



Local Economic Development Training in Sri Lanka

On May 2-3, 2014, ICMA conducted local economic development (LED) training for the chambers of commerce in Sri Lanka's North region, and the local councils in Karachchi and Valikamam West Pradeshya Sabhas, which are both located in former conflict zones. The objective of the training was to facilitate dialogue and interaction between the chambers of commerce and the two councils and develop an understanding on the part of the councils and the business community of the benefits of working together with the chambers.

The training was conducted by Mr. Steve Glueck, the local economic development and community development director in Golden, Colorado, who served as a pro-bono expert on the assignment. ICMA worked closely with the Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities to work with the councils and chambers on local economic development and advocacy issues.



The two-day training attracted about 50 people.

Attendees included the chairpersons of the Karachchi and Valikamam West Pradeshya Sabhas, other councilors, members of the Jaffna and Kilinochchi region chambers of commerce, as well as representatives of the Mannar Region chamber of commerce. The training was also visited midday by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce CEO, board chair, and board vice-chair.

The most significant outcomes of the first day of training were the completion of a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), the identification of a need for a stronger partnership between the respective local government authorities and chambers, and the identification of four specific strategies to improve the partnership, including a written memorandum of understanding between the parties. A separate main outcome was



a discussion of roles and duties between the local government and the chamber in such a partnership. Other topics discussed in depth were local economic development theory and practice and leakage theory and practice. The group also started an initial outline of a strategic plan.

The second day of training built on the support for a documented (but voluntary and good faith) partnership between local government and the chamber. Participation was strong, and the group moved through a few strategies in the outline strategic plan and drafted action plan steps, an exercise that highlighted the need to clearly define specific tasks related to strategies under individual goals: Specifically what will be done? Why? By whom? When? With what resources?

The key outcomes were a stated commitment to working together by the parties from each locality and the updated strategic plan outline with highlighted sections for the specific recommendations derived from the group. The attendees were very appreciative of the training, as it was the first such training they had ever received, and specifically asked for more assistance regarding LED topics. The chamber representatives from the Mannar Region were most vocal in their request for training assistance.

The training was undertaken as part of the Facilitating Economic Growth project awarded to the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance by the U.S. Agency for International Development. ICMA was a member of a team headed by the International Executive Service Corps.

ABOUT ICMA

ICMA (International City/County Management Association) is the premier local government leadership and management organization worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing the professional management of local government. ICMA has been doing this since 1914 by providing technical and management assistance, training, and information resources to its members and the local government community. ICMA International was created in 1989 to further the ICMA mission worldwide. Since then it has successfully designed, implemented, and evaluated hundreds of international projects, establishing a solid reputation for its practical, hands-on approach to meeting global challenges.