



NELGA GOOD PRACTICES: **Mentorship and capacity building** for Town Planners in Training (ISUD Cooperation)

The Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) is a partnership of leading African universities and research institutions with proven leadership in education, training and research on land governance. Currently NELGA has more than **70 partner institutions** in over 40 countries and is organized in 6 regional and 1 technical nodes supported by a Secretariat.



Background

Town planners in training in Namibia, particularly those who have obtained qualifications such as a **master's degree**, are required to complete two years of practical experience in relevant fields before they can apply for registration as professional town planners, in accordance with the **Town and Regional Planners Act of 1996**.

Furthermore, under the Urban and Regional Planning Act of 2018, a local authority (LA) may apply to become an Authorised Planning Authority (APA) if it can demonstrate that it employs at least one registered town planner who has the necessary experience in spatial planning. Unfortunately, for most of the **59 local authorities** in Namibia, this is not feasible, as they either have no town planner or only employ a town planner in training.

Each year, a significant number of **town planning graduates struggle** for years to gain the necessary experience and register as professional town planners. This not only affects the ability of local authorities to build capacity and become APAs, but also hinders the professional growth of these young town planners.

In cooperation with **GIZ's Strengthening Advisory Capacities for Land Governance in Africa (SLGA)** and the **Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA)**, the Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Development (ISUD) programme, in collaboration with the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD), has developed and is implementing a capacity development project to provide mentorship and training for town planners in training.

The main objective of the project is to **design a comprehensive Mentorship and Capacity-Building Programme for Town Planners** in Training. This includes the creation of a detailed concept, training plan, identification of mentors, and the signing of agreements between mentors and mentees.

Implementation

The project was initiated in response to the challenges faced by town planning graduates in local authorities, who struggle for years to gain the necessary **experience and register** as professional town planners.

The programme was developed through a detailed assessment, including a questionnaire to identify skills gaps, registration challenges, and trainees' experience needs. **Clear objectives were set**, addressing issues such as the **hosting of the pilot project** and the continuation of the programme thereafter.

Based on the **identified gaps, competencies and learning areas were evaluated**, as well as the method of training, whether through workshops or online sessions.

Subsequent steps included establishing mentoring arrangements, planning for resource mobilisation, identifying partners and collaboration opportunities, such as NELGA and SACPLAN, and developing an **implementation plan** alongside a **monitoring and evaluation system** to ensure continuous improvement.



Figure 1: Methodological Approach

In summary, the methods and sources that informed the development of the programme include desktop research (best practices, theoretical frameworks, and examples), personal interviews with stakeholders, mentees, mentors, and partners, feedback discussions with representatives from MURD, stakeholder surveys (with data analysis), and workshops.

3. Results and lessons learned



Participants at the CBM initiation Workshop held on August 18, 2023 (Windhoek, Namibia)



Mentors and mentees at the CBM kick-off workshop held on March 14, 2024 (Windhoek, Namibia)

- Seven mentees have been matched with mentors, signed mentorship agreements, and have begun receiving supervision.
- Mentees are gaining the necessary experience and skills.
- A Mentorship and Training Programme framework has been developed (see Table 2: Programme Framework and Learning Modules).

Lessons learned

- Commitment from both the mentor and mentee is essential to ensure that the mentee acquires the necessary competence for registration.
- Commitment from all stakeholders is key to ensuring the success of the entire programme.



Table 2: Programme framework and learning modules

4. Why is this a good practice

- It addresses current challenges, experience, and skills gaps faced by trainees.
- It helps town planners in training or students in local authorities gain the necessary experience to register as professional town planners.
- It empowers local authorities to become Authorised Planning Authorities (APA), thereby enhancing town planning capacity in Namibia.
- Ultimately, this is a high-impact programme that contributes to human and institutional capacity development at the local authority level and across the country.

Recommendations

- Ensure strong commitment and participation from both mentees and mentors by offering incentives and conducting regular check-ins.
- Continuously engage stakeholders and secure their support to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme.
- Provide incentives and engage experts for training through partnerships with organisations such as SACPLAN and NELGA.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations:

- Following a comprehensive needs assessment, the programme design incorporates a combination of coursework and mentorship, covering core concepts, technical skills, legal and policy frameworks, communication and collaboration, and professional development.
- Additionally, the programme identifies key implementation partners and includes monitoring and evaluation methods to assess progress and address any challenges or risks.





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