. At the community level, efforts are focused on education, awareness and skills relevant to project implementation, and on equipping people to participate in SSPs and receive maximum benefits. In most countries, either due to a lack of resources or training facilities, the NC and NSC have played an active role in developing capacity. They have often been the main trainers as well as facilitators and have had to be creative in taking advantage of various opportunities such as site visits, to impart training.

It is estimated that during the first three LIFE phases, roughly 7,200 people received SSP-related training (see Table 6). Since training and technical assistance have been largely integrated within the project cycles and have happened largely in informal settings, more current information on the overall number of people trained is not available, although in every country, large-scale capacity-development efforts continue, and diverse groups have continued to benefit from the opportunity LIFE has given them to learn new skills. LIFE Colombia for example, which maintains detailed records on all its training activities, reports that 2,167 workshops were conducted between 1995 and April 2005 at the local sub-national and national levels, with a total of 9,727 people participating.



Supporting small-scale initiatives through the 2005 Lebanon Development Marketplace, co-sponsored by LIFE, the UNDP country office and the World Bank

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**Table 6: Number of people formally trained to implement projects (phase I-III)**

Countries	Number Trained*
Colombia	3,653
Egypt	514
Jamaica	353
Kyrgyzstan	194
Lebanon	240
Pakistan	165
Senegal	646
Tanzania	505
Thailand	980
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,250</b>

Source: 2000 LIFE Global Evaluation and LIFE NCs

*\*This table includes only formally imparted, skill-based training such as proposal writing and submission; project management skills; skills for recycling, marketing, accounting, community organization and mobilization, leadership, dialogue, environmental assessment, action planning, etc. It includes participants from communities, CBOs, NGOs, municipalities, national governments and the private sector.*

Volunteers upgrade side-walks during a 'Clean-up-the-World' campaign (Egypt)



### **Box 13: Potable water through community initiative in Cartagena (Colombia)**

The neighbourhood of Paraiso II in Cartagena was established over 25 years ago, and in all this time its 400 households lacked direct access to drinking water. Since several attempts to have municipal water piped in had failed, local people were forced to buy water at an exorbitant price from private water vendors who carried it in gunnysacks on the backs of donkeys.

In 1996, LIFE organized a community-based training workshop on environmental solutions and community involvement. As a result of what was learnt at this workshop, the community developed a project for building an aqueduct for potable water and approached the LIFE programme for support. LIFE provided a grant of US \$30,000 to connect 200 houses to the new potable water supply.

A small committee called Junta de Accion Paraiso II was set up by the community to implement and manage the project. Almost all of the members were women and young people. The committee worked in close cooperation with the local private water supply facility, ACUACAR, through its representative on the LIFE local steering committee. ACUACAR provided technical advice and 1,200 metres of water pipes, connected the pipelines to the water supply system and installed a water metre in every house.

LIFE conducted four environmental education workshops (attended by almost all the direct beneficiaries of the project) to build community capacity to fully participate in the project and manage the water system. As a result, the community, under the guidance of ACUACAR, carried out all construction work. Today, nearly 200 households have round-the-clock potable water in their houses and pay an affordable monthly rate for the service.

Several beneficiaries mentioned that they now save money every month. Almost all of them said that the savings are being used to provide more nutritious food for their children, schoolbooks or school fees. The success of the project has brought the community closer together and has given credibility to the local committee, which is now looking at ways to address other problems.

Moreover, the municipality is considering handing over the local management of a city-owned food shop for low-income people to Junta de Accion Paraiso II. Negotiations are also in progress with the municipality over its contribution to a LIFE solid waste management project in the southeast part of the city.

*Increasing capacity to design, implement and manage projects* In all LIFE countries, the capability of applicants to formulate projects has needed improvement. The LIFE process has forced them to make a more careful and considered evaluation of their own targets and objectives. The need for more formal organization and management has helped empower communities. When LIFE was initiated in Kyrgyzstan, the whole process of community-based environmental improvement and upgrading was a new experience. So the NC and the NSC engaged in the capacity development of communities right from project identification to formulation and implementation. This training and capacity development included general awareness-raising regarding environmental concerns, information on how to formulate projects, and information about LIFE. Without such inputs, it is unlikely that the SSPs could have been initiated or successfully completed.

To build the capacity of stakeholders, partnership workshops were organized in Lebanon. In Colombia the situation of armed conflict made capacity development a remarkable exercise (see Box 5). In Egypt, the need for capacity development was extensive. Initially, the NC and some members of the NSC had to put considerable effort into helping local groups to understand the managerial and reporting requirements for the projects. Since 1998, capacity development at the community level has resulted in involving people in committees as volunteers and has created interest amongst the upcoming generation to volunteer their time.

At the community level, the main mechanism of capacity development has been experience-sharing among groups supported by LIFE. In some cases, exchange visits have been used to build the capacity of stakeholders to work together.

*Increasing capacity for partnerships, participatory approaches, and broader development* The experience of project implementation has an empowering effect, and is a first step in the process of capacity development that can ensure improved living conditions. Communities then develop the capacity and confidence to get involved with larger developmental issues that can bring about more improvements and contribute to sustainable human development. There is evidence in some countries that the SSPs have led to such larger action.

In Egypt, the host NGO, AOYE, has gained much expertise and capacity through long involvement with LIFE approaches, and is now a forerunner in the region on raising public awareness about solid waste issues, including in the Mediterranean and the Middle East (Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon). In Jamaica, the community efforts in Bower Bank, Cave Island Settlement, Jeffrey Town, Drewsland Housing Settlement and Portmore Gardens provide much evidence of empowerment. Whereas LIFE engagement with these communities began with issues of water supply, sanitation and drainage, the communities have now been empowered to address larger problems such as land tenure, housing conditions and livelihood. In several countries, new organizations – CBOs or NGOs – were created as a result of the mobilization around the SSPs. In Colombia, several cooperatives and associations have been legally established to carry out the handling and use of solid waste. Furthermore, training has been provided on project formulation, preparation, monitoring, evaluation, and on providing inputs to municipal development plans. In Thailand, training for the slum communities of Klong Toey has empowered them to fight drug trafficking, which is a severe impediment to local development. In Senegal, the community organization National Association for the Well-being of the Population (ANBEP) has reinforced its capacities through LIFE and other programmes and, as of 2003, has become an NGO. It is now capable of handling bigger projects and larger funds.

While the process of implementing SSPs affects capacity development, experience shows that addressing more substantive aspects of capacity development requires conscious efforts and strategies.

*Increasing technical skills and awareness related to environmental problem-solving and good practices* Often, through the active mode of learning-by-doing, SSP participants develop many technical skills related to waste management, recycling and installation of infrastructure; awareness about environmental health and good practices (see Box 11 for an example from Senegal); and technical capabilities such as contract negotiation. In Colombia, an activity to involve stakeholders in negotiating contracts for recycling rights has built the confidence and long-term skills of the recycling cooperatives and associations, which can now operate with minimum intervention by a third party.

*Increasing the capacity of local authorities* A significant contribution to local governance is LIFE's efforts to improve the capacity of local authorities in technical areas and in participatory processes. Phase IV has seen a number of such efforts. LIFE Thailand partnered with the Municipal League of Thailand (MLT) to organize courses for mayors and permanent secretaries of municipalities. In collaboration with the MLT, two regional annual seminars for 400 mayors were held to enhance their understanding of the decentralization laws and regulations. LIFE Thailand also supported the participation of mayors in a World Bank Institute course for City Strategies to Reduce Urban Poverty through Local Economic Development, and partnered with a university to help formulate a training curriculum for municipalities. In Pakistan, dramatic changes in the political environment led to the reservation of 33 percent seats for women at local political levels. In order to support the devolution process, LIFE undertook the training of 170 women councillors in Multan, to orient them on the issues of environmental management, service delivery and participatory local development. LIFE Lebanon supported the establishment of a local government training centre in the municipality of Hasbayya. Furthermore, in the near future, LIFE will be conducting regional workshops to strengthen the capacity of municipal members to implement the new integrated solid waste management policy for Lebanon.



A capacity-development workshop for women municipal councillors in Multan (Pakistan)

The experience of implementing SSPs has exposed the limitations of some organizations in the face of the complexity and scale of the environmental problems on the one hand, and the social injustice suffered by the poor on the other. This has highlighted the importance of linking communities and creating larger networks so that the possibilities of securing improvements in living conditions can be enhanced. It has also become apparent that the component of capacity development needs to be strengthened and made an integral part of the strategies aimed at promoting community-based initiatives.

Overall, LIFE's experience in addressing capacity constraints at the local level reveals that while solutions must be tailored to fit the context, the best investments often include strengthening the capacity of local government to undertake participatory processes; the capacity of communities to organize and form inclusive associations; and the capacity of all sectors to engage as partners rather than as adversaries. These capacity investments have spill-over effects that go well beyond the problems originally targeted. The process of implementing SSPs can catalyse such capacity development.

#### ***Fostering dialogue and partnerships among stakeholders***

Lessons from LIFE's experience demonstrate that for community-based solutions to achieve sustainable and scaleable impact, they must be linked to the efforts of other stakeholders.

LIFE thus emphasizes multi-sectoral partnerships, because no one sector – civil society, government (local or national), private sector or the international development community – holds all the answers. It is in the partnerships formed among these sectors that sustainable solutions can be found. LIFE has played an important role in brokering these partnerships and in providing a neutral space and opportunity for the dialogue that engenders partnerships. LIFE's activities have helped foster dialogue among diverse stakeholders. They have forged new partnerships and consolidated existing ones. These achievements are realized through the SSP implementation process, as well as through dialogue events at community, sub-national and national levels. Fostering dialogue and cohesion among NGOs can be improved, however, and this should be an area of future effort.

*Breaking down walls* LIFE acts as a facilitator of social dialogue that helps break down walls between different groups that may have been unknown to one another or biased against one another, or that may even have been adversaries. Experience shows that through this process, CBOs have increasingly learnt the value of dialogue in negotiating with other actors for improving the local environment. Furthermore, many NGOs have come a long way from their earlier focus on political activism to a focus on cooperation. Dialogue can help NGOs learn to play their natural role as lobbyists and as a counter-power to the state. Dialogue also helps resolve or diffuse situations of conflict. In Kyrgyzstan, dialogue was one of the innovative aspects of LIFE, as it introduced a new culture of discussion among people of conflicting interests. In Jamaica, the process of dialogue helped broker a resolution of intense conflict between the St. Ann Seville Squatters community and the Relocation Unit of the Ministry of Water and Housing.

*Launching new partnerships* The LIFE programme has promoted new partnerships among a variety of actors, most notably among CBOs, NGOs and local authorities. In Kyrgyzstan and Egypt, LIFE pioneered the idea of partnership, especially among CBOs and NGOs. In Lebanon, LIFE also brought NGOs and CBOs into the programme with, in most instances, the involvement of local authorities. Private foundations and universities have also entered into partnerships in a small number of projects and programmes.

In both Brazil and Colombia, building partnerships has been a strong point of LIFE. When LIFE was active in Brazil, the NC successfully matched the interests of LIFE with those of potential partners. The best example of this was the association with a private university. Being a relatively new university, it was looking for opportunities to get involved in new projects and partnerships. LIFE provided opportunities for students and faculty members to work with community projects and practice their professional skills. In 1997, the Dean of the university was invited to join the NSC. In Colombia, the response to LIFE from local private foundations, NGOs and CBOs is among its greatest achievements. There, the involvement of the NC in the local social fabric, and the credibility and respect she enjoys in society has contributed to the formation of partnerships. Moreover, owing to the political problems that affect governance at all levels, there is great interest in the concept of participatory governance proposed by LIFE.

*Consolidating existing partnerships* In Thailand, several civil society groups that were active have been able to use the small grants to consolidate their work. Hence, large numbers of NGOs and CBOs in Thailand are involved in partnerships. Other actors that have been involved with the SSPs have included the Chamber of Commerce, a local branch of the Red Cross, and faculty members of universities. LIFE was also able to build on the existing organizations of slum and squatter communities and their networks in Thailand.

**Box 14: Improving living conditions in Gezeiret El Sheir (Egypt)**

Gezeiret El Sheir is an island in the Nile 40 km north of Cairo. Some 7,000 people – 617 households – live there in six small settlements. They have electricity, potable water and household cesspits, but until recently, solid waste collection was inadequate, there was no proper waste water removal and the cesspits often overflowed. Residents were supposed to take their garbage to public dump areas to be collected by a municipal truck, but they usually dumped it in the street, along the Nile or into irrigation canals instead. Piles of garbage and pools of stagnant water were common.

From the very beginning, the project was based on participatory planning on the part of the community. This involved two innovations: The active participation of local women, and a partnership with the administration of the Qalubia Governorate in which Gezeiret El Sheir is located. After field observations were completed, the Community Development Association prepared a fact-finding questionnaire with help from LIFE-GTZ, and administered it to a sample of the population. Based on these findings, planning workshops were conducted to discuss community problems and approaches for tackling them.

One of the most productive workshops was held in August 1997. It was attended by 22 area residents, including nine women, as well as representatives of the Community Development Association board, the local municipality and its service departments, the local popular council, the Governorate's local council, LIFE-GTZ, and an NGO from another area.

The workshop's objectives were to introduce the participatory planning approach to area residents; to introduce area residents to the other actors; to build consensus on priority needs and appropriate solutions; to agree on a plan of action; and to lay the foundation for effective women's participation. To make this happen it was decided that 25 local volunteers – 15 of them women – would act as a link between residents and the Community Development Association. The Association also agreed to contribute more than US \$6,000 to the project.

Using the ZOPP methodology – objectives-oriented project planning – workshop participants identified three priority problems ranked in descending order: cesspit overflow, lack of solid waste management and unemployment among youth.

In addition to improving the environment, the project had other, equally important social goals. These included stimulating long-term behavioral changes regarding sanitation, and establishing sustainable local-local dialogue between the community and the local authority, elected popular councils and the private sector.

To achieve this, the project launched environmental awareness campaigns to build positive attitudes towards environmental sanitation and to disseminate best practices of hygienic procedures. LIFE-GTZ provided technical assistance to the Community Development Association to prepare a management plan for waste water collection by truck. The design of an efficient truck route required a database, and houses in Gezeiret El Sheir were numbered for the first time.

The local authority authorized the final disposal of waste water in a drainage canal, and a plan was made to collect fees for regular cesspit emptying and cleaning. These fees, paid to the Association in advance of service, were decided on by the community itself and were slightly higher than those that had been charged by the municipality. Residents were willing to pay because their participation in the decision making process had given them a sense of ownership, and a stake in the improvements that were taking place.

The role of the local authority was indispensable to the success of the project. As a partner in all its phases, including decision-making, the local authority made available two workers in two shifts for the waste water collection system. It also provided technical training for the collection staff and maintenance services for the waste water collection truck and equipment that are kept at the municipal maintenance centre. In addition, it paved new road to allow easy access for the truck. System operation was celebrated on 7 October, 1998.

Solving the problem of waste water collection in Gezeiret El paved the way for further successful local initiatives such as a solid waste management project, also supported by LIFE-GTZ. As a result, a garbage collection system has been established.

Perhaps the greatest social impact of the project was the empowerment of young men and women through their work as community volunteers. They received training in how to conduct environmental awareness campaigns, disseminate a project concept, and act as a link between the Community Development Association and the community. This training and their involvement in different project activities helped build their self-confidence and sense of empowerment. Two volunteers, one male and one female, have since become members of a project development committee responsible for long-term project management after the LIFE-GTZ team has phased out.

Even though they were often treated paternalistically, this experience opened up the possibility that some of these young people will go on to become Community Development Association members in their own right. Many have shown great interest in moving from being volunteers – acting as assistants to the traditional powers – to taking on their jobs on CBO committees. For young Egyptian women who lack opportunities, this is a relatively acceptable and accessible way to exercise their authority and influence. At a second workshop attended by 43 community representatives and local authority officials, women's participation was remarkable and very effective.

The Gezeiret El Sheir experience proves that pre-action activities that address the target problem accurately yield high returns for the project and beyond. The area mapping, surveys, workshops, participatory planning and training of volunteers contributed greatly to the success of the project and to the creation of valuable social assets. Involvement in training community volunteers helped link the whole community with the local Community Development Association and supported the successful performance of the project. In many cases, extension and management work in the project areas has continued even after the project has been completed.

*Building partnerships with the private sector* Chapter 3 discussed the need to involve representatives of the private (business/corporate) sector on NSCs. Similarly, in order to form partnerships with the private sector at the community level, it is first necessary to identify a shared vision and shared goals. Major differences in perspectives and inequality in the power wielded by actors can pose difficulties in this process.

In a few cases, the private sector has given funds for specific, national-level activities, but so far there are few instances of partnership at the project level. In Egypt, special efforts have been made, such as a national workshop with the private sector that was organized to create interest and develop a shared vision. This helped break new ground for further dialogue. Increased capacity of NGOs and CBOs as a result of LIFE and successful completion of the SSPs may provide opportunities for creating partnerships with the private sector in the future.

### ***Empowering women and addressing gender equity***

LIFE emphasizes gender equity and women's empowerment in the criteria for SSP selection. Indeed, women are active in all aspects of the programme in most countries, and participate at all stages.

Several SSPs in Bangladesh have included the empowerment of women among their goals and achievements, and the experience has underlined that encouraging gender-sensitive participation at the local level ensures women's empowerment and entitlement to basic services. In Colombia, about 56 percent of the nearly 10,000 people who received capacity-building training through workshops have been women. The NC of Colombia, who is closely associated with the national women's movement, has made women's empowerment and gender equity a focus of the programme. Colombian women from poor households are generally active in their communities and often occupy leadership positions on community committees. They have generally participated in greater numbers than men in all dialogues and capacity-development activities promoted by LIFE. Participation of women in SSPs in Colombia is currently about 44 percent. These women are now confident that they can carry on the work even without support from LIFE. In Lebanon too, many activities have aimed at improving the capacity of women and increasing their participation in political processes. Recently, for example, four two-day workshops were held in the provinces to promote women's participation in local municipal elections (also see Box 15).

Women's empowerment is emphasized in other countries as well. Senegal has long had a strategic focus on women. A recent workshop in Senegal focused on women leaders (members of the National Network of Women for the Improvement of Urban Environment) from 15 towns and enhanced their capacity in developing, managing and marketing urban development projects. Public hearing meetings for Egypt's Hot-Line Service project in 2005 encouraged 38 percent attendance from women. As mentioned earlier, LIFE Pakistan undertook the training of 170 women councillors in Multan on environmental management and participatory local development. Another very important direct impact on women in Pakistan, albeit a small one, was due to the microcredit provided to women by NGOs after their environmental improvement work had finished. This is a strategy that has been used by the same NGO that developed the low cost sanitation programme. The provision of microcredit and education to women has been a recurrent activity in many localities in which they work. In one area, microcredit has enabled women to set up small retail businesses to supplement their income. In some cases the women are generating more income than their husbands. Provision of microcredit seems to be a strategy that has empowering potential if used creatively.

The experiences of these countries underline that conscious efforts must be made to enhance women's participation in decision-making. The 2000 evaluation indicated the need for integrating more strategies for gender equity and women's empowerment into the programmes. It also noted that the focus on gender equity should take place regardless of the gender of the NC. These examples demonstrate that the recommendation has been taken to heart. While Bangladesh, Colombia, Jamaica and Lebanon are coordinated by women NCs, programmes with a focus on women are seen in all countries.

### **Box 15: Workshops on gender mainstreaming and empowerment in Lebanon**

In Lebanon, the NC organized a two-day workshop in 1999 to promote gender mainstreaming in LIFE projects. The workshop focused on introducing the concept of gender and development, clarifying ways in which gender is relevant and integral to LIFE initiatives and familiarizing the participants with basic gender analysis and planning tools. It was conducted by a trained facilitator and brought together a diverse group of partners, including all the CBOs and NGOs that have received LIFE grants.

This was the first time that such a structured workshop was conducted in a LIFE country using its own projects as a basis for examining gender issues and sensitizing various stakeholders. The experience of this workshop is a model for other LIFE countries to follow.

As a follow-up to this workshop, LIFE Lebanon recently conducted a series of four training workshops in four different regions, aimed at promoting women's participation in the 2004 local elections. Organized in partnership with Frederick Ebert Stiftung, the Lebanese Committee for Women's Rights, and the Collective on Research and Training for Development, these workshops have received positive feedback from the participants, and have empowered women, many of whom have gone on to being elected to municipal office.

### ***Promoting sustainable development***

There is a qualitative difference between projects that only raise awareness regarding the protection of those involved, and those that create the conditions for sustainable improvements. A campaign for a cleaner or dust-free city may create awareness regarding the environment, but merely raising awareness is not enough. Projects must also create the conditions that facilitate lasting improvements, motivate people to get involved, and build their capacities to act in partnership with local authorities. As evidenced in the sections above, this is LIFE's objective, the focus of its efforts, and its main contribution to sustainable development. At the community level, in many instances, people have learnt the benefits of organizing and collective action as a result of capacity development and the project experience. They no longer need external motivation to continue an effective struggle for basic needs, and can extend their activities to addressing larger development objectives. This is an integral aspect of sustainable development.



School children using new washbasins built by the School Environmental Project (Bangladesh)



Capacity-building workshop for NGO members and LIFE grantees (Kyrgyzstan)

## Chapter Five

# Upstream: micro-macro linkages to influence policies and mainstream LIFE

The problems that LIFE seeks to address are immense. In particular, the problems of urban environment, exacerbated by urbanization, are often described as a ticking time bomb. Large-scale, country-owned solutions to these problems require policy changes that institutionalize, among other things, participation, community-centred approaches, and decentralization processes that truly empower local government and local people. LIFE's experience reveals that micro-level experiences that demonstrate the success of these approaches can be linked to macro-level policy change. This micro-macro link is, however, not automatic, and programmes such as LIFE must proactively make the connection between downstream mechanisms such as SSPs and policy advocacy.

The third stage of the LIFE approach aims to upstream the community-based experiences and results, i.e. to scale up and replicate these experiences and results and thereby influence conventional practices, mechanisms and policies related to participatory local governance. The institutionalization and sustainability of LIFE at the country and global levels is also a focus of the upstream stage. While LIFE puts in place some innovative and effective tools to influence upstreaming, it must be stressed that the achievement of these objectives is part of a larger process of social change and is affected by socio-political factors in-country.

The main advocacy tools for upstreaming are SSPs, dialogue and partnerships, and documentation and dissemination. The sections below discuss these tools; their impact on replicating and upscaling community-based projects, on policy and practices at municipal and national levels, and on mainstreaming LIFE within UNDP; and, finally, LIFE's experiences in achieving sustainability.

### Advocacy tools for upstreaming

#### *The central role of SSPs*

LIFE's experience in its 12 countries demonstrates that SSPs serve a central role in upstreaming participatory local governance and urban poor issues:

- While SSPs have brought about tangible improvements in the living conditions of poor neighbourhoods, they are often only a small part of the solution to local environmental ills. However, they create the basis for people to gather and work to address broader issues of local environment and local governance.
- They build the capacity of local actors to work in partnership for wider impact.
- They have a demonstration effect by affording local authorities the opportunity to appreciate the contribution of community efforts to solving local environmental problems. This leads to replication, up-scaling and the mainstreaming of participatory local governance both horizontally and vertically, with the encouragement and support of local authorities.
- They give LIFE downstream credibility to advocate for policy impact and to up-scale its activities.

- They function as policy experiments i.e., micro-level experiments that when successful can be scaled up to macro-level initiatives or policies.

SSPs are thus a potent first step in the much broader process of achieving sustainable human development through participatory local governance. The possibility of achieving LIFE's upstream objectives is therefore vitally contingent upon the outcome of SSPs and their potential for scaling up. It depends on the solutions these projects are able to offer to the problems faced by local authorities. It is also contingent upon how well the windows of opportunity in individual countries are used, and upon the advocacy skills of the NC, the NSC and LIFE stakeholders to articulate their case.

#### *Documentation and dissemination*

Meticulous documentation and dissemination of the SSPs is also very important in achieving upstream success. LIFE employs a number of mechanisms to document its experiences, and to promote dissemination and advocacy. These mechanisms include media coverage and publicity; documentation and publication of case studies; websites at the national and global levels; and national policy dialogues.

*Media coverage and publicity* Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon provide examples of where the media and publicity strategies have been used successfully. In Kyrgyzstan, media presence at NSC meetings has been an important tool for publicizing the programme. LIFE has also hosted a number of press-covered events to disseminate information on its environmental message. Quarterly bulletins about LIFE and the Global Environment Facility-Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) have also been issued in both Russian and Kyrgyz languages. One result of this has been the rise in interest among communities, CBOs and NGOs to participate in LIFE projects, with project applications increasing over the years.

In Lebanon, press coverage has been instrumental in spreading the LIFE message. The all-women project concerning solid waste management received national publicity, and the leader of the CBO was given an award (see Box 2). This caught the attention of the media, and the media coverage inspired other communities to follow the women's example. Both salient milestones and the completion of SSPs were also used for publicizing LIFE and its objectives, while the presence of the UNDP Resident Representative helped enormously in attracting media coverage of these events.

Peer-to-peer learning: community members from Thies and Yeumbeul visit a project site in Kolda (Senegal)



The mass media can thus help up-scale LIFE by publicizing NSC meetings and national workshops, high profile SSPs, UNDP Resident Representatives' project visits, and LIFE-hosted events. Publicity can also be gained by linking LIFE to other high-visibility local and national events and multi-sectoral workshops.

*Publishing case studies and developing websites* Most LIFE countries have published and distributed brochures on LIFE, and undertaken substantive documentation in the form of published articles. All the countries have developed in-depth case studies on selected SSPs, and used these studies for systematic dissemination to advocate for scaling-up and to influence mindsets and policies. Several countries, including Bangladesh, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand, Jamaica and Pakistan have developed their own websites to disseminate their experiences, and Egypt, Jamaica and Kyrgyzstan publish newsletters.

LIFE's experience to date indicates the need for much more aggressive investments in documenting and disseminating experiences to help scale up from local actions to national solutions. Knowledge on participatory local governance and technical and community-based solutions to urban environmental issues is constantly evolving. Poor communities are too busy and local governments too resource-strapped to make documentation and knowledge transfer a priority. Development programmes such as LIFE have an important role to play in facilitating the transfer of this knowledge, particularly in locally-accessible languages, so as to spread and up-scale small-scale innovations, enhance capacity, and influence policy. Effective mechanisms for achieving knowledge transfer include learning-by-doing (through SSPs), and peer-to-peer learning. LIFE's country experience also suggests that leaving dissemination to the third stage is not the best strategy, since timely and effective dissemination of information can promote fundraising, partnerships, replication and policy influence. It is also important that dissemination should target poor communities to motivate them to follow the good practices of their peers.

#### ***Policy dialogue and strategic partnerships***

Events to initiate issue-based dialogue at the municipal and national level are also among the main tools used to upstream the community level experiences. In most LIFE countries, these events have been structured and facilitated workshops that include a variety of stakeholders from all levels. They are conducted either to review progress, introduce new ideas, disseminate experiences or to advocate for policies. In Jamaica, for example, national level dialogues were held on the involvement of local authorities in community development, sanitation problems in low-income communities and the need for connecting NGOs. These dialogues resulted in significant follow-up actions that included training of government officials and the establishment of a National Sanitation Task Force (see Box 21). LIFE Pakistan has organized several national dialogues for NGOs to discuss development issues and ways of increasing their effectiveness in dealing with these issues. Egypt has organized a national dialogue with the private sector to discuss its involvement in LIFE and environmental issues.

Partnerships further promote the policy dialogue process and contribute to upstreaming. LIFE's country experience shows that by fostering and strengthening partnerships between different stakeholders, LIFE has taken the first few steps towards sustainable human development, which is not merely a planning and management problem, but part of the larger political process. Some strategic partnerships – at the NSC level, with LIFE's host NGOs and with municipal and national government – are particularly effective.

**Box 16: Upstreaming LIFE in Senegal**

In the Senegalese city of Yeumbeul, the LIFE project focusing on household waste water disposal has affected local politics in a number of ways. For one thing, municipal officials were regular participants in the project's consciousness-raising workshops. As a result, the level of interest in the affairs of Yeumbeul on the part the Mayor's office increased dramatically.

In the municipalities of south and north Yeumbeul, two elected Council Members have close ties to the waste water project. One is a mason who helped build drainage tanks for the project, and the other was initially a project beneficiary, having had a drainage tank installed in his house. The latter is now Council Member for the Environment. Both have pledged to expand the installation of drainage tanks to other neighbourhoods. Thanks to recognition of its achievements, ANBEP, the implementing NGO, has recently received financing for some 1,629 additional works from the Government of Senegal.

The national policy dialogue on the topic of solid waste management, organized by LIFE in October 2003, is an example of another opportunity used to upstream the LIFE approach. Among the participants at this event were the Minister of the Environment, the Resident Representative of UNDP, the Representative of the President of the Association of the Mayors of Senegal accompanied by 13 other mayors, as well as journalists, representatives of a women's network, representatives of the decentralized administration and of the private sector. After the national policy dialogue workshop, the Mayor of Bambey, whose commune benefited from LIFE financing for a household garbage collection project, granted approximately US \$7,000 to CBOs for furthering the project.

Public awareness about the need for a healthy urban environment is clearly on the rise in Senegal. For example, the President has vowed not to enter any city where piles of garbage line the streets. He has encouraged municipal governments to provide incentives for local groups to tackle solid waste management, urban sanitation and infrastructure problems. He has also drafted a law mandating sanctions against mayors who neglect the urban environment.

This has given mayors added incentive to be receptive to the LIFE programme and to NGOs and CBOs that will help them achieve the goals that the President has set.

*Partnerships through the NSC* Having appropriate multi-sector representation on the NSC can facilitate upstreaming. The experience of Senegal in this regard is discussed in Box 4. Another example is Thailand, where members of the NSC have helped the upstreaming process by applying the methodologies of LIFE within their own organizations. For example, after being elected governor of Bangkok Metropolis in 1996, the first chairman of the LIFE NSC introduced the participatory approach to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Organization. He set up more than 100 civil society groups all over the Bangkok metropolis to serve the various communities. Under his leadership, the administration implemented a number of significant decisions that benefited the poor and slum communities. Examples include protection from eviction and house registration certificates for 10,000 squatter families. Such measures are being replicated in other Thai cities. The second NSC chairman, a former president of the Urban Development Commission, and a former governor of the National Housing Authority, integrated the LIFE Thailand approach into a government proj-

ect named Livable Cities, an approach recommended by the National Economic and Social Development Board. A number of other NSC members are representatives of local governments. They also work with the National Decentralization Commission, and have brought LIFE Thailand's approach to decentralization policies at the national level. LIFE Kyrgyzstan is currently forming a network of former NSC members to tap into this important resource.

*Partnerships with the LIFE host NGO* In several countries, the host agency for the programme at different stages has been an NGO. Currently, about half of the country programmes are hosted by NGOs. Many of these NGOs have gained from this rare opportunity to coordinate a programme much larger than the ones they would normally manage. This experience has increased their capacity to interact with diverse actors, deal with policy-makers, get involved with a variety of local issues and link them to national, regional and global institutions. Some NGOs were exposed to a methodology different from their normal practice, thus providing another avenue for mainstreaming the LIFE approach.

### **Box 17: Partnerships for upstreaming LIFE in Thailand**

Thailand is a good example of how successful projects at the community level can translate into an upstreaming of LIFE's methodology at the national level. Since the beginning of its programme, LIFE Thailand has been particularly strong in networking and building partnerships. In order to link up with political processes at the national level, LIFE first entered into collaboration with the Municipal League of Thailand (MLT), a national body consisting of elected representatives from local authorities. This partnership was greatly facilitated by the Deputy Chairman of the NSC, a member of the MLT and a key coordinator of the Thai government's Decentralization Commission.

The MLT plays a leading role in formulating and proposing new initiatives and policies to its member organizations, and in coordinating other key actors to promote decentralization. For a few years, LIFE formally integrated its budget with that of the MLT, so that they could jointly undertake the training of municipal staff, the replication of LIFE projects, the dissemination of information on best practices, and technical support. In addition to providing key recommendations regarding strategy, a main focus of the partnership involved training local authorities to be more effective in working with communities to solve environmental and sanitation problems. The joint LIFE-MLT training programme included exchange visits to LIFE projects and networking and other initiatives to contribute to the replication of the LIFE approach at the national level.

In addition to its mandated activities, the MLT has become a national leader in lobbying for decentralization and for new initiatives in sustainable development and good governance. The LIFE-MLT partnership networked with many Thai cities and towns identified as having high potential to initiate new ventures in community-based environmental management. These have become the core of the MLT movement to promote local governance.

More recently, LIFE has extended support to the Tambon Administration Organizations (TAOs – the sub-district administrations that are the smallest units of local governance) by partnering with the Thailand Association of TAOs to create models for good governance, training and coordination among the members of the Association. The LIFE NC was appointed as advisor to the Association and supported its first general assembly, organized in March 2002, which was attended by some 8,000 TAO officers representing over 4000 TAOs.

Through these partnerships, LIFE Thailand has been working with municipal and sub-district administrative bodies, and influencing their activities and practices on a local as well as a national scale.

*Partnerships with municipal and national government and networks* LIFE Thailand's partnerships with the Municipal League of Thailand and the TAO is expected to help up-scale the programme, institutionalize lessons learnt and ensure that LIFE's methodology continues to be used by local authorities throughout the country (see Box 17). LIFE Thailand has also built a partnership with the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), a new government agency whose mandate is to develop CBOs in urban and rural communities all over Thailand, with a specific focus on problems related to housing, occupation and income generation, livable towns and cities, narcotic problems and the environment. CODI is a member of the NSC, and strengthens the NSC's efforts on policies related to Strengthened Communities and Livable Cities and Towns. LIFE Thailand coordinates with CODI on regional town networks, and works with the agency to ensure the strengthening of local CBOs.

### **The downstream-to-upstream impact of LIFE projects**

#### *Replication and scaling-up of projects, environmental solutions, and participatory approaches*

The experience in the area of replication and up-scaling is encouraging. As illustrated in examples in the preceding section, one impetus for replication is the interest and needs of local authorities who have seen LIFE in action. Another major impetus is that communities, CBOs and NGOs continue to show great interest in taking up LIFE-funded projects.

LIFE's experience in phase IV provides many instances of horizontal replication. Egypt's Environmental Streets Project, initially implemented in the six governorates of Monoufia, Suez, Hurghada, Beni Suef, Minya and Sohag, is considered a model in the country for demonstrating the successful partnership of NGOs, CBOs, local authorities and community residents in upgrading streets by tackling cleanliness, solid waste management systems, beautification, greening and public awareness. It is now being replicated in five more governorates – Alexandria, Qena, Elsharkia, North Sinai and Elbehira. In Pakistan, the success of the Lodhran Pilot Project (see Box 1) led to the signing of MoUs with the local authorities in three towns to replicate the experience. In Bangladesh, LIFE-initiated models such as Barrel Type Composting and Community-based Waste Collection are being scaled-up from neighbourhoods to many different areas and cities, and have the potential to influence policy and practice.

It is important to note that the contexts in the countries vary widely, and some provide more support for replication and mainstreaming than others. In Thailand, for instance, conditions have been favourable for promoting the LIFE approach. Progressive policies and institutional mechanisms, as well as a mature NGO and CBO movement provide a framework capable of promoting LIFE's objectives. With the recent elevation of several hundred Sanitary Districts to the status of municipalities, opportunities for replication of SSPs have increased.

In Senegal, the President's campaign for clean cities has created a fertile environment for community-based urban improvements. However, Senegal also provides an example of how political reality can impede replication, particularly at the municipal level. The dissolution of local governments in 2002 deprived the programme of its main counterpart, and progress

could not be resumed until new local elections were held. Political violence and instability in parts of Bangladesh and Colombia during the 2000-2004 phase also stymied municipal level upstreaming of successful experiences.

In Jamaica too, the lack of resources, gang violence and lack of participation by local authorities in solving local environmental problems has limited the replication of projects. Nevertheless, a country report from Jamaica notes that the flexibility of the LIFE methodology and the encouraging results of projects have attracted communities. Four SSPs, for example, did trigger great horizontal impact. Because of the strategies used, they resulted in negotiations with the National Water Commission and created a precedent that was beneficial to other communities as they used the LIFE methodology and community development practices to address issues of land tenure and resettlement. For replicating and scaling-up projects, the conclusions drawn from the Jamaican experience seem to be representative. Projects that help address, in the process of implementation, larger problems or issues that are beyond their immediate scope, seem to have a higher potential for replication and scaling-up.



Local-local dialogue to share the experiences of Helwan University (Egypt)

### Box 18: Mainstreaming and upstreaming LIFE in Colombia

*Through capacity-building workshops* The series of capacity-building workshops that LIFE conducted in Colombia resulted in mainstreaming and upstreaming LIFE's approach and methodology in a number of ways. For example:

- Between 1997 and 2000, the private cleaning consortium LIME developed educational campaigns and environmental awareness materials for communities and schools using LIFE's approach and support.
- LIFE's proposals on sustainable human development at the municipal level have been introduced in the municipality of Talaigua's local development plans. The Lions Club and other private foundations have incorporated the theme of sustainable human development in their training programmes, as advocated by LIFE.
- Training courses to disseminate sustainable human development issues were organized in 2000 by Funcicar, a private foundation, in association with LIFE.
- In the south of the armed conflict zone in Bolivar province, LIFE collaborated with the provincial government during 1997-2000 to continue the local-local dialogues initiated in 1998, which aimed to identify people's basic needs and potential SSPs.

*Through partnerships* The number and quality of the partners mobilized by LIFE in Cartagena are impressive. Indeed, the responsiveness of local private foundations, NGOs and CBOs is one of the main achievements of the programme. Although the partnerships were facilitated by the involvement of the NC, the fact is that these organizations have endorsed LIFE's message of sustainable development and participatory governance because it corresponds to their own interests and missions.

*Through demonstration* It was initially more difficult in Cartagena to create solid partnerships with local authorities and the Bolívar Government. But after the positive achievements of the SSPs and local-local dialogues, the municipality and the Bolívar provincial government showed greater interest in supporting LIFE and providing funds for its replication.

*Through dialogue* Another example of upstreaming is LIFE's promotion of regional-level dialogue among local councils, mayors and communities in connection with Colombia's Bonus Law for petroleum revenues. In theory, resources generated from oil production or transport were intended to support local development projects. Instead, the system has been subject to corruption and has failed to benefit local communities. Between 2001 and 2003, LIFE worked to regulate the Bonus Law by convening discussion groups with all the stakeholders involved: mayors, municipal councillors, senators, national assembly members, and representatives of the private sector and local communities. The goal was two-fold: To achieve an equitable distribution of revenues among municipalities that produce petrol and those that do not, and to ensure that revenues are invested in local projects that have been agreed upon by all stakeholders. Although continuation of the process has been stymied due to the sensitivity of the issue, LIFE has contributed greatly to multi-stakeholder dialogue in this area.

***Scaling-up to address larger problems of access to basic infrastructure and land***

The question of improving living conditions in poor areas is linked to the wider issues of access to basic infrastructure and even more broadly to issues of land tenure and property rights. The experience with LIFE has helped address these wider issues in many instances, as seen in Thailand, Pakistan and in Jamaica.

Because of the decision by several local authorities in Thailand to issue house registration certificates to squatters, it became possible for these disadvantaged groups to formally access basic facilities. LIFE was one of the factors that contributed to a change in the attitude of local authorities towards this problem, along with the favourable political situation and years of struggle by slum and squatter communities to gain minimum security and decent living conditions. By focusing attention on the issue of environmental degradation in poor areas, LIFE helped to enhance the possibilities of the poor obtaining a degree of relief. LIFE's small funding for a *katchi abadi* cell (department) within the Capital Development Authority (CDA) in Pakistan resulted in the CDA agreeing to change its shelter policy and providing ownership of land to the squatter residents upon payment of the price of the land (see Box 22).

As mentioned earlier, Jamaica provides several examples of where the organizational development, capacity building and empowerment engendered by the SSPs in one domain have typically empowered communities to take on other issues such as land tenure and relocation. Three of these experiences are described further in Box 19. In addition to providing the SSP experience, LIFE in many cases has actively facilitated the upstream endeavors of securing land tenure and relocation.

Successful experiences such as those of Thailand, Jamaica and Pakistan should be documented and shared for other countries such as Colombia, where land tenure is becoming a priority issue. As noted in the 2005 progress report from LIFE Colombia, land tenure lies at the root of the conflict in Colombia, and is a critical issue for poverty reduction and soil protection. LIFE Colombia has thus proposed a future strategy that includes land tenure as a focus area.



After exchange visits to LIFE projects, the project implementers and grantees discuss lessons learnt (Kyrgyzstan)

### **Box 19: Upscaling to address land tenure and relocation issues in Jamaica**

During phase IV, several outstanding examples of successes in securing land tenure and relocation emerged, including for the communities of Drewsland, Portmore Gardens and Cave Island in Jamaica.

In Drewsland and Portmore Gardens, which had previously received LIFE grants to improve sanitation and drainage conditions, the communities scaled-up their activities to address the issue of security of tenure of their unplanned settlements. In partnership with the Ministry of Water and Housing, and with the facilitation of LIFE, local resource mobilization, community sensitization and organization around the issue by the Citizens' Associations, Drewsland and Portmore Gardens succeeded in securing tenure for lands that they had occupied for several years as squatters and lease-hold occupants respectively.

In both cases, the respective community organizations led the advocacy process, mobilized community contributions, facilitated the meetings, and collaborated in the land allocation exercises towards the provision of titles by the Ministry, which acted as landlord and broker. In Drewsland, which was provided with road infrastructure in 1976, the community organization collected J\$1.5 million to meet the cost of the land survey to guide the Ministry in the allotment exercise. In Portmore Gardens, which is privately owned, the Ministry facilitated the acquisition exercise and the community organization mobilized local resources to meet the acquisition costs. The community association led the process of aerial mapping, GIS and technical surveying to facilitate the first phase of allotment and the registering of plans for the provision of titles. The Ministry has indicated that these two interventions should be documented as they represent best practice in low-cost solutions through community participation.

In Cave Island, where dwellers live on dump and swamp lands, relocation was selected as the most appropriate intervention to address the deplorable living conditions. LIFE worked in collaboration with the Cave Island Citizens' Association, a local community organization, to assist the communities with the preparatory plans for relocating to an area that was less environmentally challenged and that afforded them the security of tenure.

The community organization was the driving force that identified the need for their relocation and commenced the process of search, lobby and resource mobilization towards securing lands and infrastructure inputs. The values of community participation and partnership were transferred through the successful implementation of a water supply project, which LIFE had previously supported. The group successfully mobilized J\$8.5 million from its members, and in partnership with the government programme (Operation PRIDE for low-income housing solutions) secured an arrangement including loan and technical assistance that will provide 260 serviced lots, including water, sewage, road and electricity, for its members. The organization received additional support from the CIDA Enhancing Civil Society Project to commence the planning process for the development of the new community, including reviewing solutions for house construction, and provision of vital social and economic support infrastructure.

***Influencing the orientation of NGOs and development programmes***

In Pakistan, LIFE helped transform and bring into the development sphere a number of NGOs that had hitherto been largely oriented toward charity and social welfare. The LIFE methodology provided a new, alternative vision for these NGOs, and introduced them to service providers as well. A tried and tested technique and process of solid waste management and low cost sanitation developed by an NGO in Karachi provided the model for other groups. LIFE and local NGOs provided the bridge necessary to reach the poor by linking municipal solid waste management with community collection. In Tanzania, LIFE has had an impact on other programmes with a similar philosophy, such as the Sustainable Cities Programme. There are other such programmes at both country and global levels that have learnt from LIFE and adapted its methods to their requirements.

***Transforming the orientation of local governance institutions (including local planning and decision-making processes)***

As is well known, there is a limit to the extent of local environmental improvements that community initiatives alone can achieve. Institutionalizing participatory processes in local governance processes and enabling partnerships with local authorities are essential for sustainability and for creating viable models to up-scale. LIFE has often transformed the orientation of local authorities, affecting their willingness and capacity to engage in participatory methods of local problem solving, planning and decision-making.

In Thailand, LIFE helped link existing organizations of slum and squatter communities to local authorities. As a result, a major contribution of LIFE has been the change in the attitude of civic officials towards low-income settlements. Municipal officials acknowledged that until they worked with LIFE, they had not thought of involving people in executing projects. The experience of using local-local dialogue as a method of resolving conflicts and implementing development projects has since encouraged them to adopt this approach, as it clearly demonstrated the advantages of direct and regular communication with community representatives in addressing the problems of service delivery. The officials point out that the impetus for change came from several sources, but that LIFE lit the first spark.

Some local authorities that supported or implemented LIFE projects have established structures and mechanisms within their organizations to facilitate popular participation, for example, community development departments with the necessary budgetary allocations. Greater interaction between civil society and local authority officials in the form of public forums is also being encouraged and facilitated in some municipalities. Furthermore, municipal officials who have implemented LIFE projects have had the opportunity to informally discuss this approach with their peers at annual conventions, and to increase their interest in participatory approaches. Such developments may mark crucial steps towards achieving participatory local governance for sustainable human development.

In recent years LIFE Thailand has also directly supported participation in planning and budgeting, particularly through the Network of Bangkok Metropolitan Civil Society Organizations. Some examples include inputs, through large-scale public meetings, to the government's poverty eradication programme, assistance to the presidents of 1,700 communities throughout Bangkok in conducting action planning for their budgetary allocations, and advocating for the legal status of communities at the policy level so that they can participate formally in budgeting processes.

In Egypt, an innovative project known as the Hotline Service has created a new local-level mechanism that allows the poor in Greater Cairo to channel their environmental complaints



The Governor of Qena visits the Environmental Streets Project (Egypt)

and concerns to the appropriate authorities. LIFE's approach has been used to facilitate the process of solving these problems through dialogue and partnerships with the concerned municipal authorities. By facilitating such a local-level mechanism for information about public concerns, LIFE and its partner AOYE have contributed to creating a vital local governance institution for accountability and for information sharing. Public hearings and public meetings are integral to this project, and are attended not merely by the concerned citizens, but by district directors, members of the Egyptian Parliament, representatives of local councils and women's groups. Citizens have been involved in the decisions taken in these forums, and the right of citizens to voice their concerns and opinions about the problems they face has been continually reinforced.

In Tanzania, the LIFE experience encouraged local authorities to welcome popular participation, but for a particular reason. They became interested in this approach primarily because it led to revenue-generation, as LIFE brought about a change in the attitude of the people, who became willing to pay for basic services. One Tanzania country report noted that the acceptance of a participatory approach is far more valuable for increasing the effectiveness of public action than large monetary investments.

In Kyrgyzstan, after toilets were successfully built by two low-income communities in the town of Osh, the municipality was ready to embark on a partnership programme with other communities and to entertain the possibility of decentralizing some of its area-upgrading, improvement and servicing powers. Another example from Kyrgyzstan is the organization of a seminar by the authorities of the Oktyabrskiy district of Bishkek for the heads of local territorial councils, featuring the experience of a project on waste collection that was implemented by the condominium Reyhan. Oktyabrskiy district has subsequently become a pilot district for a large-scale experiment implemented by a private company and by the Bishkek city authorities on introducing a new waste collection system.

LIFE's diverse experiences bring to light some lessons for changing the orientation of local authorities and improving local governance institutions:

- Local authorities must be shown that regular communication with community representatives can satisfactorily solve problems of service delivery.
- Local-local dialogue should be used to resolve conflicts and implement development projects.
- Municipal officials who have worked fruitfully with programmes such as LIFE can stimulate the interest of their peers from other municipalities (for example, at annual conventions).
- Local authorities become very interested when city revenues increase because the participatory approach has prompted people to pay for services.
- Successful projects can convince local authorities to devolve some of their responsibilities such as upgrading, improvement and servicing.

**Box 20: Upstream impact in Tanzania**

In 1996, LIFE established local, multi-stakeholder sub-committees in three major Tanzanian cities: Dodoma, Moshi and Mwanza. The Mwanza committee, which included two representatives of city government, had remarkable success in up-scaling the LIFE approach to local governance. The committee lobbied important institutions in the Mwanza region to create a more favourable environment for the community-based, participatory development activities that LIFE seeks to promote. Two Mwanza municipal councillors subsequently became members of the national parliament, and were thus able to promote municipal governance based on popular participation at the national level.

In Mwanza itself, LIFE and its SSPs influenced the way the municipal council designed its policies, even those pertaining to issues that lie beyond the LIFE mandate of the urban environment. After observing a LIFE water project in the low-income informal settlement of Ibungilo, other communities started building not only wells, but classrooms and dispensaries as well. Since then, municipal policies, particularly those dealing with schools, have been based on the participatory experience of the SSPs. The municipal council set up a small revolving fund to support the microenterprise activities of women's and youth groups, giving assistance in the form of low-interest, short-term loans, to maximize benefit to as many borrowers as possible.

The Mwanza Municipal Council's capacity to manage projects and programmes was enhanced by its involvement in LIFE's first project in the Mwaloni market. The Council decided that all programmes in the municipality must work for complementarity and scale up their impact to benefit local communities. The Council thus sought to coordinate municipal and aid programmes so that they complemented each other in geography, themes, beneficiary targets and means. For example, LIFE and an NGO, Capacity Building for Urban Environment Management (CBEM), jointly financed the Ibungilo water project. Community mobilization for the construction of a water storage tank was supported by LIFE, whereas the procurement of pipes and other accessories was supported by CBEM. In addition, these programmes worked together to support a local CBO, the Bugosa youth group, in various ways. LIFE helped the group improve the supply of drinking water and CBEM helped with household garbage collection. These two projects demonstrate how assistance from different donors could be directed to an identified community need and how two or more programmes with different focus areas, working in the same community, can complement each other in assisting community groups. This is only possible if the local and municipal leaders are willing to accommodate and provide a supportive and enabling environment for such partnerships. With these kinds of arrangements the Mwanza Council is now able to benefit more comprehensively from the assistance provided by bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies.

LIFE's first project in the Mwaloni market became an example of holistic intervention that results in environmental, economic, social and organizational improvements, and the project became a demonstration site, attracting people from all over the Mwanza region to come and learn from this experience. It induced the municipal councillors to start working with CBOs and other community groups. Various working groups were formed, comprising city agents and CBO members, in which the opinions expressed by CBOs were as important as those of the municipal council officials. The CBOs' competencies were thus acknowledged and appreciated.

On returning from a conference organized by LIFE in Mwanza, the Mayor of Dodoma, Tanzania's capital, told the Dodoma Municipal Council about the successes in Mwanza. The LIFE office then organized a study visit for representatives of the Dodoma Municipal Council and some active CBOs to observe LIFE's activities in Mwanza and Dar es Salaam. The visits resulted in the Dodoma Municipal Council's decision to replicate the Mwanza experience by upgrading a major cattle market in the capital.

The success of LIFE's downstream-upstream stage with its micro-macro linkages inspired many local authorities in Tanzania to experiment with the LIFE experience and adopt its methodology. The Mwanza Municipal councillors noted that, although LIFE's projects are small-scale, thanks to the participation of grass roots communities and municipal councils, their ultimate impact becomes very important.

LIFE also had an impact on the National Income Generating Programme, the key government intervention for reducing poverty, which built on the LIFE experience by investing in a massive modernization of the Mwaloni market and by extending credit to the small-scale fishermen who are its main suppliers. When the initial LIFE-funded market structures in Mwaloni were removed to give way to a Japanese-funded ultra-modern, multi-million dollar fish market, the CBOs and stakeholders were consulted through a consensus-building process. The fact that the new ultra facilities are building upon an idea first conceived through the LIFE programme is a matter of great satisfaction. The inclusive approach that has been followed during this transition is a testament to the sustainability of participatory methodologies demonstrated by the early LIFE projects in Tanzania.

### ***Political impact***

One of the most important achievements of LIFE is the impact it has had on local and national politics by making people more politically engaged in the local democratic process. It has done this by empowering people at the community level to participate in grass roots democracy and by creating structures that enable them to have a voice, form strategic partnerships and lobby elected officials on their own behalf. It has enabled people to participate and to be truly engaged, not only at the community level but also at the municipal level. In a number of instances, these activities have helped to shape local political agendas.

Every country has reported the formation of new, mostly community-based, civil society organizations. The process of dialogue, experience-sharing and partnership has also resulted in the formation of formal organizations at city and national levels. Table 7, based on the 2000 evaluation, illustrates this achievement, which continues to date.

**Table 7: Number of new groups formed as a result of the LIFE process\* (phase I-III)**

CBOs and cooperatives:	16
City and national-level networks and federations of CBOs:	5
City-level civil society groups:	5
City-level and national networks of NGOs:	1
National partnership groups:	1
NGOs:	7

Source: 2000 LIFE Global Evaluation

\*These new groups have been formally established and do not include those that were created only for the purpose of implementing the SSPs.

Community empowerment, capacity development and organization, especially of poor communities, also help to replace political patronage with participatory local governance. For example, despite policy frameworks that are favourable to decentralization and popular participation, political dynamics are likely to determine how far such partnerships will bring real improvements to the living conditions of the poor, and how far the improvements will be sustained in the long term. Such questions loom large in countries where patron-client relationships between politicians and poor communities are deeply entrenched. It is well established that dependence on patrons thwarts self-reliance and collective action, both of which are essential elements of LIFE. Community empowerment and organization increase the political bargaining strength of low-income groups by helping them build constituencies that withstand political manipulation and encourage representation of their interests.

### ***Influencing policies and practices at municipal and national levels***

*Changes at the municipal level* LIFE experience demonstrates that the process of influencing policy is gradual. Nevertheless, in several countries, governments have initiated small but significant changes. Moreover, the experience of SSPs has demonstrated that even without major changes, considerable improvements in environmental conditions in poorer areas are possible. As a result of the demonstrated impact of SSPs, the process of integrating LIFE's approach and methodology into the administration of certain functions of local authorities is beginning to take place in several project cities.

In Thailand, for example, several municipalities, as a result of their interaction with the LIFE programme, have established community development departments to facilitate popular participation and to support community initiatives. Some local authorities have made budgetary allocations for these activities. Setting up public forums to enhance interaction between civic officials and local people is an example of another measure adopted in Thailand to promote participatory approaches. The collaboration between LIFE and the MLT is a move to work together towards making the functioning of municipalities more participatory. LIFE Senegal has contributed towards a framework for the extension of Community Development Units at the municipal level. Colombia's municipality of Toluviejo provides a recent instance of where the LIFE approach has been integrated into the municipal planning process.

*Changes at the national level* In Jamaica, a remarkable achievement of LIFE is the creation of the National Sanitation Task Force, which emerged out of a LIFE-facilitated policy dialogue (see Box 21). The Task Force was set up by interested participants to implement the recommendations of the dialogue. It has designed a policy framework and prepared a compendium of successful approaches to low-cost sanitation. It has acquired considerable expertise

and credibility within the few years of its operation, and even public authorities respect its advice. Another new NGO, the Sanitation Institute of Jamaica, was being formed at the same time to focus on sanitation improvement in Jamaica. Although resource constraints have restricted the activities of the Sanitation Institute of Jamaica, the issues and concerns raised in the dialogue support the need for such a non-governmental entity. In Jamaica, LIFE has thus played a strategic role in facilitating a change in the policy approach towards the provision of sanitation in poor areas. This initiative has great potential to impact policies and programmes related to sanitation, and in the long run to reduce degradation of the urban environment. Its credibility even with public authorities is an indication of the influence of LIFE on government programmes.

In addition, Jamaica's Local Government Reforms Programme is using the LIFE methodology to secure community participation in local governance. The Parish Infrastructure Development Project is using the LIFE approach in planning local infrastructure projects. LIFE's Portmore Gardens project is to be endorsed by the Ministry of Water and Housing as a model for solving settlement and land tenure issues of unplanned and informal settlements. There are also indications that other windows of opportunity may open for the integration of the LIFE approach in national policies.

In Jamaica, LIFE focuses on the two national priorities of poverty eradication and environmental protection, and the government wants to encourage community ownership of projects. LIFE presents an opportunity to help the government accomplish its goal. The Planning Institute of Jamaica (part of the Ministry of Finance) has been very appreciative of the LIFE programme and has extended support to it.

LIFE grantees attend the launch of a Household Garbage Management project (Senegal)



**Box 21: Establishing the National Sanitation Task Force in Jamaica**

Many sanitation projects have been completed or are currently underway in Jamaica, involving a wide range of government agencies, NGOs, CBOs, service clubs and churches. Yet until recently there was no coordination among them, no overall planning, development guidelines or management. Nevertheless, a natural partnership had emerged among government, NGOs, bilateral agencies and other actors. Because of its track record of promoting partnerships to implement successful projects dealing with water, sanitation and waste management in Jamaica, LIFE Jamaica was asked to help facilitate the dialogue between partners in the sanitation sector.

Through this facilitation process, LIFE coordinated the establishment of a planning committee consisting of representatives from the public health departments, Environmental Control Division, sanitation engineers working in the sector, U.S. Peace Corps, the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica and the Construction Resource and Development Centre, a Jamaican NGO that focuses on shelter and sanitation. In addition, new partnerships were formed, for example with the Planning Institute of Jamaica. Also involved in the process was an NGO in formation called the Sanitation Institute of Jamaica, which focused on improving the conditions of sanitation in Jamaica.

In July 1997, LIFE convened a National Dialogue on Sanitation towards Policy Formation. Eighty-seven people attended, results were published and a follow-up task force was set up. The seminar focused on assisting the various sectors in implementing their individual solutions, rather than on creating yet another bureaucracy to implement one particular sanitation solution. This involved creating guidelines for the participating sectors on how to improve the availability of low-cost sanitation and how to improve interchange and collaboration. During the forum, the following objectives were identified: examine the options for low cost sanitation in Jamaica; propose strategies to provide suitable, cost-effective sanitation; and promote collaboration and partnerships in the sanitation sector.

The seminar was designed to provide a forum for the sharing of ideas and experiences on low-cost sanitation solutions and the formulation of clear guidelines. The first step was to consolidate informal dialogue by bringing the various practitioners and stakeholders in sanitation together – including community groups that were struggling to find solutions – to share their experiences and discuss issues of cost, design and implementation. The total project budget was US \$2,833 of which LIFE provided US \$750.

The seminar consisted of a plenary session where various speakers made presentations, followed by focus group sessions on the following topics: Towards Standards in Design and Construction; Strategies for Developing Partnerships at the Community Level; How Planning Impacts the Choices for Sanitation Solutions; and Strategies for Reducing Costs in Sanitation.

The seminar produced a list of successful alternative approaches to the implementation of sanitation projects at an affordable cost, and a set of recommendations on how to improve the availability of low-cost sanitation to target groups.

Subsequent to the workshop, three follow-up meetings were held over a period of eight months. At the first meeting, participants conducted a review of the seminar and

formulated a plan for follow-up activities. At the second, a Sanitation Task Force was formed and projects were identified for consideration. At the third meeting participants agreed on three projects to be developed. The primary accomplishment of this LIFE project was the establishment of a National Sanitation Task Force to carry forward recommendations through subsequent meetings and activities.

Indeed, the seminar and workshops in themselves were important steps towards creating collaboration in the sanitation sector, which was a primary reason for creating the Task Force in the first place.

There were other positive outcomes as well. “The seminar highlighted some of the gaps in the way the regulatory system has been dealing with informal settlements,” noted the Director of the Environmental Control Division at the Ministry of Health. It also strengthened new working relationships. After one follow-up meeting, the Coastal Water Quality Improvement Project and other participants met, for the first time, with some of the people they would work with during project execution.

On the social side, a major recognition has been that at the leadership level in the sanitation sector, women and men participate on an equal level.

In terms of economic impact, stipends were paid to some for preparing papers to be presented at the seminar. But most importantly, a public consequence emerging from the Strategies for Reducing Costs directly addresses the issue of making sanitation more affordable for the poor, thereby improving their livelihoods.

In Tanzania, LIFE’s impact was perceptible in the form of improved social dialogue. Local authorities were impressed with LIFE because of the change it brought about in the mindset of the people, manifested by their willingness to pay for services. To promote SSPs, a law was passed that required local authorities to devote 10 percent of their revenue to support small, income-generating projects led by women and youth. In addition, municipalities where LIFE had funded projects adopted the practice of working with CBOs for a number of initiatives, including collecting municipal taxes and fees.

In Pakistan, the UNDP country office has taken the lead in institutionalizing the LIFE approach and has started two projects that involve cooperation between local authorities and citizens for social mobilization and the building of social capital. LIFE has also embarked upon negotiations for implementing a municipal-community partnership programme for providing urban services. This will be a pilot project to provide an example and a model for other small towns. At the policy level, LIFE has provided important inputs to the National Shelter Policy.

LIFE Colombia has gained upstream influence in several areas. As a result of the dissemination of information on the LIFE process, the Governor of Bolivar recognized the potential of small projects to build social capital and improve living conditions. Several policy-level outcomes concerning the Magdalena River have also been underway. A national policy impact meeting was held to define national policies for the recuperation of Canal del Dique. A doc-

ument and a final declaration were underwritten by the participants, who included Bolivar's Governor, senators, chamber representative members, deputies, town's councilmen, mayors, national, departmental and municipal public entities, private sector, communities, NGOs and the French Embassy. A second forum is planned to move the process further ahead. Furthermore, LIFE Colombia has also contributed to the design of a draft sub-regional policy on moist soil for the Canal and the Bay of Cartagena.

In Egypt, the Ministry of Youth was impressed with the results of LIFE projects and announced a generous grant for the implementation of youth-based environmental improvement projects in each of the country's 26 governorates. In Bangladesh, LIFE was involved in the development of the National Human Settlements Strategy. In Lebanon, although replication of projects has been limited, LIFE's policy on waste, reduce-recycle-reuse, was incorporated into the national environmental policy. LIFE is also integrally involved in complementing the Government's new legal framework for integrated solid waste management by preparing municipalities throughout the country to function within the framework. It is expected that as more small municipalities begin to take on the task of solid waste management in response to national policy, there will be increased adoption of community-based approaches and community-municipality partnerships.

Above all, these examples both at municipal and national levels demonstrate the change in official perceptions regarding community-based initiatives and the recognition of their potential to improve environmental conditions in cities.



Balloting for resettlement plots in *katchi abadis* being observed by the area residents (Pakistan)

### Box 22: Regularization of *katchi abadis* in Islamabad (Pakistan)

For several years, the LIFE Programme has worked with the Capital Development Authority (CDA), a government agency, on regularization of *katchi abadis* (squatter settlements) in Islamabad. In 1995 LIFE initiated a dialogue with the CDA to devise a mechanism for regularization and upgrading of squatter settlements in the capital. To set the pace, LIFE provided grant assistance to PIEDAR, an NGO, to carry out socio-economic and physical surveys of existing squatter settlements. On the basis of these surveys, CDA initially agreed to regularize and upgrade those settlements that were not constructed on amenity plots, green or sensitive areas. But the problem with this was that existing laws did not allow these actions. Furthermore, CDA did not have the human resources to do so. To overcome these problems CDA established a *katchi abadi* cell (department). In order to hire Geographical Imaging Systems (GIS) experts and additional staff, LIFE provided a grant of US \$50,000 over a three-year period. This helped CDA in updating its existing records, reassessing the validity of previous surveys and identifying new construction in these settlements after the cut-off date.

The CDA accepted and adapted the Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority (SKAA) model of incremental development. The CDA-SKAA cooperation represents a unique partnership for infrastructure development whereby, rather than turning to outside, often foreign assistance, all the technical assistance required has been acquired from another, innovative government agency.

In order to pave the way for legal instruments to regularize the squatter settlements, upstream advocacy was carried out with the federal government. A National Committee on Katchi Abadis, Urban Renewal and Slum Upgradation was established to propose a long-term solution to the problems of *katchi abadis*. The committee was entrusted with the task of formulating a national policy on *katchi abadis* to provide a framework for regularization of squatter settlements in Pakistan. The policy was endorsed in January 2001.

The LIFE grant acted as a catalyst and CDA contributed land worth US \$3.45 million, whereas communities agreed to upgrade services in their area on a self-help basis, mobilizing community resources to the tune of US \$382,950. The detailed plans for regularization or resettlement of 6 out of 10 squatter settlements in Islamabad have already been completed.

In addition to regularizing existing settlements, CDA has also agreed to provide residential plots for the municipal service providers in all the new residential areas developed in Islamabad. The Alternative Energy Development Board and the Islamabad Capital Territory administration recently decided to launch a solar energy project to provide electric power to the relocation site of Alipur Faras.

### **Mainstreaming LIFE in UNDP countries, programmes and policies**

Mainstreaming in this case refers to the integration of the LIFE approach, methodology and mechanisms into the programmes, agenda and policies of UNDP and the donor community globally and at the country level. At the country level, mainstreaming involves using country-level resources and advocacy for local-local dialogue, micro-macro linkages, participation and partnership-based activities and methodologies in both existing LIFE countries and in non-LIFE countries where the demand exists.

*Mainstreaming in existing LIFE countries* Pakistan, Tanzania and Thailand are among the countries that have successfully adopted the LIFE approach in other UNDP programmes. In Pakistan, where participatory approaches involving the community and supporting good governance are very much part of the UNDP country strategy, LIFE provided exactly the kind of entry point that UNDP was looking for. The LIFE methodology has had a significant influence on the UNDP country office, including the solid waste management programme and the Programme for Improvement of Livelihoods in Urban Settlements, which was initiated in three urban centers of Punjab in 1998, leading to further scaling-up in the form of a project entitled National Urban Poverty Alleviation Programme, which targeted 10 cities. The country office has also allotted financial resources for LIFE. Some of LIFE Pakistan's SSPs have also received support and recognition from The Urban Governance Initiative, a regional UNDP programme. In Thailand, the UNDP country office-initiated Thai-UNCAP (UN Collaborative Action Plan) of 1998-1999 is another example of LIFE mainstreaming. Some communities that had previously received funding from LIFE went on to work with Thai-UNCAP. Currently, the country office is implementing the Partnership for Local Empowerment through Democratic Governance in five cities, and LIFE Thailand is one of its mechanisms for strengthening local communities and local governance. In Tanzania, LIFE has been mainstreamed into the UNDP country office's integrated Small Grants Programme, and although there is no independent LIFE programme, LIFE's principles continue to be applied.

Successful mainstreaming requires more substantive advocacy than mere presentation of LIFE's achievements. In every country, the NC, NSC and UNDP LIFE Focal Point need to be well informed about the possible synergies between the LIFE methodology and other ongoing programmes of UNDP and other donors. As seen in some countries like Kyrgyzstan, regular presentation by the NC on the progress of work helps improve the UNDP staff's understanding about the programme. UNDP is then able to provide timely support to LIFE and realize synergies. The presence of UNDP members on the NSC (as in Jamaica) and at important LIFE events also helps to bridge the gap between the two. Such steps greatly advance the mainstreaming and institutionalization of LIFE.

While much has been done to mainstream LIFE within UNDP, there remains considerable room for creating stronger linkages between LIFE and ongoing country programmes and activities so as to increase the impact of LIFE by giving it access to a much larger network of partners, resources and, generally, a broader sphere of influence. The MDGs present a particular opportunity in this regard, given their importance as the principal operating framework for UNDP country offices and the relevance of LIFE's experience.

*Mainstreaming in new countries* Many new countries, particularly in Africa, have shown an interest in LIFE. The demand has been fueled largely by the knowledge of LIFE's achievements. These countries find LIFE's focus on urban issues, upstream-downstream-upstream approach and the tool of dialogue to be a concrete and unique way of directly reaching the urban poor and assisting in solving their immediate problems, while at the same time

creating enabling conditions for local governance and for influencing policies. At the global level, LIFE has developed a guidebook containing step-by-step guidelines to assist country offices that wish to initiate a LIFE programme or adopt its approach. Online and onsite technical advice has been provided by the global LIFE programme to several countries, including India, Uganda, Malawi, Chad, El Salvador, Mongolia, Djibouti, Mauritius, Benin and Ethiopia, to explore various entry-points for initiating a LIFE programme or mainstreaming the LIFE approach in UNDP work. For example, LIFE assisted Chad in developing a project that would use the LIFE approach to link community initiatives and citywide solid waste management.

Despite these efforts, the reality is that limited resources have made it difficult to respond to the demand for the LIFE programme in UNDP country offices. An advocacy and financing strategy needs to be developed to capitalize on interest in new countries and to provide them with the tools to mainstream the LIFE methodology. The MDGs provide an entry-point and a rationale for doing so.

*Mainstreaming within UNDP policies and programmes* Advocacy for mainstreaming LIFE within UNDP has been mainly through inter-division and inter-bureau working groups, task forces etc., and through publications. Several UNDP publications and policies have used LIFE as an example and illustration. These include UNDP Poverty Reports (1998 and 1999), UNDP's Policy on Capacity Development, UNDP's Policy on Governance and Strategy on Urban Development, and 'Decentralized Governance for Development: A Combined Practice Note on Decentralization, Local Governance and Urban/Rural Development' (2004). LIFE experiences have also been featured in the UNDP bulletins *Newsfront* and *Choices*.

At the programme level, LIFE has inspired, and been inspired by, other UNDP small grants programmes. One important example is the GEF-SGP, which focuses on global environmental issues. Like LIFE, GEF-SGP uses a participatory process and approach, engaging local people in implementing environmental solutions. The two programmes have mutually benefited from and influenced each other. In Pakistan, Egypt and Kyrgyzstan, the programmes have shared the same NC to capture synergies. In every country where the two programmes have been located, they seem to have maintained a continuous dialogue, and learnt from each other about local participation methods for working with the poor, achieving sustainable development, and forming effective partnerships.

*Supporting community initiatives: the need for flexibility* Over the years, LIFE has helped change the global perception of UNDP. The organization is now seen as being open and amenable to addressing community-level needs. The implementation of the LIFE programme indicates the need for creating a supportive structure and framework for community-based small grants programmes, with simple and flexible procedures. The projects and small grants are usually too short in duration to benefit from fixed or regular reporting, and function best when feedback is received at specific stages. It is also important that any arrangements made to utilize funds more efficiently, such as integrating all small grants programmes, do not compromise the flexibility and simplicity of procedures. Also, it is very important that the special character of the LIFE programme and its close links with grass roots organizations be maintained.

### Addressing sustainability

Sustainability is a crucial goal for LIFE, and one that LIFE strives to achieve as a country programme, as a global programme and as a methodology.

LIFE pursues sustainability as a methodology for participatory local governance through all the mechanisms for upstreaming, up-scaling and mainstreaming described in the preceding sections. As a global programme and methodology, LIFE is currently undergoing a strategic planning exercise to review and devise administrative, structural and resource options for sustainability in the future. These options are discussed further in Chapter 7.

At the country level, sustainability has long been a serious concern, and various options have been considered, including marketing LIFE's services and its experience with poor communities to national governments and other clients; establishing a national-level trust fund, foundation or NGO; and institutionalizing partnerships and dialogue at various levels after the end of a national LIFE programme, possibly with support from provincial governments and local authorities.

LIFE countries have accumulated a range of experiences in using these tools. Perhaps the most successful has been LIFE Jamaica, recently registered as LIFE Ltd., a stand-alone, non-profit entity. Several approaches are being considered to make the institution self-sustaining and its nascent efforts have achieved very promising results (see Box 23).



Color coded garbage bins for waste management and recycling on Helwan University campus (Egypt)

**Box 23: Institutionalizing LIFE in Jamaica: establishing LIFE Ltd., a local non-governmental organization**

During the phase IV period, LIFE Jamaica began implementing a plan for institutionalization. The plan was based on the recognition that the sustainability and self-sufficiency of LIFE Jamaica would depend upon its ability to generate sustainable sources of income by leveraging its core strengths and competencies. Thus began the transition of LIFE Jamaica to an independent non-profit entity, LIFE Ltd. This transition envisioned a number of sources of income for self-sustainability, including community and environmental consulting fees, community and environmental training fees, project management fees, corporate sponsorship, fund-raising activities, interest income on investments, and donor funding.

An exit strategy was implemented for transitioning the programme from its previous legal and administrative status. In July 2003, LIFE Ltd. was registered with the concerned authorities as a local NGO. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with another local NGO, the People's Action for Community Transformation (PACT), to share overheads and administrative costs and collaborate on fund management, marketing services and project implementation. PACT was selected as a partner because of similarities in its goals and approach. As an NGO that was established by 20 other NGOs and CBOs working primarily in the inner city communities of the Greater Kingston Metropolitan area, PACT employs participatory strategies much like LIFE. It works to establish a collaborative framework for strengthening NGOs and CBOs through partnerships, training, technical support, fund-raising and information gathering. PACT's established legal status also provided LIFE Ltd. with the ability to enter into contracts whilst undergoing the process of registration.

Since getting off the ground, LIFE Ltd. has mobilized grant funds of US \$446,000 to support social, environmental and economic initiatives as part of its sustainability strategy, and garnered fee-based consultancy contracts of US \$160,000. The overall resource mobilization during the 2004-2005 period has been over US \$610,000, including the contribution of the global LIFE programme and local resources leveraged for the community projects. The Board of Directors and staff have been put into place. Furthermore, the NSC has been deliberately retained as a stakeholder forum. It is particularly engaged in the upstreaming process and continues to be a central feature of LIFE Ltd.

LIFE Jamaica's experience provides a possible blueprint for other entities within and outside of LIFE that are thinking of undergoing similar transitions to achieve institutionalization.

Other countries are at various stages in the process of achieving sustainability. In an organizational sense, country programmes begun in phase I are more independent than those begun in phase II. Thailand, Senegal, Jamaica and Egypt are independently hosted or independent, while Bangladesh, Colombia, Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan are hosted by the UNDP country office (Pakistan is the exception, being a phase I country hosted by the UNDP country office). Countries with independent hosting may be better equipped to transition to sustainable structures. Countries currently hosted by UNDP have several models to follow: Jamaica's LIFE Ltd. model; hosting by or partnership with an independent NGO as in Egypt, Senegal and Thailand; mainstreaming within the UNDP country programme as in Brazil or Tanzania; and consolidation with the GEF-SGP as in Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Egypt, although this is a relatively short-term solution.

With a view towards financial and methodological sustainability, countries are experimenting with new strategies such as the institutionalization of partnerships. In Bangladesh, for example, the partners of LIFE have decided to form an alliance under the LIFE banner. With an independent existence, this alliance will be able to pursue funds from donors and other agencies. It will have the LIFE NC as its head and the LIFE NSC as its advisory body. Kyrgyzstan provides yet another innovative example. It has established a national-level NGO, Alliance of Local Initiative Facilities for Sustainable Development, which is an association of GEF-SGP and LIFE grantees. Constituted in January 2003, this NGO has undertaken many activities including giving technical and legal advice to its members, coordinating members' activities, initiating and developing projects, and establishing a channel for information and knowledge sharing among its members. It has also shown huge potential in the management of the programme and proved to be a worthy partner for donor programmes such as the Soros Kyrgyzstan Foundation.

The country context is a key determinant of sustainability. Thailand, as discussed earlier, presents one promising country context. The government has adopted a new constitution and prepared a national economic and social development plan, both of which have put into motion radical reforms in government policies and institutions. There are already institutions and mechanisms that give concrete shape to policies on environmental protection, popular participation and people's empowerment. LIFE has contributed to refining facets of programmes that can promote these policies. At the municipal level, significant decisions have been made that impact on the situation of the poor. Many of them have been inspired by LIFE and will ensure that the LIFE approach is sustained. In his involvement with local governments and the National Decentralization Commission, the NC has promoted the establishment of public forums to create avenues for greater interaction between people and civic officials. These measures are in their initial stages and need to be developed further to bring about the desired results. However, they contribute to a foundation that will help sustain the LIFE approach in Thailand, whatever the future form of the programme.

Regardless of the path taken towards sustainability, it is clear that the process, especially in countries where the context is unfavorable, or where organizational independence does not yet exist, is time-consuming. Reasonable transition periods are needed to firmly consolidate programme gains and realize well-rooted institutionalization. Although country context is an important determinant of the sustainability of LIFE, the fact remains that LIFE's focus issues of urban poverty elimination and environmental problem-solving are a priority in most countries, and that LIFE is reaching marginalized groups that multilateral agencies find difficult to reach. Many donors are looking for possibilities to achieve direct results at the local level, particularly in view of the MDGs. These factors provide many opportunities for sustaining LIFE – as a programme or a methodology – at both global and country levels.

### **The power of micro-macro linkages**

The third, upstream stage of LIFE is one that sets it apart from many other small-grants programmes. The focus on macro-micro linkages transforms and expands the potential of small initiatives, an essential step if large-scale impacts are to be realized in solving the vast problem of urban poverty. Although LIFE has already achieved significant gains in the last few years, the process of using the results of micro initiatives to influence policies at the macro level is still at an early stage. A long time-horizon is necessary for more results to be realized. At every level, LIFE must continue to build upon its downstream achievements and its existing assets to further influence policies for sustainable human development.



Partnering for development (Egypt)

## Chapter Six

### LIFE's global and regional activities and partnerships

Objective three of LIFE is to “promote the exchange of successful approaches and innovations for local urban environmental improvements at the sub-regional, regional and inter-regional levels, through NGO networks, cities associations and international agencies.” LIFE's global mechanisms and its regional and global activities respond to this objective. While the countries involved in the LIFE programme all demonstrate and test the LIFE approach, LIFE's activities at the global and regional levels broaden the scope of innovation and learning and strengthen the knowledge-creation and knowledge-dissemination efforts of the global programme. This chapter describes the coordination, support and advocacy roles of LIFE at the global level, the role of regional and global partnerships and the achievements, lessons and recommendations of the projects implemented through these partnerships.

#### **Global mechanisms for coordination, advocacy, technical support and knowledge management**

LIFE's main mechanisms for global coordination, advocacy, technical support and knowledge management are the Global LIFE Coordinator, the GAC and the annual GAC meetings. At the global level, LIFE also provides financial management to the participant country programmes.

#### ***The GAC***

The GAC is comprised of the diverse interests that support, participate in and learn from the LIFE Global Programme. In addition to the Global Coordinator, the NCs, and the donors, these have included the UNDP technical advisory team, UNOPS and other UN agencies, bilateral co-financing partners, regional and inter-regional NGOs and cities associations, mayors, NGOs and CBOs from the LIFE countries, members of NSCs, representatives of other UNDP global programmes concerned with micro-urban and/or environmental interventions, and other experts in methodological and technical subjects.

The role of the GAC has evolved over the lifetime of the programme. During phase I of LIFE, the main function of the GAC was to improve selection criteria for SSPs. In phase II, the GAC provided support in developing successful projects, and in phase III it focused on strengthening downstream-upstream linkages. In phase IV, the GAC has focused on helping more countries, donors and partners learn from the aggregated experience of the LIFE countries to enable them to apply LIFE's lessons regarding the role of local government, the role of civil society organizations in service delivery, and the role of partnerships to a variety of development initiatives.

***GAC workshops***

The GAC meets annually to review and assess the programme and to make proposals for the future. These meetings take place within a workshop format, and provide a forum for global learning and sharing. Each GAC meeting reviews the previous year's country-level, regional, inter-regional and global activities. Country-level reporting focuses on accomplishments, challenges and experiences. Selected global and regional partners also report at each meeting. The Global Coordinator's report summarizes the experiences to date and sets the stage for planning future activities. The workshops often use and demonstrate the local-local dialogue methods of LIFE. When the event is hosted in a LIFE programme country, participants visit the sites of some LIFE projects to see the work, and to meet and learn from the local actors at the point of their engagement.

In preparation for the upcoming year, GAC members propose activities, methods and strategies for implementing the plans presented by the LIFE Global and National Coordinators. Mini-workshops are used to focus on particular aspects of LIFE, and for the co-financing partners and donors to strategize.

GAC participants reflect on lessons learnt and the implications for the LIFE programme. The conclusions are documented for future use and are disseminated to promote learning.

The GAC contribution has been repeatedly affirmed as a very useful experience and a value added to LIFE. The essential benefit identified is that every meeting focuses on what has been learnt and how this knowledge may be applied to LIFE and used by all of the GAC participants. In particular, GAC meetings have had positive impact in four areas:

*Providing exposure to global experience* GAC participants are seasoned and experienced professionals in their fields and represent the best thinking their organizations have to offer. At each GAC meeting they bring their experience to bear on how to accomplish the objectives and respond to the challenges of each phase of LIFE.

*Engaging donors as a development resource* While many programmes see donors simply as financial sources, LIFE considers them to also be a resource for a wealth of development experience and a conduit for LIFE programme experiences to be communicated to others engaged in development.

*Disseminating LIFE's methodology and approach* At each GAC meeting, the NCs report on their activities and lessons learnt. This gives funding agencies and other participating organizations the opportunity to immediately learn from LIFE experiences and take away lessons for their own use. GAC meetings thus serve to disseminate LIFE methodologies through its participants and partner organizations. Representatives of organizations such as the Centre for African Settlement Studies and Development (CASSAD) have attributed such exposure to being instrumental in enhancing their own capacity to initiate and implement grass roots-oriented projects. Furthermore, the use of local-local dialogue within the GAC meetings provides a highly effective means for all LIFE's partners to experience, evaluate and contribute to the improvement of this methodology.

*Providing an opportunity for strengthening partnerships and bonding* An essential outcome of the dialogue and participation processes used in both the GAC meetings and NC meetings is a sense of being global partners in a common effort. These regular meetings serve to facilitate bonds that exceed the normal parameters of partnership. The bonds encompass elements of trust and confidence that enliven the roles of the various partners, particularly the

NCs, who have the continuous, day-to-day responsibility for implementing LIFE. The sense of kinship and camaraderie generated by LIFE's global meetings and workshops provides invaluable moral as well as technical support.

Overall, the GAC has been a platform for the exchange of views, performance review and monitoring. It has brought visibility and status to the programme and has been particularly useful as a device for engaging and influencing potential partners.

### ***Global technical support and coordination***

Technical support and coordination at the global level, which is primarily provided by the Global Coordinator, has evolved, corresponding in each of the four phases to the specific needs of that phase. Activities have included:

- providing advice and support to the LIFE countries in each stage of the LIFE approach;
- coordinating all LIFE programme activities at all levels;
- developing partnerships with regional and global NGOs and cities associations;
- promoting experience-sharing among countries and regions throughout the programme cycle;
- documenting and evaluating experiences, best practices and impacts; and
- analysing and disseminating LIFE's lessons learnt at the global, regional, country and local levels, to influence the practice and policy of participatory local governance, to address urban environmental issues and to improve the lives of the urban poor.

Global technical support thus provides necessary tools, and allows for the transfer of techniques and concepts. However, more use could be made of this facility, particularly through lateral exchanges among the countries themselves. There is a need to provide better access to tools, techniques and strategies to tackle specific issues such as gender mainstreaming and income generation.

### ***Global financial management***

Global financial management, facilitated by UNOPS, provides financial controls and management alternatives to normal UNDP country office procedures. However, a more flexible operational system needs to be devised, one that recognizes the particular nature of small grants and community-based and participatory projects and processes.

### ***Knowledge management***

Knowledge management at the global level facilitates the creation, documentation and dissemination of LIFE's knowledge as well as the publicizing of LIFE's achievements. LIFE has produced a variety of materials such as country-level case studies, evaluations of SSPs, videos, books, technical advisory papers, brochures, guidelines, etc., all of which contribute to a growing database for both advocacy and learning.

Global dissemination and advocacy has been undertaken through many means: LIFE participation and country case presentations in various regional and global events, such as the Global Conference on Regional Development Policy in Japan, the Global Workshop on Rural-Urban Linkages in Brazil, the World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty Forum in France, and the African Regional Conference of Local Authorities in Abidjan; a LIFE web page, created on the website of the Democratic Governance Group (UNDP/DGG), which houses recent LIFE publications, newsletters and reports; and the dissemination of reports and publications to UNDP country offices, to donors, to GAC member organizations and at major events. However, more can be done to disseminate documented experiences and information in local



On World Environment Day, children from Khlong-teoy community participate in a fashion show of clothes made from recycled waste material (Thailand)

languages. LIFE's knowledge management efforts overall can be enhanced by systematizing the process of documentation and by facilitating greater knowledge access and exchange.

### **The role of regional and global partnerships**

#### ***Country-level partnerships with regional and global organizations***

Most LIFE countries have a history of involvement with regional-level NGOs and CBOs. Examples of such organizations are the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR) and Habitat International Coalition (HIC), both of which have received support from the LIFE Global Programme for some of their regional and inter-regional activities.

From among the LIFE countries, Thailand and Pakistan have NGOs and CBOs that are associated with ACHR. They have benefited from exchange visits to other countries as well as from ACHR's efforts to build a regional network of NGOs and CBOs. Similarly, Brazil and Colombia benefited from HIC's regional capacity-development initiatives on alternative technologies for water supply and sanitation, supported by the LIFE Global Programme. In this way, LIFE has been able to base some of its projects on the work of existing networks in the participant countries. LIFE country programmes frequently partner with global organizations as well. A recent example is the partnership between LIFE Lebanon, the UNDP country office and the World Bank to organize the 2005 Lebanese Development Marketplace. The competition aimed at supporting community innovations and initiatives to clean up and protect the Lebanese landscape, air and water. Seven innovative projects were selected and jointly funded. Other recent examples are provided in Table 4.

#### ***Regional, inter-regional and global partners***

Regional and global partnerships provide mechanisms for developing, testing, documenting and disseminating participatory methodologies that complement LIFE's approach and methods. These regional and global partnerships serve to promote the policy and practice of local-local dialogue and partnerships for improving the living conditions of the urban poor in four primary ways:

- first, by complementing LIFE's approach with other successful methods and approaches;
- second, by expanding LIFE's learning laboratory to include learning about participatory methodologies for community-based solutions and local governance from many countries and communities beyond the LIFE countries;
- third, by encouraging regional and global NGOs, cities associations, donors and other agencies to engage in innovative methodologies for addressing urban poverty, environmental problems and urban local governance, thereby expanding the pool of global knowledge;
- fourth, by enabling LIFE to extensively disseminate its methods, experiences and results through networking with these institutions.

#### **Box 24: Selected regional, inter-regional and global NGOs and cities associations**

International Union of Local Authorities, Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East (IULA-EMME)

International Council for Local Environment Initiatives (ICLEI)

CityNet

MegaCities Project

Environmental Development Action in the Third World (ENDA-TM)

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)

Habitat International Coalition (HIC)

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Centre for African Settlement Studies and Development (CASSAD)

Huairou Commission

Grass Roots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS)

Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)

People's Dialogue

Formal regional and inter-regional partnerships were emphasized in the first three phases of LIFE. In order to select its partnerships, LIFE initially solicited recommendations and proposals from many prospective organizations. Through this process, numerous regional and inter-regional projects, implemented by several NGOs, cities associations and other agencies, were selected to be a partner with the LIFE Global Programme. Some of the criteria used in selecting the implementing agencies included:

- those with existing, proven and successful community-based environmental experiences involving participation and partnership approaches for the urban poor;
- those with documentation, evaluation and dissemination skills and avenues through which LIFE can exchange its experiences with others;
- those with experience in working directly with local municipal governments to promote partnership and participation approaches in the practice of good governance; and
- those with particular regional expertise for each of the developing regions of the globe.

When these projects were active, the selected organization had representatives on the LIFE GAC who shared their experiences with the NCs and the co-financing partners. The wide range and diversity of regional and global partners helped promote LIFE's objective of local-local dialogue among various partners for improving urban environmental conditions, and in the process enlarge the scope of LIFE beyond the programme countries. Box 24 gives some examples of organizations that have helped LIFE, over the years, to expand the pool of knowledge on local governance and community development.

**Table 8: Examples of inter-regional and global partners and LIFE-supported projects**

Regions	Partners	Project	Countries involved	Focus of activities
Asia, Latin America and Africa	Habitat International Coalition (HIC)	Promotion of successful drinking water and sanitation technologies	Pakistan, India, Senegal, Kenya, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Mexico	Documentation and dissemination of best practices
	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)	Local Agenda 21 Model Communities Programme	Tanzania, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Thailand, India, PNG, Australia and New Zealand	Regional and interregional training and dialogue
Asia and Arab States	MegaCities Project	Transfer of solid waste management innovation from Cairo to Manila and Bombay	Egypt, India, Philippines	Identification and transfer of grass roots innovations
Asia and Africa	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	Bombay-South Africa Poor Peoples' Exchange	India, South Africa	Regional, interregional dialogue
Global	World Health Organization (WHO)	Healthy Cities Project	Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Nicaragua, Tanzania	Dissemination of best practices

Source: UNDP- LIFE supported inter-regional project proposals (phases I-III: 1992-1999)

**Table 9: Examples of regional partners and LIFE-supported projects**

Regions	Partners	Project	Countries involved	Focus of activities
Africa	Centre for African Settlement Studies and Development (CASSAD)	Africa NGO Network Workshop	Nigeria	Networking and interchange of best practices
		Regional capacity building for community- based solid waste management	Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia	Documentation of best practices, experience sharing and training
	Environmental Development Action in the Third World (ENDA-TM)	Documentation and dissemination of community- based approaches in West Africa	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger and Senegal	Networking and interchange of best practices
Asia	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	People's Plan for the 21st Century	India, South Africa	Grass roots participation and inter-regional dialogue
	CityNet	Regional training workshop on waste water management	India, Indonesia Nepal, Pakistan, P. R. China, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand	Community-based technologies documentation and transfer
Latin America	Habitat International Coalition (HIC)	Training and exchange in Latin America	Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador and Peru	Community-based technologies documentation and transfer
Arab States	Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)	Information and exchange, newsletter, private sector workshop	Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia	Networking and exchange of best practices among NGOs, government and the private sector
	International Union of Local Authorities- Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (IULA-EMME)	Arab Env. NGO directory documentation and exchange of information on successful projects and institutions	Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia	Networking and exchange of best practices among NGOs, government and the private sector

Source: UNDP, selected LIFE regional project proposals (phases I-III: 1992-1999)

## Key results and accomplishments at the global and regional levels

During its first three phases, LIFE supported 17 regional and global projects implemented by 11 organizations and involving 29 countries (some examples of these collaborative projects are provided in Tables 8 and 9). LIFE's support for such regional and global activities resulted in the creation of innovative methodologies and new technologies, documentation and capacity development of various stakeholders. It expanded LIFE's global learning laboratory of the 12 original countries, to include about 40 countries for continued learning and refinement of participatory approaches to improve local governance and the urban environment. While global, regional and inter-regional projects were not emphasized during phase IV of the programme, many informal activities and partnerships continued. The results achieved through the formal partnerships indicate a need for continuing such a strategy in the future.

### *Initiating and sustaining dialogue*

*Advocating for collaboration* LIFE's participation in regional forums is an important means of initiating and sustaining dialogue to support local governance and environmental improvements for the urban poor. For example, LIFE and the Nigerian government supported a post-Istanbul Habitat II all-African NGO workshop (organized by CASSAD and held in Abuja, Nigeria in 1996) involving 90 NGOs from across Africa. Participants and observers also included UNDP and UNICEF in Nigeria, relevant ministries from the government of Nigeria, and LIFE NCs from Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania.

The workshop gave the Africa NGO caucus the opportunity to chart a course of action for the immediate future. It served to cement the spirit of regional cooperation established in Istanbul, and to find ways to continue the dialogue among African NGOs, between African NGOs and governments in Africa and between African NGOs and donor agencies. Since Abuja, several follow-up workshops have been held.

*Facilitating inter-regional dialogue among the poor to influence policy* LIFE provided support to ACHR for a three-year South Africa-India Poor People's Exchange Programme involving the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres in Mumbai (India), People's Dialogue in South Africa, and IBA Media Group. The programme helped bring grass roots women into dialogue on their housing problems and possible solutions. This innovative method of experience-sharing was recognized as an empowering tool that brings the poor together in solidarity and helps influence policies. Support was also provided to organize a regional conference, 'The People's Plan for the 21st Century', and to develop radio documentaries and publications.

*Advocating for dialogue and community mobilization* Through presentations and discussions at CityNet's regional training workshop and dialogue on waste water management, community mobilization was demonstrated to be one of the most effective tools that can be used, particularly in the context of South Asia. LIFE's support of the project was useful for promoting the concepts of partnership and local-local dialogue. Also, through CityNet's experience, waste water management was recognized as an important entry-point for community participation, as effectively demonstrated by the Sri Lankan NGO, Sevanatha, and the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority of Pakistan. They presented ways in which a city can enter into partnerships with the community and devise solutions to meet the immediate needs of the people. They also demonstrated that innovative ideas can emerge if a community is mobilized with appropriate guidance.

***Developing the capacities of local actors***

*Training in innovative methodologies* In response to the need for municipal capacity-building for operationalizing Local Agenda 21, LIFE supported the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives' (ICLEI) Local Agenda 21 Model Communities Programme to conduct regional training workshops on Local Agenda 21 planning, evaluation and research frameworks and environmental auditing and action planning. It also supported the publication of ICLEI's newsletter, *LA21 Network News* to disseminate news and lessons.



A waste processing and removal plant in Archa-Beshik district, based upon innovative and ecologically-friendly technologies (Kyrgyzstan)

The Model Communities Programme developed a planning framework involving the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships, city-level consultations, issue analysis and local action planning, implementation and monitoring. It conducted regional workshops in Asia, the Pacific and Latin America to build the capacity of several municipalities and of civil society to implement this planning framework. As a result, 14 municipalities in 11 countries initiated Local Agenda 21 processes that brought together 392 partners, including municipalities, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector, trade unions, academia and the media, and involved more than 30,000 people who directly participated in city-level consultations and in developing local action plans.

*Building multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development* Through workshops on issue analysis and action planning in Mwanza (Tanzania) and Jinja (Uganda), ICLEI's Local Agenda 21 Model Communities Programme built the capacity of 165 actors and technicians from municipalities, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector and academia, to work together. They also developed methods to incorporate local knowledge in city-level environmental analysis and action plans. The World Health Organization's (WHO) Healthy Cities Project promoted and demonstrated this multi-stakeholder participation in developing city health plans and activities in schools, street food markets and other venues.

*Supporting regional training workshops* In a collaborative venture with LIFE, CityNet's 1996 regional training workshop on waste water management in Colombo, provided direct training to 57 participants from nine countries and produced the publication, *Waste Water Management in Asia*. This publication included 11 city papers and three technical papers prepared by participants and resource persons. Five hundred copies were printed and disseminated to CityNet members and relevant organizations, and a summary of the publication was included on CityNet's website for wider distribution.

This programme led to further follow-through actions in the CityNet/Yokohama waterworks training programme held in 1999. This involved Seoul, Mumbai and the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) of Sri Lanka. Through CityNet, the NWSDB was able to secure a working relationship with Sevanatha in Sri Lanka to address the issue of community stakeholders' involvement and participation in their water supply project.

***Developing and testing participatory approaches***

*Attracting participation by raising awareness* The LIFE-funded Healthy Cities Project of WHO developed a methodology incorporating LIFE's approach of funding SSPs. WHO, LIFE and the Netherlands government (DGIS) collaborated in five cities: Quetta (Pakistan), Cox's Bazaar (Bangladesh), Managua (Nicaragua), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), and Fayoum (Egypt). Four of these cities are in LIFE countries. The Healthy Cities Project methodology introduced health-awareness through a variety of media mechanisms and forums to people at work, in their homes, at schools and in the market-place, leading to the development of a city health plan involving local participation.

*Supporting innovative technologies for community-based water and sanitation* HIC and LIFE identified 50 relevant urban experiences and documented 15 alternative methods for providing drinking water and sanitation in poor urban communities – four in Africa, four in Asia and seven in Latin America. A national workshop was held in Fortaleza (Brazil), a training workshop in Cali (Columbia) and three internships in Mexico, Ecuador and Peru. All these activities involved intensive exchange of information and technologies for achieving potable water and sanitation in the urban environment. In phase III LIFE also provided support to CASSAD for capacity building in community-based technologies for waste management.

### ***Documentation and dissemination***

*Sharing LIFE's lessons* In phase II, RAED provided LIFE with a valuable mechanism for ensuring that the approach, methods and lessons learnt by LIFE in Egypt and Lebanon were accessible to other Arab countries and Turkey. In partnership with IULA-EMME, RAED provided monitoring, documentation and evaluation of the lessons learnt regarding participation and partnership in LIFE SSPs in Egypt and Lebanon. RAED was able to provide feedback to the LIFE programme for the improvement of its project implementation. Then, through a series of country-level workshops in Jordan, Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco (all non-LIFE countries), these findings were presented and discussed with NGOs and municipal local governments and experienced through a cooperative activity using LIFE methods. LIFE furthered its dissemination activities in the Arab region by its participation in the Arab States Local Governance Forum in Sana'a (Yemen, 2003), where LIFE Egypt's experiences were disseminated. LIFE also supported the Huairou Commission in documenting and disseminating best practices for a global database and case studies on the role of women in developing sustainable communities and good local governance.

*Publishing conference and research results* CityNet, in collaboration with UNCHS CDA, published *Partnership for Local Action: A Sourcebook on Participatory Approaches to Shelter and Human Settlements Improvement for Local Government*. This was piloted at the CityNet regional workshop on locally initiated training for local government officials on community participation in 1997 in Surabaya (Indonesia). The sourcebook identifies issues and case studies that illustrate how local authorities can respond to problems of urban poverty in a community-sensitive way. The ENDA/LIFE programme produced three videos and held workshops on community development and local governance.

### ***Peer-to-peer experience-sharing and transfers***

*Global and regional sharing* LIFE-supported projects and activities with ACHR, CityNet, HIC, and MegaCities promoted and facilitated international exchanges on global urban problems such as solid waste, housing and water. These exchange programmes allowed people from different backgrounds to reflect and interact on common problems, to understand the impact of global trends on their communities and to discuss local solutions for these problems. Peer-to-peer knowledge transfer at the global level was also facilitated through the 2002 GAC meeting held in Johannesburg in conjunction with the WSSD. Marking 10 years of LIFE, this meeting revolved around the theme of Sharing and Listening. It was organized in collaboration with the Municipality of Mogale, the UNDP country office, Huairou Commission, GROOTS, ICLEI, Equator Initiative and Public Private Partnerships for Urban Environment (PPPUE). Four workshop modules unfolded at different venues for direct and in-depth interface among stakeholders. A one-day workshop entitled A Decade of Local Sustainable Development: Lessons Learnt from UNDP/LIFE and ICLEI/LA21 was organized in the WSSD parallel session on local governance. More than 300 people participated in the various workshops.

*Successful transfers* In LIFE's phase I, MegaCities documented the origin of innovations through nine case studies of urban environmental projects located in nine mega-cities. In phase II, MegaCities tested and facilitated the transfer of LIFE's Zabaleen solid waste management project from Cairo to Manila and Mumbai. In Manila, a great deal of local participation with a broad base of stakeholders made importing and adapting the transfer a success. Mumbai took a more institutional approach, which did not involve local communities until the design stage was complete. At this point the process stalled. They backtracked, started over and put local participation up front.

*Study visits* CityNet conducted study visits on various urban issues to allow cities and NGOs to learn from best and good practices in the Asia-Pacific region. To make the programme effective and efficient, CityNet, in collaboration with LIFE, UNDP's unit on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and UN Centre for Human Settlements' Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme (BLP) published *Guidelines for Transferring Effective Practices: A Technical Manual on Methods for South-South Cooperation*. These guidelines provided an operational framework for participants to match supply with demand for expertise and experience and to engage in peer-to-peer learning.

Treated waste water is disposed while being harnessed for irrigation in Lodhran (Pakistan)





A waste management project contributes to cleaner streets in Yeumbeul (Senegal)



A young resident of a *katchi abadi*  
(Pakistan)

## Chapter Seven

### Lessons learnt and the future of LIFE

After over a decade of operational experience, LIFE has gathered a wealth of lessons, many of which are reflected throughout the preceding chapters on the LIFE process. This chapter takes stock of some of the broad, cross-cutting lessons that are applicable not merely within the programme, but also to other initiatives with similar objectives. The chapter also reflects on LIFE's comparative advantages, addresses some of its current operational challenges and looks at the strategic options for the future of the LIFE programme and methodology.

#### Lessons learnt

##### *Supporting community-based and partnerships-based approaches*

- Local communities must be at the centre of processes for achieving sustainable environmental improvements for the urban poor. Poor communities are closest to the problems of urban deprivation and degradation. Time and again, they have demonstrated that not only are they potential beneficiaries of external assistance from donors or governments, but also their proximity to the problems and their understanding of the local context and needs make them creative resources, active participants, discerning investors and willing initiators in the process of change. It is therefore critical that community-based approaches are supported.
- For community-based solutions to achieve sustainable and large-scale impact, they must be linked to local governance processes. The effectiveness of these efforts depends upon multi-sectoral partnerships. No one sector – civil society, government (local or national), private sector or the international development community – holds all the answers. It is in the partnerships formed among these sectors that sustainable solutions can be found. Programmes such as LIFE have an important role to play in brokering these partnerships and in providing a neutral space and opportunity for the dialogue that engenders partnerships.

##### *Developing capacity and empowering communities*

- Capacity development is key for mobilizing and empowering communities. People are willing to organize and undertake initiatives for their collective welfare if they are provided with the requisite skills, knowledge and awareness.
- Some of the best capacity-related investments include strengthening the capacity of local government to undertake participatory processes; the capacity of communities to organize and form inclusive associations; and the capacity of all sectors to engage as partners rather than as adversaries. The process of implementing SSPs can catalyse such capacity development.

- Community-empowerment in one area has spill-over effects in many other areas that are important to the poor. Urban community issues of water and sanitation and poor living conditions are inextricably linked with issues including lack of ownership of assets such as land, security of tenure and productive capacity. Communities feel empowered to address these issues once they have experienced success in or organized around, for example, water and sanitation projects, as these experiences build capacity in planning, partnership, advocacy and resource mobilization.
- Community skills development in non-traditional areas should be considered. As discussed above, issues related to property rights often need to be addressed to sustain the progress achieved in low-income settlements. Legal literacy of the poor and rights awareness are other areas for intervention.
- Creative methods should be used to engage poor people in discussing and learning about the environment and about sustainable development, as well as to involve them in the planning processes at the national and city levels.
- Both technical and community-based participation methods are essential to ensure sustainable achievements in solving urban environmental problems. Technically-oriented partners tend to discount the effectiveness of community-based participatory mechanisms. Thus, the technically-oriented must learn participation and dialogue skills, while participation enthusiasts must learn or appreciate practical, technical skills. Each needs to learn how to harness the other's comparative advantages and together instill a 'learning community' approach.
- Community capacity development for the maintenance of environmental improvements is essential to project sustainability. Project designs must include planning for, and creating, community-level maintenance systems for technologies once they are in operation.

*Developing partnerships and networks through dialogue*

- Municipalities are essential partners in replicating and sustaining local initiatives and the on-going participation of civil society organizations. Methods of fostering dialogue need to be used to involve local authorities in partnerships with civil society organizations and other actors. Institutional mechanisms to sustain partnerships and partnership approaches are greatly needed.
- Communities need physical and organizational space for engaging in dialogue. Hence, more attention is needed on providing physical space – schools, churches, community centres and other meeting spaces – where communities can gather to engage in dialogue and organize around the needs and issues that concern them.
- Global dialogue among local communities about practices and common concerns can give rise to new, potentially powerful networks and organizations. Encouragement and support from multilateral and bilateral donors can help maximize such global dialogue and promote policy changes.

*Refining participatory methods, tools and mechanisms for diverse audiences*

- Participatory methods and techniques are being continually refined through their use in varied settings and communities. These methods and experiences should continue to be documented, packaged, promoted and disseminated at all levels.

- Published case studies and reports of successful approaches, as well as video and audio tools are effective ways of providing detail in implementation techniques. These materials provide an important resource for participatory development efforts, and should be properly budgeted for in project costs.
- Different audiences and tasks call for different methods of participation. To encourage community participation, interactive methods, especially those that rely on face-to-face dialogue such as focus groups, workshops, seminars and planning processes, are far more effective than semi-interactive methods such as questionnaires. Experienced facilitators can make participatory processes more effective and efficient, and can help to facilitate dialogue among groups of different backgrounds.

#### *Broadening the scope of participation*

- Most communities are ethnic- or clan-based, and are formed and kept together by long-held traditions. This often tends to narrow communities' perceived options for solutions to their environmental concerns. As facilitators of dialogue, NGOs may help broaden the scope by bringing to the fore alternatives from the global community. Local-local dialogue furthers this process.
- Regional and inter-regional NGOs and cities associations collaborate both formally and informally to transfer what they are learning among themselves and with CBOs, national-level NGOs, government agencies and donors. However, more collaborative rather than competitive approaches to development involving multiple actors need to be encouraged, particularly by UN and donor agencies.
- Local government policy support for local environmental initiatives serves to decentralize responsibility and broaden the scope of action, and allows for community management of resources and assets. Proper contractual, legal and institutional mechanisms need to accompany such policies in order to make them effective and sustainable.

#### *Creating conditions for participatory, pro-poor local governance*

- Decentralization poses both opportunities and challenges for achieving improvements in the urban environment. Processes that strengthen participation in local governance are essential for ensuring that decentralization benefits rather than harms the poor. Where decentralization and local governance processes are underdeveloped, community-based initiatives must be intensively supported so that the poorest can, without delay, access the services to which they have a right.
- Promoting NGO, CBO and government cooperation improves local governance while reducing costs, decreasing duplication of efforts and broadening the impact of solving problems. National policies should formally promote such collaboration and cooperation, and provide financial and technical support to these efforts.
- Municipal councillors, local politicians and other local government officials often do not have the skills required for engaging communities in partnerships. There is a great need for developing the capacity of these actors to foster and sustain participatory local governance.
- Partnership-led initiatives are more effective when as many key stakeholders as possible, especially local government, are brought on board at the outset of any project. For large-scale

and longer-term operations, partnerships can be of two types: Overarching partnerships that stay with the process until the end, or needs-based partnerships that are created for special tasks. Keeping partners informed of all actions and decisions is necessary for transparency and for building trust.

- Involving the poor, women, youth and otherwise marginalized local community members in planning, implementation and monitoring local development processes is essential for pro-poor local governance, equity and justice.
- Successful participatory projects that achieve real and tangible improvements in service delivery and the urban environment, and raise local resources, are excellent advocacy tools for wearing down resistance to participation in local development and governance.

*Exchanging experiences: poor-to-poor and peer-to-peer*

- LIFE's experiences demonstrate that peer-to-peer learning can be extremely effective. Learning by seeing and doing among the poor, as in the MegaCities Egypt/Philippines innovation transfer and the ACHR South Africa/India exchange have been powerful and empowering experiences. The exchange of experiences between NGOs and governments must be augmented by the opportunity for the poor to learn effective technical and participatory skills from each other's projects and programmes.
- International exchanges allow diverse people to reflect and interact on common problems, and to understand how global trends affect their communities. Such exchanges need to be more accessible to the urban poor and need to be designed so that the urban poor can directly raise their concerns.

*Advocating for changes in policy and investments*

- New and effective participatory mechanisms, community-based technologies, planning methods and governance mechanisms are continually emerging through the creativity and ingenuity of development efforts. Global, regional and inter-regional development institutions are well positioned to advocate, both among themselves and at national and municipal levels of government, for changes in policy and investments that reflect this evolving learning. Proper documentation, packaging and dissemination of knowledge can help such processes of policy change and investment reorientation.
- It is well recognized that the problems of urban environment posed by the inexorable trend of urbanization are immense. Large-scale, country-owned solutions require policy changes that institutionalize among other things, participation, community-centred approaches, and also decentralization processes that truly empower local governments and local people. Micro-level experiences that demonstrate the success of these approaches can be linked to macro-level policy change, however this link is not automatic. Programmes such as LIFE must proactively make the connection between mechanisms such as SSPs and policy advocacy.

**The comparative advantages of LIFE, recommendations and future options**

Several assessments, including the 2000 global evaluation of LIFE and an e-discussion among key LIFE stakeholders in 2003, provide the following observations on the comparative advantages and strengths of the LIFE programme:

- the roles, contributions and calibre of the NCs;
- demonstration of the multi-dimensional benefits of small-scale projects;

- demonstration and projection of good practices with policy relevance;
- the results-oriented projects and processes;
- the facilitation of partnerships, especially among CBOs, NGOs and local authorities; capacity development, especially of communities, CBOs and NGOs; and community empowerment;
- the links with wide alliances, actors and networks;
- the replication of successful projects in most participant countries;
- the consultative and participatory approach;
- the easy and direct access to communities, even among the poorest of the poor, with direct relevance to their most immediate needs;
- the contribution to good governance;
- the high value for donor investment;
- the economic use of resources in project implementation;
- the in-built mechanisms and explicit focus on micro-macro linkages;
- the programme's neutrality, transparency and credibility, which attracts diverse actors including the private sector;
- the well-established mechanisms for multi-stakeholder dialogue and monitoring;
- the mechanism of the annual GAC meetings for networking, reviewing progress and sharing lessons;
- the easy, comprehensible and non-bureaucratic modality.

These assessments have also flagged areas that need strengthening at the operational level. These include:

- improving the performance of the NSCs;
- increasing support to the NCs;
- increasing the focus on up-scaling and upstreaming;
- increasing efforts to empower local government;
- further enhancing women's empowerment and gender equity;
- enhancing financial reporting;
- improving documentation and dissemination ;
- improving linkages with UNDP country programmes.

In view of these strengths and weaknesses, some important recommendations have been made for enhancing operations at the country programme level:

- *Strengthen the NSCs* Enhance the role of NSCs in steering the country programmes and create supporting committees to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. Ensure appropriate membership profiles so as to increase policy-influence and up-scaling of the programme. Provide some measure of monetary support to enhance participation and ownership.
- *Increase programmatic and capacity support to NCs* Develop the capacity of NCs to become more effective actors in upstreaming. Organize orientation for NCs on policy issues and to develop an understanding of the implications of their actions in working with grass roots groups on the one hand, and national and international agencies and a range of stakeholders on the other. Provide more opportunities for interchange among NCs so that they can benefit from each others' experiences. Increase the LIFE project staff and travel funds so that SSPs can be developed and monitored more effectively, and their impact enhanced.
- *Intensify efforts to up-scale and mainstream LIFE* Integrate LIFE into more municipal or national programmes related to the environment and poverty alleviation so that it does not

become isolated, and expand LIFE through mainstreaming and increased programmatic country coverage.

- *Increase upstream, policy impact* Give priority to upstreaming by making best use of existing opportunities to ensure the sustainability of LIFE. Review the upstream-downstream-upstream approach, especially the last upstreaming stage, and focus on policy change throughout all stages of LIFE. Provide technical assistance to create strategies for upstreaming project experiences. Recognize the budgetary implications of increased efforts to upstream.

- *Empower and engage local government* Build stronger partnerships with municipalities by giving greater visibility and recognition to their role in improving living conditions. Focus more on developing local authorities' capacity to facilitate participatory community development.

- *Make capacity-building efforts more efficient* Decentralize capacity development, especially of communities, by involving capable NGOs. Emphasize peer learning for community groups and exchange and exposure visits.

- *Promote women's empowerment and gender equity* Design strategies that explicitly address gender equity and make them integral to the process of project formulation and implementation. Women's participation and empowerment is key to achieving LIFE's objectives. Given their often disadvantaged status in society, women often have the most to gain from improvements to urban facilities such as water and sanitation.

- *Enhance relationship with donors and enhance reporting* Encourage greater involvement of donors in the LIFE approach and methodology through participation in LIFE events. Facilitate closer contact of donors with NSCs and NCs. Establish better monitoring systems for providing high-quality project and financial data to donors.

- *Expand technical support* Provide more technical support to conduct specialized tasks that require special strategies, such as institutionalization, mainstreaming and influencing policies. Document experiences and lessons from other urban community and local development methodologies and tools, and provide this knowledge to enhance country programmes.

- *Increase lesson-based advocacy, documentation and dissemination* Since local communities and authorities often do not have a stake in documenting and disseminating lessons of experience from the SSPs, there is a strong rationale for LIFE to undertake this role. A systematic approach to documentation is required. LIFE's knowledge materials should be collected and catalogued on an ongoing basis, and the Internet should be used more extensively to make knowledge available to all actors and advocates of urban environmental development initiatives. While free access to knowledge further opens avenues to cooperation, these resources must be accompanied by sound methods of participation and dialogue in order to be effective. LIFE's case studies, experiences, results and lessons should be widely disseminated to a diverse audience that includes poor communities. Discussions and dialogues could be organized around results and lessons. Opportunities such as global summits, GAC meetings and other international gatherings should continue to be used to promote the mainstreaming of LIFE's approach.

*Strengthen relationship with UNDP in LIFE countries and with other UNDP programmes* Retain the support and shield of neutrality of UNDP for LIFE as it is crucial for upstreaming. Mainstream LIFE into UNDP country-level work through strategic partnerships and advocacy. Anchor LIFE more explicitly in the overall priorities of the UNDP country programmes, particularly within the context of the MDGs as described below.

- *Intensively pursue sustainability* Each LIFE country should take concrete steps to institutionalize or mainstream its programme in order to sustain its considerable achievements, assets and contributions beyond the life of the global programme.

At the global level, the programme is at a strategic juncture, and must consider its future options. In particular, LIFE is faced with some pivotal strategic challenges stemming from its need to transition to a more sustainable and institutionalized modality. LIFE is simultaneously faced with some critical global development needs: (i) the challenge of urbanization, which poses an immense and growing crisis in some of LIFE's focus areas (for example, the problems of slum dwellers); (ii) the ongoing need for reality-tested knowledge in decentralization and local governance, areas of rapidly growing importance for UNDP; and finally (iii) the imperative of the MDGs which need to be localized to be achieved.

Although several strategic options should be considered for LIFE's future, there is a strong case to be made for continued investment in mainstreaming its methodology to respond to these needs: (i) LIFE has always worked directly and indirectly in many MDG areas. Directly, it has worked on poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability, specifically related to slum dwellers and water and sanitation (in fact, LIFE's approach is keenly in line with the recommendations made by the Millennium Task Force Reports on Slum Dwellers and on Water and Sanitation). Both indirectly and directly it has also addressed child, maternal and public health; as well as gender equity and empowerment. (ii) Over 13 years, LIFE has accumulated knowledge in these areas, and demonstrated how results can be achieved at the local level in a cost-effective manner. (iii) LIFE has also garnered invaluable assets on the ground: trusted networks, social capital, community-based knowledge, experience, and most importantly, concrete results. These assets can now be harnessed to help realize the MDGs in LIFE's focus areas, spread local-level accountability for the MDGs, improve local-level capacity for achieving the MDGs, and provide a methodology for localizing the MDGs.

LIFE thus has the potential to be harnessed in the MDG effort by contributing:

- directly to Goal 1 on poverty and Goal 7 on environmental sustainability, specifically Target 10 on sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and Target 11 on improving the lives of slum dwellers;
- indirectly to other goals such as Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment and Goal 4 on child mortality; and
- by providing a methodology and approach by which the MDGs overall (Goal 1 on poverty and hunger, Goal 2 on universal primary education, Goal 3 on gender equality and empowerment of women, Goal 4 on child mortality, Goal 5 on maternal health, Goal 6 on HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and Goal 7 on environmental sustainability) can be localized.

With this discussion in mind, the following strategic options for LIFE are being considered:

- *Option A* Phasing out the global programme while institutionalizing and decentralizing the country programmes and mainstreaming the LIFE methodology. *Rationale:* LIFE has met its stated objectives, demonstrated the power of local initiatives, influenced the debate on and practice of local governance, and acquired a significant body of knowledge and impact. It is thus time to consolidate the programme's gains and phase out the programme, while ensuring that the country programmes are institutionalized and that the LIFE methodology is widely mainstreamed.



A green house being constructed by local residents to generate income through sustainable urban farming (Kyrgyzstan)

- *Option B* Phasing out the global programme as above, and in addition, forming a knowledge network of LIFE affiliates including the institutionalized country programmes. *Rationale:* LIFE has met its objectives as described above. However, its assets are of particular value in light of the MDGs, and must be sustained through a formal knowledge network.
- *Option C* Reinventing LIFE as a facility for localizing the MDGs. *Rationale:* Due to the imperative of the MDGs, LIFE's experience, knowledge, methodology and assets should be harnessed to help localize the MDGs.

The path eventually selected should ensure that LIFE's knowledge, assets and methodology continue to contribute to the ongoing struggle for sustainable human development in the most efficient and effective way.

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