

# CityLinks Program in Ethiopia

- ▶ **Local Economic Development**
- ▶ **Public Service Delivery**
- ▶ **Municipal Finance**

In September 2005, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) granted ICMA an associate award under ICMA's CityLinks program, to provide assistance to the Ethiopian cities of Addis Ababa and Adama for a period of two years. As part of that work, ICMA established a partnership between the city of Adama and the U.S. city of Portland, Oregon. That partnership was intended to facilitate Adama's local economic development, by attracting investments to the city and enhancing the relationship between the public and private sectors there, with the ultimate goal of creating more jobs. After making several attempts to work with the city of Addis Ababa with little success, ICMA, in close consultation with USAID, decided to concentrate all the program's resources and efforts in the city of Adama.

Based on the success of the initial CityLinks work in Ethiopia, in April 2007, USAID's Ethiopia mission asked ICMA to assess a possible expansion of the CityLinks program for the city of Dire Dawa (one of the two "chartered cities" in Ethiopia); the Gambella region (state) and that region's capital city, which is also called Gambella; and the Somali region and its capital city, Jijiga.

The April 2007 assessment led to a decision to expand the program to those new areas of the country, with a focus on local governance, public service delivery, and local economic development. The program received \$1,450,000 of additional funding for a two-year extension of the Ethiopia efforts, with the program to run through September 2009. As a result, the CityLinks program has increased its presence in Ethiopia, establishing an office in Addis Ababa (the country's capital), along with two regional offices, in the city of Gambella and the city of Jijiga. The program also increased the level of resources to promote additional peer-to-peer exchanges from the United States to Ethiopia and among cities in Ethiopia. The added resources also helped build the institutional capacity of local and regional governments, by utilizing technical assistance and training provided by local professionals and international experts.

**Ethiopia partner cities:** Adama (in Oromia region (state)), Dire Dawa (a "chartered city"), Gambella (in Gambella region), and Jijiga (Somali region).

**Population of the Ethiopian partner cities:** Adama, 200,000; Dire Dawa, 350,000; Gambella, 50,000; and Jijiga, 150,000.

**U.S. partner communities:** Portland, Oregon; Oldsmar, Florida; Flagler Beach, Florida; and Port Orange, Florida.

**Program dates:** September 2005 to September 2009.

**Key program issues in Ethiopia:** Good local government in Ethiopia is becoming a priority, as the country is decentralizing power to its regional governments. The Somali and Gambella regions are considered "emerging regions," with low institutional capacity to perform essential functions, areas that are prone to conflict, and a limited governmental presence and delivery of public services. The CityLinks program will focus on working with these two regions and the cities of Dire Dawa and Adama to strengthen institutional capacity and to provide linkages between the governments and their citizens as a way of mitigating conflict.

*"The work undertaken during our visits with Ethiopian municipal officials was personally fulfilling, and I was struck by the officials' dedication and desire to improve governance and service delivery systems."*

**Scott McGuff, fire chief, Oldsmar, Florida**

## **Accomplishments in 2007**

In February 2007, operating under the initial Ethiopia CityLinks award, representatives from Portland, Oregon, worked with the staff of the city of Adama to consolidate their relationship. Their efforts focused on the institutionalization of the local economic development (LED) role in the municipality through an LED unit managed by an LED specialist; planning for an industrial district; marketing of Adama's economic potential to investors; and the expansion of a business incubator. That incubator helps small enterprises gain access to financing and other needed resources and build their skills in business planning, and thus grow their enterprises and employ more workers.

With its 2007 expansion to the three new areas of Ethiopia, the CityLinks program introduced a number of additional activities. To supplement the peer-to-peer exchanges between Portland and Adama, the program added partnerships that involve three cities in the U.S. state of Florida: Oldsmar, Flagler Beach, and Port Orange. Those three Florida communities will be paired with the city of Dire Dawa and with the Somali region and its capital city, Jijiga.

While continuing to work with the city of Adama, Portland will add a partnership with Gambella region and the city of Gambella. In the new three areas of Ethiopia, the CityLinks program will be working with local and regional government authorities, civil society organizations, and private sector entities.

The new offices in Ethiopia will place CityLinks staff closer to the program's stakeholders and beneficiaries. The office in Addis Ababa is staffed with a local project director and a finance coordinator, and there are regional coordinators located in both the city of Jijiga and the city of Gambella. The program is also tapping local expertise for short-term program needs. Under the program extension, future efforts will focus on local governance and also expand the LED activities beyond the ones already implemented in the city of Adama. In all the CityLinks Ethiopia cities and regions, the program will work on public finance, public service delivery, citizen participation, peer-to-peer exchanges, and training in leadership skills for citizens and government officials. In addition, in the city of Dire Dawa, there will be a component focusing on emergency prevention, mitigation, and response.

In November 2007, ICMA staff and pro-bono professionals from the U.S. traveled to Ethiopia to plan the start-up of the expanded CityLinks program, and to meet with officials from various local, regional, and federal agencies.

The partnership with Adama has continued to facilitate local economic development in that city. In November 2007, a memo of understanding was signed by Adama municipal officials, the Adama Chamber of Commerce, and ICMA, in which the city agreed to establish the position of an LED specialist. The initial funding for the position will come from the CityLinks project, the

Adama municipal government, and the Adama Chamber of Commerce. In 2009, after the end of the CityLinks project, both the municipality and the Chamber of Commerce will continue funding the position. The position will be central to developing LED policies for the municipality, establishing public-private partnerships and other forms of synergy with the private sector, and implementing a long-term vision for increasing Adama's competitive advantages and future economic growth.

In addition, Adama has agreed to host the city's first economic development conference, which will promote Adama's economic potential and advantages for domestic and international investors. Finally, Adama is progressing in planning an industrial district that will emphasize agro-processing. This will provide opportunities for producers in the Oromia region (of which Adama is the capital) to process their products and market them to other regions of the country.

During 2007 the CityLinks program promoted new partnerships for Adama, involving the program beneficiaries, agencies at different levels of government, and other donor programs. Pro-bono professionals from Portland, Oregon, facilitated meetings between representatives of the city of Adama and different federal and regional agencies concerned with economic development, trade, and investment. These new relationships will be important as the city works to raise its profile and attract new business and investment. Such steps

are essential as Ethiopia continues to move away from its current, highly centralized governmental system and its strong limitations on the private ownership of land. Now, many important decisions, such as the zoning of public property, are made by higher levels of government.

### **Looking Forward**

Over the next two years the CityLinks program in Ethiopia will continue expanding its activities and accomplishments. In 2007, ICMA completed the start-up phase of the new program, including recruiting the program staff and establishing the program office in Addis Ababa. During the first quarter of 2008, based on a new work plan, the CityLinks program will start implementing the activities in the newly added cities and regions of Ethiopia.

Among the most noteworthy activities that will be implemented in 2008 are: (1) a study on decentralization in the Gambella and Somali regions, during the first months of 2008; (2) sanitation, public transit, water, and other public service delivery projects in the cities of Gambella, Jijiga, and Dire Dawa; (3) a leadership training program, during the third quarter of 2008; and (4) a local economic conference in Adama to promote the city's economic potential among local and international investors.

A key future element of the CityLinks program will be the promotion of more city-to-city exchanges within Ethiopia. For example, authorities from the city of Jijiga will participate in peer-to-peer exchanges with the



**Two pro-bono professionals from the city of Portland, Oregon, visit the city of Adama and meet with key municipality staff to discuss planning an industrial district.**

*"The experience [in Ethiopia] has affected me in a positive way, both professionally and personally. My personal 'world' has been greatly expanded, and the 'global world' has certainly become smaller!"*

**Scott McGuff, fire chief, Oldsmar, Florida**



**The government of the Gambella region is undertaking an ambitious project to pave streets in the main corridor of the city of Gambella as part of a sound, multimodal public transit system in that city.**

city of Dire Dawa, in the areas of organizational development, human resources, finance, and public service delivery. In addition, over the next two years, the CityLinks program will facilitate up to four workshops that will bring together representatives from Ethiopian cities to discuss common concerns and to share lessons

learned. That, in turn, will contribute to the establishment of local networks in the country and learning processes among peers. ICMA will also promote the formation of associations of municipalities, which could build long-lasting learning networks among local government professionals in Ethiopia.