AGORA: a vehicle for supporting and strengthening local governance mechanisms

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**KEY FEATURES**

- Support improved local governance planning frameworks and service delivery
- Holistic understanding of relevant governance systems at the local level, including formal and informal systems, showing functionality of public services and capacity building needs
- Community engagement and empowerment, by actively involving local stakeholders and communities in aid and development projects decision-making processes, fostering ownership and accountability
- Improved collaboration and inclusivity, by facilitating coordination among stakeholders and reducing spatial disparities by targeting underserved communities, ensuring greater access to services and opportunities

**Case studies**

Supporting local authorities in Niger’s Diffa region

Through the Shimodu project, Acted, IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT), Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe supported local authorities in six communes (admin. 3). The area-based assessments (ABA) provided a basis for evidence-based participatory planning, in addition to generating useful information about the territories, and in two communes served to the replanification of the local development plans. Moreover, coordination between local authorities and exogenous aid and development actors was facilitated. IT kits were also distributed, in addition to trainings dispensed by Niger’s local authorities training centre (CFGCT), tackling decentralisation, project management, commune administration and local finances. Lastly, an international exchange seminar was organised with local authorities from an AGORA project in the Central African Republic on institutional capacities for evidence-based planning and enhancing decision-making processes.

Supporting Central African local authorities

Acted and IMPACT partnered with Concern Worldwide, COOPI, Oxfam, and Free Press Unlimited for a large-scale multistakeholder recovery project in the southeast of the Central African Republic. Covering eighteen localities across five préfectures of each locality’s (centre of the municipality) needs and dynamics and the mapping of socio-economic catchment areas, community members actively contributed to identifying multisectoral priorities. These insights formed the basis for tailored local recovery plans, which now serve as important coordination tools for local authorities, humanitarian, and development organisations. Additionally, local authorities received training, office equipment, and engaged in workshops with counterparts from Niger to share expertise and exchange best practices in aid coordination and management.

Supporting local authorities in eastern Ukraine

Acted and IMPACT implemented a project aimed at bolstering local capacities for evidence-based planning and enhancing decision-making processes in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (admin. 1). This endeavor was part of a broader effort to support the UN Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme in eastern Ukraine, responding to the effects of the conflict. The project focused on empowering local authorities at the hromada level (admin. 3) in the context of the decentralisation reform by providing them with access to high-quality information for informed planning. IMPACT profiled 23 hromadas and generated a variety of information products consolidated into an interactive web dashboard to inform the development of local plans. Additionally, the project featured a capacity-building component aimed at enhancing local authorities’ competencies in information management and GIS for evidence-based decision-making.

Expanding upon this approach, a collaborative Humanitarian Development Nexus pilot was launched in 2021 by Acted, in partnership with IMPACT, Right to Protection, Danish Red Cross, and Ukrainian Red Cross Society in Olyhynska, Volnovakha, and Myrne hromadas (Donetsk oblast) to shift the provision of humanitarian services from external aid organisations to local authorities and civil society organisations. Leveraging IMPACT’s hromada mapping and profiling, the consortium worked towards implementing an integrated, locally driven humanitarian response, particularly investing in improving social protection systems, risk reduction and preparedness, water safety planning and reinforcing vital infrastructure.

**ADDED VALUE**

Taking an evidence-based, participatory area-based approach allows AGORA to strengthen local government planning and delivery, improve local coordination, and foster dialogue between local authorities and communities.

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**Fig 1:** CFGCT training of collectivités territoriales, IMPACT, June 2021

**Fig 2:** Handover ceremony for IT equipment to the mayor’s office in Chetimari, Acted, September 2020

**Fig 7:** Overview (Bakhmut hromada profile), IMPACT, October 2020

**Figs 8-13:** Barriers to service provision (Bakhmut hromada profile), IMPACT, October 2020

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