



**STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE
WITH STRENGTHENED LEAGUE:
A KNOWLEDGE PAPER ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE LMP**

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ACRONYMS

ADEKSI	-	Association of Municipal Legislators in Indonesia
ARMM	-	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the
CAR	-	Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)
CARP	-	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program
CIDA	-	Canadian International Development Agency
DILG	-	Department of the Interior and Local Government
FCM	-	Federation of Canadian Municipality
IRA	-	Internal Revenue Allotment
IULA	-	International Union of Local Authority
LGC	-	Local Government Code
LGSEF	-	Local Government Service Equalization Fund
LGSP	-	Local Government Support Program
LGU	-	Local Government Unit
LMP	-	League of Municipalities of the Philippines
LWUA	-	Local Waterworks Utilities Administration
MIS	-	Management Information System
MOA	-	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPOLCOM	-	National Police Commission
NCR	-	National Capital Region
NEA	-	National Electrification Administration
NEC	-	National Executive Committee
NEDA	-	National Economic Development Authority
NFARMC	-	National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council
NGA	-	National Government Agency
NIA	-	National Irrigation Administration
NWRB	-	National Water Resources Board
PCSO	-	Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office
PITC	-	Philippine International Trading Corporation
TAG	-	Transparent and Accountable Governance
USAEP	-	The United States-Asia Environmental Partnership
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development

**STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE WITH
A STRENGTHENED LEAGUE:
THE LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES
ORGANIZATIONAL PRELIMINARY REVIEW**

by Elmer Mercado

BACKGROUND AND MANDATE

The League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) is an organization of all Philippine municipalities under Republic Act. No 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991 with the mandate of ventilating, articulating, and crystallizing the issues affecting municipalities and finding solutions to these issues (Title Six, Chapter 1, Article 2, Sec. 496-498 of the Code).

The LMP was known as the League of Municipal Mayors from 1977 until its reorganization as the League of Municipalities by virtue of RA 7160. Since its reinstatement in 1992, the LMP has metamorphosed from a 'politicized organization' into a more credible organization of municipal LGUs, pursuing the interests of municipal governments for effective local governance.

BASIC INFORMATION

A. BASIC MEMBERSHIP AND COMPOSITION

As stated under Sec. 496 of the Local Government Code and Sec. 1, Article III of the LMP Constitution and By-Laws, the League's membership is composed of all municipalities in the country represented by their municipal mayors or their duly authorized representatives. It also includes those municipalities in the National Capital Region (NCR), the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

As of 2003, the LMP had a listed membership of 1, 498 municipalities, excluding the eleven new municipalities created under the ARMM RLA¹ which are mostly located in the province of Maguindanao.

Of the total LMP membership, almost two-thirds belong to the lowest income classes of LGUs (4th-6th class), with the ARMM having the largest number of municipalities belonging to the poorest 6th income class. In fact, most of the poorest municipalities in the country are located in the ARMM, particularly in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao.

In terms of geographical characteristics, a little more than half of the LGU municipalities are classified as coastal municipalities, while the rest are considered landlocked areas. There is no available information, however, on how many of the LGUs comprising the poorest municipalities fall under the category of landlocked or coastal areas.

¹ Sec. 19, Art. VI of RA 9054 or the new Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao gives the ARMM Regional Assembly the authority to "create, divide, merge, abolish or substantially alter boundaries of provinces, cities, municipalities or barangays" within the region.

Table 1. LGU Municipalities Classification by Income and Physical Characteristics

Region	No. of LGUs by Income Class (1 st -6 th Class)						No. of LGUs by Physical Characteristics		Total No. of LGUs*
	1st	2 nd	3 rd	4th	5 th	6th	Landlocked	Coastal	
CAR	3	4	2	26	38	3	76	0	76
R1	4	9	23	53	28	0	68	49	117
R2	7	10	13	36	20	4	62	28	90
R3	24	19	24	45	30	0	85	34	119
R4-a	34	13	13	41	29	1	47	84	131
R4-b	9	9	7	27	15	4	6	65	71
R5	6	10	16	47	28	0	30	77	107
R6	3	9	16	69	20	0	54	63	117
R7	1	11	14	46	47	1	31	89	120
R8	3	5	11	41	75	4	34	106	139
R9	1	7	15	31	13	0	34	33	67
R10	3	6	9	31	33	3	43	42	85
R11	9	9	14	9	2	0	22	21	43
R12	12	10	15	7	1	0	36	9	45
CARAGA	5	6	10	19	29	1	24	46	70
ARMM	3	3	8	24	24	32	56	42	98
NCR	3						1	2	3
Totals	130	140	210	552	432	53	708	790	1498

Source: Compiled from the 2003 LMP National Secretariat Database.

LMP's current membership is a big departure from the previous League of Mayors when the local chief executive was the members and that the municipality had a membership of mayors rather than municipalities. The League of Mayors in the late 70's served as a political platform of the national leadership. It became more of an organization of politicians prone to becoming a 'political' extension of the country's political leaders and their interests rather than of the municipal institutions and their constituency.

Thus, under RA 7160, the municipality as represented by its local chief executive or his or her representative became the members of the League and not the incumbent mayor. This provision was clearly expressed during the Congressional deliberations on the 1991 Local Government Code, and in the purposes and objectives stated in Art. 216 of the Code, and further laid down in the League's Constitution and By-Laws.

B. A 'SEMI-GOVERNMENT NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION'

The LMP is often confused by some sectors as a government institution. However, no appropriation has been allocated to it by the national government. Neither are its officers and staff compensated and classified as government employees. The LMP operates and exists only through membership contributions collected from its member-LGUs and from grants and assistance it is able to generate.

Similarly, while the DILG as an administrative body has supervisory powers over all LGUs, it merely exercises advisory, and not supervisor control over the LMP. The LMP operates as a formal organization of member municipalities and has its own elected officers. It is governed by a National Directorate, whose officers and members are elected from among all its members.

Unlike, government-corporations and government-created bodies, the LMP does not have any officer, ex-officio or otherwise, coming from national agency offices like the DILG or Malacañang. For all intents and purposes, the League is a non-government organization composed of

municipalities, similar to the International Union of Local Authorities of which the LMP along with other LGU Leagues are members. Yet the LMP has neither the status of a government agency, nor of a local civil society organizations in the Philippines.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

1. *The General Assembly and the National Directorate*

The League, while a national assemblage of municipal mayors who are all decision-makers, has adopted a council-type or collegial form of leadership and decision-making process. The General Assembly serves as the highest policymaking and decision-making body of the League. Regularly meeting at least once a year, the General Assembly approves any change or amendment to the League's Constitution and By-Laws, as well as to the organization's program of action and resolutions. It, however, does not elect its leaders but merely affirms the League's set of officers.

The National Directorate, on the other hand, is vested with the power to select among its members the League's set of officers, including the National President, the Vice Presidents and the Secretary-General. It also has the power to formulate and promulgate all the necessary policies and programs for enforcement and adoption by its LGU members. Because of such powers the National Directorate is effectively the most powerful and most influential policy and decision-making body of the League.

In October 2001, the Directorate's powers were further strengthened through amendments approved by the League and ratified by the general membership through a referendum. Under the amended LMP Constitution and By-Laws, the National Directorate gained more approval authority over the actions made by the League, including those of key national officers of the National Executive Committee (NEC) such as the National President, the Vice Presidents, the Auditor, and the Treasurer.

The National Directorate is composed of all incumbent provincial chapter presidents and all immediate past presidents of provincial chapters who are incumbent mayors.² This policy governing body of the League which meets quarterly has two major functions: to formulate general policies that would lead to the attainment of the LMP's purposes and to serve as a conflict-resolution mechanism for intra-organization disputes among its members.³ Its other functions are:

- Exercise all corporate powers and control all properties of the League;
- Amend the Constitution and its By-Laws, subject to ratification by the members;
- Approve the annual budget of the League as well as supplemental budgets;
- Create committees and such other positions or offices, and define their duties and functions;
- Approve all contracts, investments and indebtedness of the League;
- Approve the rate of salaries and emoluments of employees of the League as proposed by the National President; and,

² All officers of the League serve a term of three years concurrent with their term of office as elected LGU officials.

³ See Article 211(f) of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Local Government Code of 1991 and Article V of the LMP Constitution and By-Laws.

- Perform such acts and exercise such other powers as may be essential or necessary to carry out the purposes of the League.

Within the National Directorate, Standing Committees chaired by members of the Directorate are created. The members of the Standing Committees are recruited from among the general membership of the League. The LMP Constitution and By-Laws mandate the creation of at least six regular Standing Committees, namely, Finance, Membership and Attendance, Legal Affairs, Plans and Programs, Rules, Nominations and Elections, and Publications. The National Directorate also creates other standing committees, depending on the issues and concerns being addressed by the LMP.

2. The National Executive Committee

From the National Directorate, Members of the LMP National Executive Committee, including the National President, the Executive Vice Presidents, the Vice Presidents and other national officers are elected from within the National Directorate.⁴ The LMP President appoints the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General, spokesmen and other assistants subject to the consent of the National Directorate. As defined in the LMP's Constitution and By-Laws, the NEC is tasked to handle not only the day-to-day administrative and organizational functions such as the preparation and implementation of the plans and programs of the League, but also on matters affecting public policy and the creation of committees and sub-committees. However, critical decisions of the organization as well as policies have to be approved and ratified by the National Directorate.

While the National Directorate can be seen as the most influential policymaking unit of the LMP, the NEC, through its national officers, exercises and wields greater 'political influence' in behalf of the League and, in many instances, with the incumbent administration. Indeed over the last three sets of leaders since the League's reconstitution under the Local Government Code, LMP officials, specially the National President, have always been close allies of the national administration, if not direct relatives of the incumbent President.⁵

Such closeness to Malacañang by the LMP national leadership creates both positive and negative images of the League. On the one hand, the close relationship between the LMP President and the incumbent administration provides direct access and opportunities for quicker decisions over, if not the disposition of, resources and support to LMP members. This is particularly important to the bulk of the LMP members who represent the 4th-6th class municipalities and have no strong political connections to the national leadership in Malacañang and Manila. A specific example has to do with releases of the annual internal revenue allotment (IRA) for LGUs which is determined and authorized by the President. Most LGUs are dependent on the IRA for their operations, if not existence.

On the other hand, because of the perceived 'political ties' of the LMP with the incumbent national administration, the League cannot detach itself from pursuing and adopting the same political programs and policies as the incumbent national administration or from shifting accordingly with any changes in the administration. This tendency creates the perception that the LMP is a political adjunct of the national administration and is therefore not a truly independent body. Such perception has affected the association's credibility as an organization distinct from the national government and its status vis-a-vis the other civil society organizations and non-government organizations.

⁴ Based on its Constitution and By-Laws the members of the NEC are as follows: the National President; Executive Vice Presidents for Operations, Internal, External Affairs and Special Concerns; Vice Presidents for Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao; the National Treasurer, the Auditor, the Business Manager, the Public Relations Officer, and the General Legal Counsel.

⁵ Among the LMP Presidents have been Mayor Jose Sison (1991-1997), a province-mate and relative of President Fidel V. Ramos; Mayor Jinggoy Estrada (1998-2001), eldest son of President Joseph Estrada; and Mayor Ramon N. Guico, Jr. (2001-2004), a second cousin of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Likewise, this closeness of the LMP to Malacañang does not always guarantee that it will get what it wants. In 2001, for example, President Macapagal-Arroyo mildly rebuked the LMP in her speech during its annual general assembly for always asking for some favor or for her to grant a request whenever she attends the LGU mayors' meeting. Indeed, many members of the League attend the annual general assemblies hoping to get some 'largesse' from the national government in exchange for its support—quid pro quo. And more often than not the mayors do get something. This is especially true during election years when national leaders and Cabinet secretaries dreaming of running for national office pack the LMP national assemblies to seek the mayors' political support for their electoral bids.

B. THE NATIONAL PROGRAM AGENDA AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

1. From national to municipal

Art. 211 (b) of RA 7160 states the LMP's primary purpose to be: "ventilating, articulating, and crystallizing issues affecting municipal government administration and securing, through proper and legal means, solution thereto". But further powers and functions of the League together with those of the other LGU Leagues is commonly mandated under Art. 214 of the Code, namely:

- Assist the National Government in the formulation and implementation of policies, programs and projects affecting the LGUs;
- Promote local autonomy;
- Adopt measures for the promotion of the welfare of the LGU concerned and its officials and employees;
- Encourage people's participation in local government administration in order to promote united and concerted actions for the attainment of countrywide development goals;
- Supplement the efforts of the National Government in creating opportunities for gainful employment within the LGUs;
- Give priority to programs designed for the total development of LGUs in consonance with the policies, programs and projects of the National Government;
- Serve as a forum for crystallizing and expressing ideas seeking the necessary assistance of the national government, and providing the private sector avenues for cooperation in the promotion of the welfare of LGUs; and,
- Exercise such other powers and functions as the Leagues may prescribe for the welfare of LGUs.

Based on these provisions, every new set of officers and the LMP general assembly set their working agenda for the next three years or during the incumbency of the elected officers. But oftentimes, the agenda and program of action are largely influenced, if not dictated upon, by the current national government agenda and program. For example, during the Ramos administration, the LMP adopted the "Philippines 2000" industrialization and the "tiger economy" program. Under the Estrada administration, it adopted "Erap para sa Mahihirap", an anti-poverty campaign. Finally, under the Arroyo administration, the LMP embraced the "strong republic" motto versus criminality and terrorism.

These programs and the national agenda can be justified under the provisions in the Code and as outlined earlier. However, such shifting agenda and the lack of consistency and continuity of the programs of the League merely support the criticism regarding the League's 'politicized' nature. This criticism is further bolstered by the LMP leadership and membership which actively support the 'political agenda' of the incumbent administration. For example, in 2003, of the 10 resolutions passed by the LMP NEC, three were expressions of multi-partisan support for President Arroyo's quest for a fresh mandate for the May 2004 national elections. Several other LMP island conferences passed similar resolutions in support of President Arroyo's presidential bid. These

resolutions were capped by a national resolution approved by the General Assembly in December 2004.

The tendency of the LMP's national agenda to be co-opted by other more influential sectors, particularly the national administration, is due to the absence of a vision, mission and goals clearly defined, determined and formulated by the members of the League. Whilst the League's mandate and goals are set under the Local Government Code, it is a mandate that is shared with the rest of the other Leagues of LGUs in the country. Therefore, it needs to be specified and concretized in the context of the interests, needs and goals of municipal LGUs. The same vision, mission and goals should serve as the negotiating platform or program agenda and should include the set of policy agenda of the League in its partnership arrangements with the NGAs, donor agencies and other sectors. The vision, mission and goals should also indicate the organizational and institutional direction and the operations of the services, activities and projects to be implemented by the League in behalf of its members.

2. *The LMP as a strong advocate of the LGU agenda in national policymaking and decision-making*

One of the major roles that the LMP has effectively assigned its members is their serving as strong advocates of the LGU agenda or of the interests of the municipalities. Over the past few years, the LMP has pursued, with a strong commitment and position, major governance issues, resulting in highly critical policy debates and discussions between the municipalities and the national government on various issues, particularly those that affect local resource use and revenue mobilization. For example, in the 2003 Working Agenda and Action Commitment Terminal Report presented to the LMP General Assembly, the LMP National Directorate was reported to have passed five key national resolutions. These included its position on the delineation of municipal waters, an increase in and releases of the internal revenue allotment (IRA), its support of constitutional changes and its favoring the shift to a parliamentary/federal system of government.

Other advocacies that the LMP successfully negotiated were the use of LGU counterpart funds for foreign-assisted projects and the immediate release of the IRA that was previously subjected to prior review and approval by a Malacañang technical committee (EO 81).⁶ The association's efforts in public advocacy provided it with a stronger hand in its participation in national agenda-setting as envisioned by its creation.

As a result the LMP became a standing member of several national policymaking bodies of the National Anti-Poverty Commission and the National Solid Waste Management Commission. Other national policymaking bodies in which the LMP has been actively involved are Congress and the Senate of the Philippines, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agrarian Reform, the Housing and Urban Development Commission, and the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development, among others.

In the last three years more than half of the annual average of 2,000 incoming communications and correspondences received by the LMP pertained to its participation and involvement in the discussion of pending or proposed policy issuances or legislative measures that would entail LGU participation or implementation (please see further discussion in the section on Membership Services and Assistance). This also shows the growing interest and recognition of municipalities and LGUs in the policymaking activities and project implementation of national programs and projects.

⁶ Last May 2004, the Supreme Court upheld the petition submitted by LGUs opposing the issuance by the Arroyo Administration of EO 81 that subjected to prior review and approval by a Malacañang-created technical committee the release of the 20-percent development fund of the IRA allotted for LGUs per the General Appropriations Act (GAA).

The efficacy of the LMP's inputs and participation in these policymaking processes are, however, hampered by the lack of a clearly defined policy agenda and by the technical capacities of the LMP. The LMP leadership and its membership have limited access to technical data and researches on many policy and legislative issues presented to LGUs because the LMP has but a limited number of technical staff that could provide accurate, systematic and well-researched information for an informed decision on many vital issues affecting local governance.

Oftentimes, its participation in key policy and decision-making processes such as those in Congress and Malacañang is limited to the League's attendance during the caucuses and to its being informed of the issues. Deliberations or discussions of major policy issues presented to the LMP National Directorate are oftentimes impeded by the lack of technical inputs and information on the matter at hand.

In some instances, the LMP's official position on national issues and concerns is effectively simplified and watered down due to the lack of serious study and debate on the matter. The standing committees created by the National Directorate to address general policy issues and concerns affecting municipalities are normally non-functional and difficult to convene as forums for debates and discussions. Oftentimes, the policy position of the National Directorate is tied to the basic knowledge and experiences of its members and the LMP technical staff. Due to these limitations, the LMP is understandably forced to push and advocate for more parochial and familiar local issues and governance concerns affecting municipalities.

Likewise, despite the growing acknowledgement of the role of LGUs in national policy formulation and project implementation, the LMP remains an outsider in the policymaking boards of many LGU-mandated and related functions and basic local services such as irrigation, electricity, police (peace and order), land and water resource management, health, education, agriculture, housing services and planning bodies that are mandated to and regulated by NGAs. These NGAs include the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), the National Irrigation Administration (NIA), the National Electrification Administration (NEA), the National Police Commission (Napolcom), the Local Waterworks Utilities Administration (LWUA), the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Board (CARP Board), the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC), and the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Board. In all of these major policymaking bodies that have regulatory and operational control over local services and development, not one of the LGU leagues is an informal or ex-officio member of their governing boards and bodies.

Indeed whilst the LMP has made great strides in advocating strong LGU agendas in national policy and decision-making bodies, many of its efforts are focused on parochial and sectoral issues tied to resource generation and utilization. In other major national policy debates and concerns beyond political matters, the LMP merely serves as a 'sounding board' with no real role in the final decision-making process. At worst, it becomes an 'unwitting' instrument of the decision-making bodies. Its lack of a clearly defined policy and research agenda that is attuned to the interests and needs of the municipalities weakens its ability to become a major player in the formulation and development of national policy.

C. CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

1. *The structure, functions and mandates of provincial chapters*

The basic organizational structure of the League is determined by its provincial chapters through which the LMP is able to hold on to its almost 1,500 members across the country. Through the provincial chapters also the LMP is able to download all its programs, priorities and policy positions and thereby extend its guidance in effecting local governance.

Per Art. 211 of the Local Government Code and Sec. 11, Art. VI of the LMP Constitution and By-Laws, the local chapters of the League shall be composed of provincial chapters consisting of the municipal mayors of all municipalities in every province in the country, including those in the ARMM and CAR. The municipalities within the NCR also constitute a chapter.

Respective chapter officers, like the composition of the National LMP, are elected from among the member municipalities within each province. The elected president of the LMP provincial chapter automatically becomes a member of the LMP National Directorate, the highest governing body of the League.

All the provincial chapters are governed by the same Constitution and By-Laws as the national league. However, chapters are allowed to formulate and adopt supplemental rules and regulations consistent with the organization's Constitution and By-Laws. Its primary duty as stated in Sec. 11, Art. VI of the LMP Constitution and By-Laws is to "carry out all policies and instructions" formulated by the National Directorate. As such, aside from electing the same set of officers as the national league, all provincial chapters are empowered to elect and create other offices and committees relevant to their organization.

Every chapter also creates its own board of directors. Further, chapters are enjoined to form their own secretariat at the provincial level and to appoint a chapter secretary-general. Such is the case in the ARMM region, where every provincial chapter from the provinces under ARMM has, aside from their chapter presidents and officers as mandated in the LMP Constitution, elected its own chapter secretary-general.

2. *The Status of the Chapter Organization*

According to 2003 data from the LMP National Secretariat, the LMP has a total of 80 provincial chapters (79 province-based and 1 for NCR) throughout the country. Every provincial chapter has its own set of officers as stipulated in the association's Constitution and By-Laws, and is reorganized every three years to coincide with the election of new municipal mayors.

Depending on the nature and character of the provinces, LMP provincial chapters are organized along the same political delineations. Chapter operations and staff are organized and dependent on the agenda and directions laid out by the elected chapter president.

More often than not, the operations and activities of the provincial chapter are dependent on the incumbent chapter president's actions and decisions. As reported by the LMP National Secretariat, less than 20 percent of all the LMP provincial chapters have an operational secretariat. Many LMP chapter offices are located in the offices of the mayors elected as LMP chapter presidents. The mayors' staff doubles as chapter staff.

Whilst the LMP Constitution and By-Laws mandate the retention by provincial chapters of 60 percent of all annual membership dues collected by the League, very limited funds are transmitted to the chapters due mainly to the low remittances by the LMP members themselves (please see details in the next section). At best, many chapters survive because of contributions and resource-sharing among the provincial chapter members themselves.

Because of the limited resources available to provincial chapters, very few activities outside of the basic organizational activities, such as provincial assemblies and chapter officers' meetings, are conducted at the provincial level. In fact, many organizational strengthening activities of the chapters, such as island conferences, continue to be managed and organized by the National Secretariat. Majority of the chapters are dependent on the LMP National Secretariat for their information and documentation needs, as well as for related organizational activities.

All LMP island conferences and meetings over the last few years were organized and managed by the National Secretariat. Local LMP chapters had but minima involvement outside of member

mobilization and attendance in the activity. On a case-by-case basis, however, several provincial chapters have organized and initiated individual programs and activities among their members but these were very few and limited to specific events or projects. As such the LMP chapters do not exercise the same level of sectoral clout and advocacy capacity as their national counterpart. In some instances, the LMP chapters are bypassed in the consultation and coordination activities by NGAs and donor organizations, and have to deal directly with individual LGUs in the province. Such is partly due to the inherent and perceived organizational weakness of LMP chapters and their lack of implementation capacity.

At best, LMP provincial chapters have served as representatives to local coordinating and consultative bodies such as the Local Sanggunian Panlalawigan, the FARMCs, the agrarian reform communities, the CIDSS-Kalahi, the Disaster Preparedness and Coordinating Council, the Regional Development Coordinating Councils (RDCCs), and the project coordinating and implementation committees of NGAs and donor-assisted projects in their provinces and at the regional level. The LMP chapters provide insights and inputs to operational and implementation issues of national programs implemented by these bodies in their localities. However, outside of coordinating and facilitating implementation responsibilities, the LMP chapters, like the LMP National, have no direct management and control over these programs and projects.

D. SECRETARIAT/STAFFING

1. *Mandate and functions*

Article X of the LMP Constitution and By-Laws mandates that the League shall have a national secretariat under the leadership of the Secretary-General. The staff shall be a “professional staff” recruited based on qualifications, policies and guidelines issued by the National Directorate. The National Directorate appoints a permanent Executive Director for a term of three years.

As provided for in Sec. 2(a) of Article X, the LMP National Secretariat has the following core functions:

- Provide the League with necessary technical, administrative and liaison services; and,
- Conceptualize, plan, research and execute the various programs and projects identified and approved by the National Directorate.

Likewise, the national secretariat performs several other functions in support of the LMP National President and Secretary General in the day-to-day administration of the League that includes representation of the organization in official functions; updating the ExeCom and National Directorate on the operations of the secretariat; the conduct and management of LMP conventions, conferences and workshops; fund raising and resource mobilization; the preparation of the League’s annual work plans and programs; the provision of service assistance and support to LMP members; program packaging and design for institutional and capacity building; and the preparation of regular reports for submission to the LMP leadership and membership.

Similarly, provincial chapters are mandated under Sec. 3, Art X of the LMP Constitution and By-Laws to establish their own provincial secretariats with the following functions and responsibilities:

- Liaison between the provincial chapters and the national secretariat;
- Planning body for the development thrust/directions of the provincial chapters;
- Monitoring arm for the programs and projects implemented in the provincial chapter or their member-municipalities;
- Needs assessor of the provincial chapter’s demands; and,
- Liaison between implementing agencies and the provincial chapter.

Whilst the functions of the national secretariat is clearly spelled out in the Constitution and By-Laws, such functions and roles were defined and clarified only in the last three years of the LMP's organization. The functions and operations of previous LMP Secretariats were largely dependent and dictated upon by the directions and command of the incumbent National President.

More often than not the Secretariat acts as an extension of the incumbent national president's 'political staff' and organization who are normally hired based on their political affiliation with the incumbent president rather than on their professional competence and qualification. As a result, neither a regular nor a professional staff is maintained or retained within the LMP's secretariat organization. All staff lack security of tenure and are co-terminus with the incumbent leadership. Only recently did the LMP National Directorate approve a policy on the security of tenure, particularly of the Executive Director,⁷ as well as the guidelines on the operations and functions of the National Secretariat,⁸ in an effort to professionalize it.

2. Staffing structure, composition and capability

The staffing composition and the functions of the LMP Secretariat are largely dependent on the guidelines and directions set by the LMP's national leadership and the National Directorate. As mentioned above, the LMP National Directorate recently approved new guidelines, which lay down a clearer structure and functions of the National Secretariat. Figure 1 below shows the organizational structure of the LMP National Secretariat revised according to these new guidelines.

The revised structure is basically oriented to the three core functions that the Secretariat provides to the organization, namely, research and information, policy and planning, and general secretariat/administrative functions. It should be noted that whilst the structure may reflect the minimum functions of the Secretariat, its capability and composition may not.

⁷ Under the new guidelines approved by the LMP National Directorate, the Executive Director will have a tenure of six years.

⁸ In 2004, the LMP National Directorate approved the policy guidelines on the Duties and Responsibilities of the National Secretariat Officials and Employees; and, policy guidelines on the Rules and Procedures of the Secretariat of the LMP.

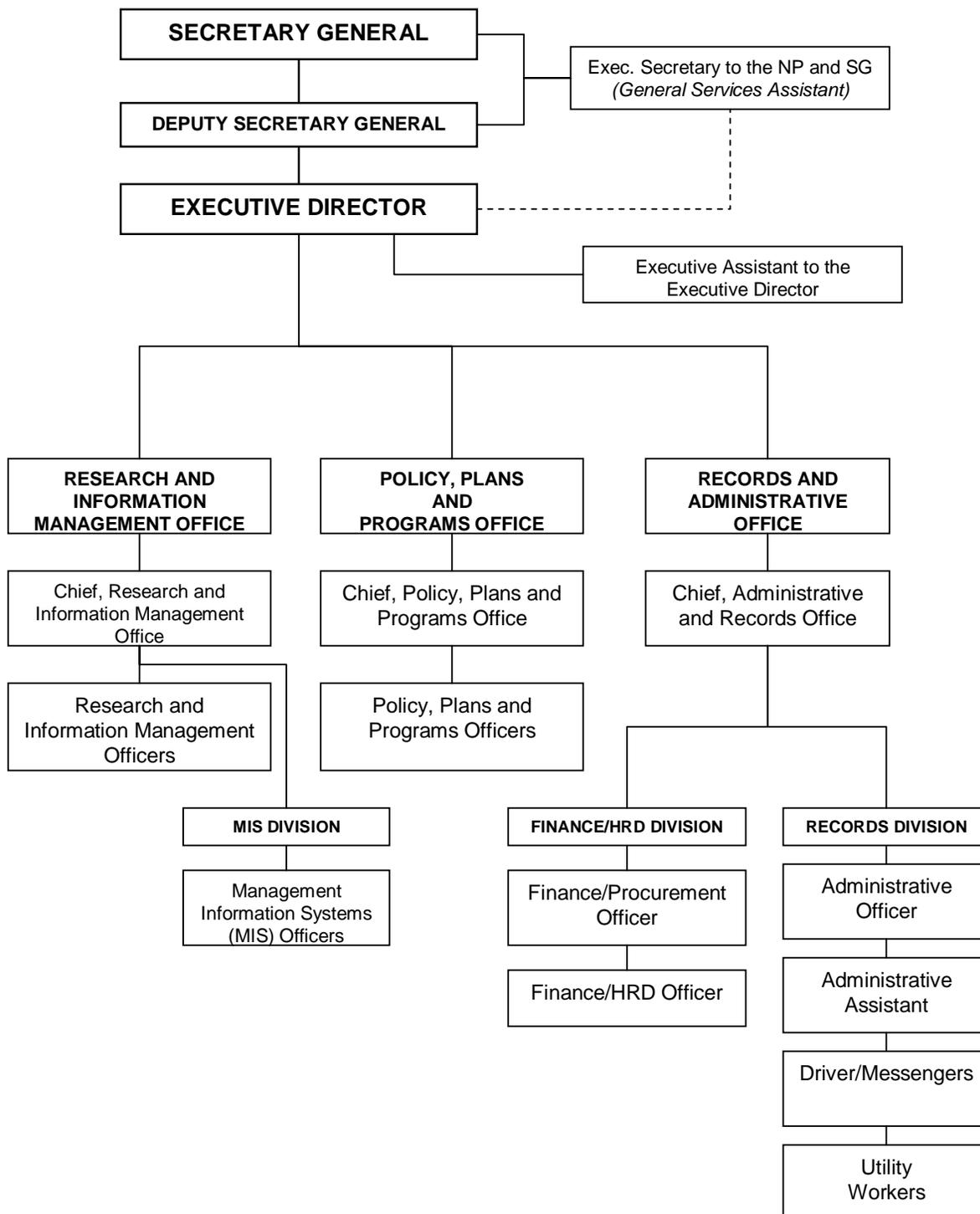


Figure 1. LMP National Secretariat Structure

Table 2 shows the distribution and disposition of the LMP National Secretariat staff. Eleven of the 23 staff are considered administrative staff, while 12 comprise the technical staff. Only 7 of the technical staff, (mostly from the policy, plans and programs offices) are considered technical officers who have some background in technical and policy work. The others have backgrounds in community organizing, legislative support, local administration and management. None of the technical staff has a Master's degree or higher, or specialist training. The rest of the technical staff handle the LMP's media and information needs, and the database system.

Table 2. Distribution of the LMP National Secretariat Staff

Function	Technical		Administrative	
	Supervisory	Support	Supervisory	Support
Policy, Plans and Programs Office	7			
Research and Information Office	4	1		
Records and Administrative Office			4	5
Executive/Management ⁹			1	1
TOTAL	11	1	5	6

On the other hand, the LMP has a well-established administrative and secretariat support service function, inclusive of a system of document tracking and member-information database system. It also has maintained a relatively intact documentation and records storage system, as well as a functional financial management system.

The staffing pattern of the LMP is fungible and flexible. Its configuration and composition are largely dependent on the priorities and agenda laid down by the LMP leadership, particularly the National President. Over the past LMP administrations, the technical secretariat of the LMP had been weakened by the 'politicized' nature of leadership that permeated the League and hampered not only its growth but also its own credibility as an LGU institution. Only in recent years did the LMP leadership undertake concrete efforts to strengthen the technical capability of its staff and its own decision-making processes and advocacy.

Outputs from a recent capability assessment workshop of the LMP conducted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the CIDA-Local Government Support Program (CIDA-LGSP)¹⁰ showed that the LMP secretariat requires capacity building on organizational, technical, project planning and development, monitoring and evaluation skills. An earlier organizational review and action planning workshop conducted by the USAID EcoGov Project similarly pointed out the limitations of the LMP Secretariat in project management, monitoring and evaluation, project development, and technical skills.

These findings are not surprising since the recruitment of technical staff in the Secretariat has largely been superficial rather than purposive. Several of the few technically-oriented staff lack the technical background and academic training needed by the various technical and policymaking bodies and for the processes participated in by the association. As pointed out in the previous section, the continuing recognition by national and regional policymaking and decision-making bodies and agencies of the importance and role of LGUs, especially municipalities, in the successful implementation of local programs and plans, has created vast opportunities for LGU advocacies. But the technical limitations and lack of competence of LMP staff limit the potential of the League to actively participate in national decision-making to articulate and advance its interests. This limitation also makes it easily overwhelmed by the work entailed by its broad responsibilities.

⁹ Includes the LMP Executive Director.

¹⁰ The League of Municipalities, together with the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP), entered into a technical partnership arrangement with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for the implementation of a Country Strategy for Municipal Cooperation in the Philippines. From 11 to 15 March 2003, the LMP, LCP and FCM held a capability assessment workshop to review the capability building issues of local governments in the Philippines, particularly of Philippine municipalities.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

A. MEMBERSHIP FEES/COLLECTIONS

The LMP largely depends on membership dues for its operations and existence. Whilst it is a mandated organization of LGUs, it does not receive any appropriations from the National Government nor allotments from the budget of any government agency including the DILG. Its finances are determined by the contributions and collections of the LMP National Office from its member-municipalities.

Under Sec. 1, Article IV of the LMP Constitution and By-Laws, all member municipalities of the LMP shall pay annual dues at a minimum rate based on its income classification as shown in Table 3. This annual due is to be allocated in the annual municipal budget of the member-municipality as stipulated in the Local Government Code. Of the annual dues of members estimated at around PhP14.0 million, however, the LMP Secretariat reports that only a mere 20 percent is collected. Still, this is indicative of a much higher collection rate compared to the previous years when a very small amount of membership dues, if at all, was collected.

According to data from the LMP Secretariat (see Table 4), the total amount of collectibles due the LMP since its organization in 1992 is nearly PhP 20.0 million. More than a third (37 percent) of these collectibles are for the period 2001–2004. However, over the same period, higher collection efficiency was reported by the Secretariat because of the consistent collection campaign initiated by the current LMP National Directorate and because of the review and a revamp of the LMP's financial and accounting systems.

Table 3. Annual Membership Dues of LMP Member-Municipalities and the Expected Annual Collections

LGU Income Classification	Annual Dues (PhP)	No. of LGUs/ Classification	Expected Collections (PhP)
1 st Class Municipality	12,000	130	1,560,000
2 nd Class Municipality	11,000	140	1,540,000
3 rd Class Municipality	10,000	210	2,100,000
4 th Class Municipality	9,000	552	4,968,000
5 th Class Municipality	8,000	432	3,456,000
6 th Class Municipality	7,000	53	371,000
TOTALS		1,517	13,995,000

Source: LMP Constitution and By-Laws and the Consolidated LMP LGU National Database.

Table 4. Total Collectible Dues from LMP Member-Municipalities (1992-2004)

Area	1992-1995	1995-1998	1998-2001	2001-2004	Total ¹¹
CAR	96,800	149,200	154,280	392,800	964,320
NCR	9,600	10,400	0	29,400	60,800
Region 1	79,200	128,000	330,720	560,160	1,375,080
Region 2	78,400	140,800	188,560	393,820	1,032,800
Region 3	62,400	180,000	333,840	411,320	1,182,680
Region 4-A	260,700	384,800	446,080	709,680	2,114,720
Region 4-B	15,600	91,200	188,880	204,620	682,820
Region 5	152,800	226,400	302,944	438,400	1,408,104
Region 6	196,000	375,080	356,920	663,960	1,877,588
Region 7	263,800	242,000	659,080	803,160	2,260,684
Region 8	113,600	226,640	352,520	629,280	1,538,440
Region 9	53,000	92,800	135,240	335,128	755,488
Region 10	81,600	190,400	227,360	402,400	1,070,880
Region 11	0	17,600	87,500	242,000	468,180
Region 12	46,400	125,060	170,260	265,560	744,320
ARMM	216,600	260,320	380,360	585,080	1,653,680
CARAGA	55,200	109,580	135,420	259,540	723,300
TOTAL	1,681,700	2,950,280	4,449,964	7,326,308	19,913,884

Source: Consolidated from the 9th LMP National Directorate Meeting Report, November 2003.

A system of rewards and incentives was also introduced by the League's leadership to encourage members to pay their membership dues. These incentives included the application of discounts on early payments, the condonation of accrued interest on dues and payments, and "a no payment, no release" policy in the implementation of LMP-generated public works and medical projects.¹²

The reason often cited for the low collection rate of membership dues is the poor financial capacity of many LMP members, specially those belonging to the lower income classes. More than 60 percent of the total membership of the League belongs to the 4th-6th class municipalities. For personnel salaries and operations these poor municipalities are largely dependent on the annual internal revenue allotment (IRA) released by the national government. On the average, almost 70 to 85 percent of the IRA allotment given to LGUs, especially the 4th-6th class municipalities is budgeted for personnel salaries. This situation is further aggravated by the 20-percent automatic allocation to development funds for projects and LGU-mandated activities such as gender and development, local school buildings, road works and health centers. Part of the funds are also used as counterpart funding for NGA or donor-initiated projects in their areas.

Likewise, collection was also affected by the 'politicized perception of the organization. LMP members wrongly assume that they have no obligation to pay membership dues because of the support funds they perceive to be funneled into the organization by the incumbent national administration. The lack of thorough accounting and audit reporting of the LMP's financial status over the past years and an inconsistent accounting system further aggravate the League's collection efficiency.

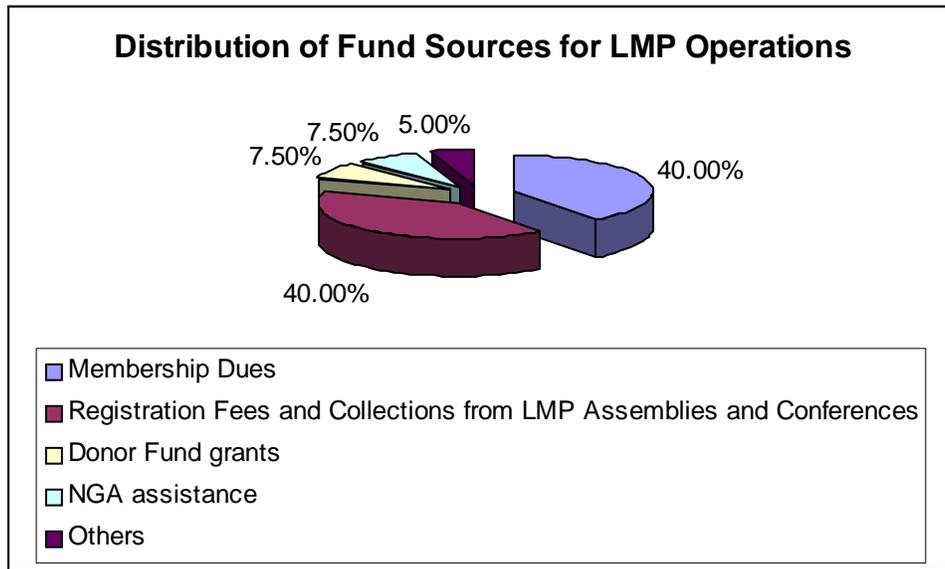
¹¹ The amount of the total collectible dues is lower than the sum of all dues from the period 1992-2004 due to a condonation policy approved by the LMP National Directorate for the period 2001-2004.

¹² Upon the LMP leadership's initiative, the LMP was able to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in 2003 on the implementation of a PhP149-million free medicine distribution project and a PhP-1.4-billion cost-sharing scheme for the construction of municipal roads, respectively.

B. OPERATIONAL FUNDS

The operations of the LMP Secretariat are basically sustained by membership fees. On the average the annual operational budget of the LMP secretariat is estimated at PHP6.2 million. Almost 40 percent of the annual budget is allocated to personnel salaries and wages, while the rest is directed to administrative and maintenance expenses. Because of the low collection rate and the non-payment of membership dues over the past few years, the LMP has had to rely on external sources to support its operations and other member-related projects and services as shown in Figure 2. These sources include proceeds from assemblies and island conferences (30-40 percent), project tie-ups with national government agency programs, and specific donor-assisted projects (15 percent).

Figure 2. Distribution of LMP Fund Sources for Operations



It could be said that majority of the project funds of the LMP were generated through national government or donor-assisted projects. But such funds are limited and tied to specific purposes and uses. Likewise, not all of these funds directly benefit the entire membership of the LMP. Rather, they benefit only specific LGU members identified as target areas of national programs or donor projects. More often than not many of these projects had to do with training and technical assistance services. In such cases, neither money nor commodities were given the participating LMP member-municipalities (for a more detailed discussion, see the section entitled “Linkages”).

Past LMP general assemblies, island conferences and workshops were all funded by the members’ registration fees and through sponsorships that had a great impact on the agenda and discussions of these organizational activities. Savings from the proceeds of these assemblies and conferences contribute a large portion to the operational funds of the League.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

A. THE FACILITATOR AND POLITICAL ‘GO-BETWEEN’ OF LMP MEMBERS AND NATIONAL AGENCIES/INSTITUTIONS

The LMP was created as a national organization to ventilate and work for the interest of municipalities vis-a-vis the priorities and agenda set by the national government. It was envisioned and created by law and by practice to serve the interests and needs of municipal LGUs. However, over time the League’s purpose and service to its members have centered on its being a ‘venue’ through which they could lobby for services and resources from the national government. It is for this reason that the LMP has largely been seen as a ‘political instrument’ by the incumbent administration in that the LGUs act in exchange for a request or support sought by the LMP members from the national government.

Indeed, the LMP’s image as a ‘political instrument’ was the main reason, be it directly or indirectly, for its creation in the early 70’s. By its very nature the LMP is a political organization by virtue of its members’ being elected political officials of their localities. But what must also be appreciated is how LGUs, especially municipalities, have long been victims of neglect and the national government and central authorities’ wrong priorities.

The decentralization of powers, albeit restricted under RA 7160, pushed LGUs, particularly municipal governments, to the forefront of delivering basic services and performing functions formerly exercised by national agencies but without any of the “powers and resources” provided by the central government. Further, the increasing demand of local constituencies for improvements and development also imposed strong pressure on the government, whether national or local, to deliver and respond to local demands. Such pressure challenges, or maybe threaten, local political leaders with the possibility of losing their ‘political power and ascendancy’ over their constituencies and therefore pressures them to seek the assistance and support of the national government and national leaders.

B. THE ‘CLEARING HOUSE’ FOR NATIONAL POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING AND THE LGU INFORMATION SOURCE

Over the last three years, the LMP has tried to overcome its tendency to become a ‘politicized’ organization and to instead become a more service-delivery and member-oriented organization. From the period 2001–2003, the LMP National Secretariat has received a total of 5,600 communications, half of these in 2003, from various groups and associations, including LMP members seeking LMP participation, support and assistance. Table 5 and Figure 3 show the nature of the requests and the percentage of each type of request submitted and responded to by the LMP.

Table 5. Nature of Incoming Communications to the LMP National Secretariat

Nature of Requests	Percentage (%)
Participation in coordination/consultation meetings with NGAs, NGOs, private sector organizations, international institutions and organizations, the diplomatic corps, etc.	30
Position papers and recommendations on House and Senate bills; invitations to public hearings; technical meetings and consultations on proposed/draft policy measures from other NGAs	25
LMP members seeking the endorsement and follow-up of projects and proposals to NGAs, international/donor organizations; memorandum circulars/policy issuances and legislative measures affecting LGUs and released by NGAs/Malacañang/Congress	15

Nature of Requests	Percentage (%)
Information and database on municipalities, their profiles, classification and directories	15
Requests for donations, financial assistance and other forms of assistance	10
Requests for newsletters, magazines, reports and publications	5

Source: LMP National Secretariat Documents Tracking and Database System.

Apparently, the LMP, as shown by the preceding data, is largely perceived by its clientele as a coordinating and consultative 'clearing house' for LGUs before national and policymaking bodies. Almost 55 percent of all communications received by the League seek out the association's position and participation in various policy, planning and decision-making processes that may affect or need LGU participation or implementation.

Other services or requests received by the League pertain to information and database resource on municipalities from its members and the general public (15 percent and to reports, newsletters and publications (5 percent).

Specific services and forms of assistance demanded of the League, particularly by members, had to do with assistance for resource mobilization and the capacity building needs of member-LGUs. These included 'follow-ups' and 'endorsements' of member-LGUs' projects and proposals to national government agencies or donors (15 percent); and requests for financial, technical assistance and resources (10 percent).

C. SPECIAL PROJECTS AND AD HOC TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Despite its limited resources and inadequately equipped technical staff, the LMP resorts to negotiating and lobbying for special projects and ad hoc technical support services with national government agencies and donor agencies for them to provide services, particularly assistance in resource mobilization, training and capacity building, to their member-LGUs..

Over the last three years, the LMP successfully negotiated two assistance programs for its members for the provision and distribution of basic medicines and the implementation of local public works projects. By virtue of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC), LMP member-municipalities received at least PhP100,000 worth of basic medicines and drugs for distribution to barangays. Through a MOA with the Department of Public Works and Highways, the LMP secured a PhP1.2 billion counterpart arrangement for the implementation and construction/repair of local roads by LGU municipalities.

Through an institutional service provider, the LMP is now implementing an organizational strengthening and capacity building training program for all its members under the Local Government Service Equalization Fund (LGSEF). The LGSEF is part of the 20-percent local development fund from the IRA that is managed by the LMP for the capacity building training activities of LGUs.

Due to the LMP's institutional status, these LMP-initiated special projects and ad hoc training assistance undertakings reflect the organization's own credibility and negotiating ability (Was this what you meant?). However, such projects are temporary and not at all sustainable. Rather than relying on the merits of a long-term assistance project that would be developed and targeted to service its members, the LMP is largely dependent on its ability to negotiate these projects, mostly through political intervention. The League is, after all, limited by its own capacity to prepare and develop project proposals and package such training assistance support despite having been successful in obtaining short-term, donor-determined assistance projects that were limited in scope.

LINKAGES

A. INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL LINKAGES

1. *Island-wide conferences*

A key function of the LMP National Office is to maintain its coordination and communication efforts with the member-municipalities of the association. Over the years, the LMP has adopted various organizational and administrative systems to strengthen intra-LGU relationship, among them the institutionalization of the island-wide conferences and regular national directorate meetings/conferences. These island conferences serve as venues for inter-LGU sharing sessions, 'requests/petition' forums, policy deliberations and information exchange, and networking. They also serve as a platform for the local launching of NGA plans and programs. But more importantly, the island conferences serve as consolidation and consultation venues for LMP's member-LGUs between annual LMP national assemblies. All island conferences are conducted and managed by the LMP National Secretariat.

Many island conferences have served as 'launching platforms' of NGA-initiated projects and plans, and have succeeded in generating LGU support. Most often the island conference agenda is centered on these NGA plans and programs. Moreover, the island conferences serve as testing grounds or consultation mechanisms for the new policy initiatives of the national government and rally local support for these initiatives.

2. *Information dissemination*

The LMP maintains a management information system to effectively track and facilitate its communication link with its member-municipalities. The system includes a document tracking system and an LGU member information database that is normally used for general information dissemination among members and external agencies/groups. However, the information database is often unprocessed, disaggregated and unconsolidated. Further, inputs need to be constantly updated and expanded beyond the general profile of the member-municipalities and expanded to include basic socio-economic, institutional, political and geo-physical characteristics. Access by a larger number of constituencies to this information is likewise limited.

In contrast, the LMP's National Directorate has instituted a well-established information dissemination system for its members, in support of the policy issuances and decisions made by the National Directorate. Regular memorandum circulars are issued to all member-LGUs by the LMP National Secretariat to keep them informed of the various decisions, policy issuances, actions and projects undertaken by the League. Last year, the LMP issued 72 memorandum circulars on topics ranging from meeting notices, to training sessions, to updates on LMP advocacies. In the last three years, the LMP Secretariat established a strong organizational link among its members through an efficient and effective communication network. This fostered stronger membership unity in the League.

Table 6 shows that almost half of the LMP's communiqués to its members are related to announcements of national events and activities seeking LGU participation and support (24 percent) and information on the latest national policies, directives and legislation affecting LGUs (21 percent). More than a third of other LMP member communications were invitations for LMP members to participate in various trainings and capacity building activities sponsored by NGAs and donor agencies (26 percent). Invitations to technical sharing sessions/workshops and conferences accounted for 11 percent. The remainder dealt with internal organization communications (18 percent) on attendance in the general assembly, the island conference and national directorate meetings.

Table 6. Summary of 2003 Memorandum Circulars Issued by the LMP

Categories	Total Number Issued	Percentage of Total (%)
Events/activities	17	24
Trainings, scholarships and capacity-building activities	19	26
Policy issuances, directives and legislative mandates	15	21
LMP organizational meetings, assemblies and information	13	18
Inter-LGU sharing sessions, technical workshops, fora and conferences	8	11
TOTALS	72	100

Source: 2003 Working Agenda and Action Commitment Terminal Report, 13th LMP General Assembly, December 2003

As a whole, the LMP National Office was as an effective medium or conduit for information sharing and the mobilization of LGU support for programs and projects by other agencies. However, most of the League's communications to its members were triggered by external agencies seeking participation and the coordination of their programs.

B. INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL

As an entity and by necessity, the League has developed strong partnerships and linkages with other sectors, particularly NGAs and donor agencies. As an institution, the League is seen by many NGAs and donor agencies as a critical implementation partner for nationally initiated projects and programs that are directed at local constituencies. Similarly, the League needs the NGAs and donors to provide support for its various requests and needs, mainly the resource requirements of its LGU members for them to be able to deliver basic services and local projects.

Partnership agreements such as memoranda of agreement/understanding (MOAs/MOUs) have been the established institutional arrangements entered into by the LMP with NGAs and donors. Indeed, in the last three years, the LMP has signed Memoranda of Agreements with various national government agencies ranging from the Department of Agriculture, to the Department of Defense, for the implementation of national programs designed and developed by these agencies but needing the LGUs to implement and achieve some results among the citizenry.

These programs include the Department of Agriculture's "Gintong Ani" and "Gloria Rice" programs, the Philippine National Police/Department of Defense's "War Against Crime and Terrorism," the Department of Agrarian Reform's "Agrarian Reform and Agricultural Modernization," the Department of Environment's "Environmental Governance" project, and the Department of Social Welfare's "CIDSS-Kalahi Poverty Reduction Strategy." For these projects, the LGUs in return receive various forms of technical assistance, resources, funding, projects, logistical and equipment support, depending on the priorities and criteria established by the projects. Many of these projects, however, merely utilize the LGUs as implementation conduits. The actual delivery of support is assumed by individual LGUs with limited, if any, direct participation from the League.

Similar arrangements with private sector groups, i.e., the ABS-CBN Knowledge Channel, for information and education campaigns in local schools were entered into by the LMP. The same arrangements were generated by the LMP with donor projects. Table 7 shows the institutional agreements entered into by the League with some donor agencies in the last three years.

Table 7. LMP-Donor Partnership Arrangements from 2001-2003

Partner Agency	Program	Description	Coverage Areas
Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)	“Country Strategy for Municipal Cooperation in the Philippines”	Technical assistance, workshops and material support on improving municipal governance capability	National Secretariat
CIDA-LGSP	“ Kaakbay Replication and Dissemination of LGU Exemplary Practices”	Technical assistance, sharing workshops and conferences for the adoption of good governance practices by other LGUs.	Pilot areas in Region X and XI
Asia Foundation Inc. with the USAID	“Transparent Accountable Governance (TAG) Project”	Technical assistance, sharing sessions and workshops on good governance practices and their replication (PhP1.5-million grant)	ARMM
The United States-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP)	‘Public-private initiative’ to promote sustainable development in various Philippine municipalities	Technical assistance and study grants	Selected participants
USAID	The Philippine Environmental Governance (EcoGov) Project Coastal Resource Management Project	Technical assistance support and policy advocacy for good environmental management and solid waste management in the uplands and coastal areas Technical assistance support, workshops, municipal database system, advocacy and sharing sessions on coastal resource management as a basic service of LGUs	ARMM and Regions 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10 and 12, Regions 4, 7, 8, 10, and 11
ADEKSI (Association of Municipal Legislators in Indonesia)/LogoDeF	Partnership and exchange program	Exchange program, joint researches, sharing sessions and conferences on good governance and decentralization	Bilateral/National Office
International Union of Local Authorities (IULA)	Partnership and exchange program	Exchange program and study visits, sharing sessions and conferences	Bilateral/National Office

Source: 2003 Working Agenda and Action Commitment Terminal Report, 13th LMP General Assembly, December 2003.

Many of these donor projects were bilateral activities directly entered into by the League and the agencies. In contrast to projects and programs set up through LMP's MOAs with NGAs, many of these projects are channeled through the League itself, albeit field implementation remains with individual LGU partners in the focused areas identified by the donors. Moreover, most of these projects are technical in nature and focus on providing assistance to enhance the capacities of the League and its individual LGU members to improve local governance and the delivery of services.

Whilst the League has a bigger say in the forging of these bilateral arrangements with the donors, many of the projects remain donor-driven and directed. The League's role in the implementation of projects, whether NGA-initiated or donor-assisted, became superficial because many of the projects' objectives remained tied to the project deliverables determined by the donor.

This situation is mainly due to the lack of a League-determined, consolidated and systematic program on capacity building and institutional development for its members. As a result, the League became a mere recipient of NGA and donor projects that did not necessarily correspond to the League nor its members' actual priorities. Moreover, these projects placed additional responsibilities and organizational burdens on the League's staff and LGU members.

As the League had too many projects to handle, there was a tendency for the projects requirements' to exceed the limited technical and project management capacity of the LMP staff and its LGU members. The prevailing situation also confined the League's role in the projects to that of an 'information dissemination center' without any real or direct project management responsibility and accountability to its members. Neither the transfer of project management skills nor any improvement in the LMP staff's capacities took place. Indeed, the projects where the League was given direct management were largely administrative in nature and small-scale, being mostly tied to internal staff training and attendance in conferences, study visits and observation trips.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE AGENDA BY STRENGTHENING THE LEAGUE'S INSTITUTIONAL AGENDA

The League has achieved a level of institutional presence and credibility in pursuing the interest of LGUs, particularly the municipalities. For the League, this has generated respect and recognition not only of the national government agencies and decision-makers, but also of the donor agencies with regard to the important role played by it and its members in national and local development. However, the League remains vulnerable to 'political' influences and pressure on account of its political constituency—the local mayors and the local people. This situation gives it both opportunities and challenges.

On the one hand, the League has the opportunity to maximize its potential as an organization pursuing the interests of its members if it can generate and pursue a comprehensive and systematic development agenda that can be utilized for both project and political negotiation. A clear statement of the League's vision, mission and goals that would concretize the League's mandate as provided for in the Code into a definite development agenda and program must be institutionalised within the LMP. Such a development agenda should cover the various organizational, institutional, policy and administrative needs of the League and its members. The agenda must also be translated into a realizable and doable platform of projects and deliverables that can be accomplished within the next three years after which it shall serve as the League's

guide in pursuing linkages and relationships, even negotiations, with NGAs, donors and other bodies.

An island-level agenda must also be developed to serve as the basis for the formulation of the League's three-year national agenda. This could be coordinated and facilitated through specific local chapters and presidents, and spearheaded by the Leagues' area vice presidents. Donor/ NGA support for this activity may be facilitated and presented.

B. IMPROVE THE LEAGUE AS A SERVICE ORGANIZATION BY STRENGTHENING ITS STAFF COMPLEMENT

Crucial to the League's strengthening is the strengthening of its staff complement. The most recent reorganization and organizational guidelines of the LMP National Secretariat approved by the National Directorate in January 2004 was a step in the right direction. However, the implementation of the Directorate's decision ultimately lies in the determination of the appropriate mix and complement of technical and support people that will comprise the Secretariat. Technical support staff must be hired based on the development agenda and the direction that the League will undertake in the next three years. A previous assessment of the League's staff capacity and needs identified the need for technical staff in the areas of project preparation and development, project management and monitoring, local governance and legal, finance and fiscal, resource management and economic services, among others. A system of performance evaluation and monitoring of staff must be established along with a more consistent financial and auditing system.

Specifically, a project development and monitoring unit should be created to serve as a 'clearing house' for the various projects and partnership arrangements being entered into by the League with NGAs and donors. It should also be responsible for preparation of project proposals that would detail the development agenda and requirements of the League and its members.

C. STRENGTHEN LEAGUE ADVOCACY ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE ISSUES THROUGH FOCUSED RESEARCH AND POLICY STUDIES

As an advocate body, the LMP can further strengthen its advocacy role by pursuing a strong research and internal review of LGU issues and concerns. The LMP's lack of strong research on the issues it advocates limits its ability to mainstream its agenda in national decision-making. A stronger research focus can be established by first identifying the LMP's policy agenda and the necessary support information needed to pursue this policy agenda.

Tie-ups with and technical assistance from donor agencies could be utilized to support this agenda. A MOA with an institutional research body on local governance or polling, for example, may be entered into by the League with support from a donor agency. Strengthening and expanding the League's LGU information and database system would provide a much stronger and concrete basis for the League's position and issues. It would also provide a more in-depth characterization of the League's members. A research component could be integrated into the Secretariat staff's unit.

Limited surveys and polls could also be conducted in association with donor agencies, e.g., TAG, CIDA-LGSP and USAID, to establish specific trends and perceptions of LGUs as the basis for articulating LGU issues and concerns to the general public. Regular briefings on survey and polling results could be presented not only to League members, but also to national bodies and general audiences for such information to serve as decision-making guides.

D. STRENGTHEN CHAPTER BUILDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSOLIDATION

The League's organizational strength lies in its chapters. Its ability to strengthen its position as a representative of LGUs depends on how its chapters are able to interact with other sectors at the local level and articulate LGU interests locally. The LMP must further strengthen its organization by consolidating its chapters even more. It must carry out organizational development and capacity building work with its provincial chapters if it intends to become a strong policy and implementing factor in local governance and development. In this respect, the League should focus on the organizing and capacity building activities of local chapter secretariats and officers; the conduct of orientation activities on the role and functions of provincial chapters and officers; and, on the mobilization of provincial chapter in island conferences and inter-LGU sharing activities at the chapter levels.

It is also recommended that a provincial executive director be regularly appointed or hired by the chapter to provide support to the chapter president as he addresses day-to-day operations support and coordinates activities and communications with chapter members. The provincial executive director shall also serve as a direct liaison with the National Secretariat.

The League may want to maximize the organizational clout of the island conferences and its vice presidents to provide leadership in their coverage areas and identify clear responsibilities and more expansive activities that may be conducted by these groupings. Likewise, island-wide agenda planning and strategic vision, mission and goal-setting activities must be initiated through the leadership of the League's Vice Presidents or Secretary-General.

Officers of the NEC should be made more functional where the operations of the respective secretariat offices are concerned by making them directly accountable not only for the operations of the offices, but also for the identification and development of the NEC's annual plans and agenda.

The League may also want to reconsider the creation of its standing committees. Standing committees of the National Directorate can be limited to the core standing committees as stipulated by the LMP Constitution. Ad hoc bodies or task forces for specific advocacy issues and concerns may replace standing committees on each issue. These task forces have the advantage of being transitional and time-bound. Their existence is dependent on the achievement of the specific objectives for which they were created and they are flexible in terms of the time needed for members to participate. Unlike standing committees that must regularly meet, ad hoc bodies determine and agree on the level and pace of their work and action. The LMP's policy agenda contained in its three-year program of action or strategic plan shall serve as the basis for the creation of these task forces or ad hoc bodies.

E. IMPROVE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, COLLECTION EFFICIENCIES AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The most critical organizational effort of the League must be the improvement of its financial management and resource generation activities to be able to effectively service the needs of its members. Whilst improving collection efficiency of membership dues remains a central consideration, other resource generating activities and programs can be devised to regularly augment its financial sources. These may include the establishment of a fee-for-service system for LMP-initiated technical assistance, trainings, seminars and workshops; sponsorship and endorsement charges for products, services and information; charges on information access and Internet-based advertising in its website; publication and document charges; and sales.

Similarly, a project development and monitoring unit, especially for the preparation of project proposals and the sponsorship of donor forums and discussions, must be created.

SYNTHESIS

The LMP as an institution created for the purpose of strengthening local governance and the delivery of basic services to the people has made great strides in establishing and living up to its mandate. Over the past few years, the League leadership and its members have succeeded in overcoming indifference, poor public perception and criticism to become a credible, development-oriented and progress organization of LGUs.

The League remains an organization of elected political leaders so that politics remains a major force in its existence. However, the institutional character of the League and its members move it to be more responsive to the development needs of its constituency. LGUs have been recognized and accepted as a critical partner in national development and policymaking. It has also gained recognition as an important implementation arm responsible for the success of national and donor-initiated programs addressing poverty, improving the quality of life of people, and service delivery.

Still, it is constrained by the limitations of its technical, financial, organizational and institutional capacities that make it a less potent and effective purveyor of good governance and leadership. The LMP is now at a crucial stage of its existence, set to move forward and strengthen its position as a key partner in nation-building. But it needs to firm up its institutional credibility and gain the acceptance not only of its external stakeholders but also of its members. By doing so it fulfills its mandate.

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