



A. MAKING THE CASE: WHY DO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (LGs) AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS (LGAs) MATTER FOR DEVELOPMENT?

MESSAGE 1: On the one hand, the future is local and the world needs democratic and accountable local governments to lead and convene development efforts in their own territory

- By 2030, it is estimated **that two-thirds of humanity** will be living in cities with much of the growth occurring in Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- The challenges that result from the increasing urbanisation, together with today's social, environmental and economic challenges and crises, **hit hardest and first at the local level.**
- **Citizens living in cities, towns and villages all over the world rely on local governments to fulfil their basic needs** for shelter, clean water, public health, education, security and livelihoods. These are the building blocks for human development.
- Municipal governments **are placed on the front lines to address these pressing challenges**, and more often than not, lead the way towards the identification and implementation of innovative solutions.
- All in all, it seems that **how well local governments can perform their tasks** will have a huge influence on the quality of life of billions of people over the next 50 years. Indeed local governments play a crucial role as democratic leaders, strategic planners, service deliverers and catalysts for local development, within their communities.
- Yet, **they require assistance to be able to perform the tasks** they are entrusted with. Unfortunately, all too often, they **lack the financial resources** (i.e. despite reinforced decentralisation efforts, resources rarely match the responsibilities devolved) and/or the **required capacities.**

MESSAGE 2: On the other hand, LGs are today recognised as relevant “actors for development”. Yet, more efforts are needed to strengthen their role and voice in international development cooperation

- Over the past few decades **Local Governments have built a strong track record in development cooperation.** Guided by a wide variety of motivations (peace, understanding, solidarity, economic prosperity, etc.) and in a rich spectrum of forms, local governments and their associations are **today involved in several partnership and cooperation initiatives across the world.**
- This wealth of experiences and forms, which have evolved over time and continue to evolve, confirms that local governments **have unique skills, responsibilities and resources** when engaging in international development cooperation. **Their efforts are complementary to those of other relevant actors** (i.e. national governments, CSO's, the private sector, etc.) and they make a definite contribution to development cooperation. What's more, **local governments have often been** and continue to be in the vanguard of development cooperation. They promote peer-to-peer approaches with their



homologues in other countries, who face similar challenges. They are also advancing new forms of South-to-South and North-South-South cooperation.

Some examples that illustrate the wealth of experiences and forms of LG development cooperation:

1 Between 2009 and 2011 an exchange process took place between the municipal **markets institute of Barcelona and the municipality of Medellín (Colombia)**, for the implementation of an integral development plan of the shopping centres and market facilities. The project was initiated upon the request of the City of Medellín to model the municipal markets in Barcelona. Its ultimate goal was to give a boost to local economic development, while safeguarding the rights of the citizens. Technical cooperation focused on the improvement of infrastructure of shopping centres and municipal markets in order to ensure better accessibility. At the end of the cooperation project, an improvement to the commercial structure, accessibility and security could be seen and was an important step forward in enhancing the attractiveness of the commercial, tourist and cultural areas of the city centre of Medellín.

2 South African local governments and their LGA, SALGA, are playing an increasing role in both triangular and South- South cooperation. For example, the P3 programme (funded by the EU and the Swedish Development Agency) involves the LGAs from Sweden, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, together with 25 municipalities from the three southern African countries, working on transparent local governance and economic development. Also, SALGA is increasingly adopting a more strategic role in development cooperation. In addition to its partnerships with 'northern' LGAs, it has taken the responsibility of assisting other LGAs in the southern African region (e.g. in Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, etc.).

- As a result, today **local government development cooperation** is considered to be a positive public policy in many parts of the world, with a proven impact on the lives of the communities. Aware of this, several funders have tightened their links with local governments in the past years.
- Yet there is still a long path ahead to deepen this recognition. Clear frameworks are needed and more support and coordination is also required to unfold the potential of local governments in development. Genuine and continuous dialogue is also necessary. Local governments and their associations, particularly "from the South" but also from developed OECD countries, need to be systematically brought on board, in order to **shape development priorities and implement development programmes.**





B. CONVEYING THE MESSAGE: THE CALL TO ACTION

MESSAGE 3: National government and the donor community (including bilateral donors, international organisations and multilateral financial institutions) are called on to:

1. Deepen their recognition of **LGs and their associations as key development actors** and support their meaningful participation and engagement in relevant dialogues, about national and sectoral policies (e.g. health, education, decentralisation and state reform, etc.)
2. Donors should increase substantially **the volume of financial support** targeting local governments, and supporting local government development cooperation (including triangular and South-South cooperation). A goal would be to have 20% of the international development assistance earmarked to support decentralisation processes and the capacity-building of LGs, counting on the active involvement of LGs and their associations at all stages. The role of local government associations is particularly relevant as partners of national government in planning and implementing decentralisation processes.
3. National governments should ensure that **enabling legal and institutional frameworks** exist to allow, on the one hand, LGs and their associations to take part in the decision-making processes around development policies that affect them and their communities. On the other hand, the frameworks should also enable local governments to lead and manage international cooperation programs, focusing on priorities relevant to them (e.g. strengthening the capacity of LGs, promoting local good governance, etc.)

Some examples that illustrate successful examples of cooperation between national governments and LGs:

1 In February 2012, the Brazilian government took a major step forward, in launching its new South-South programme for decentralised technical cooperation, covering a wide range of themes, such as health, education, environment, climate change, professional training, and capacity-building for achieving the MDGs. It is open to Brazilian sub-national authorities, together with international partners from developing countries; it offers funding of up to US \$200,000 for a one-year project.

1 Decentralisation reforms in Moldova have gained momentum after a very slow start. The country has been implementing a “National Decentralisation Strategy” since September 2012, which entails reforms in services and financing of local and regional governments. Since 2010, Moldova has had a consolidated and unified local government association, without party affiliation, the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM). It is supported by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities. Through regular and structured consultations with members on issues of decentralisation reform, CALM has managed to position itself as the local government consultative body and now meets regularly with ministries and parliamentary committees on decentralisation reform. CALM’s opinions are regularly broadcasted through radio and throughout newspapers.





MESSAGE 4: Yet, not all the responsibility lies on the shoulders of national governments and the donor community. Quite to the contrary, local governments (LGs) and their associations must also commit themselves to a set of principles and goals.

As such, LGs and LGAs are called upon to:

1. First and foremost, local governments, particularly in partner countries, **need to invest in their capacity development**, to be able to perform their newly enhanced roles and deliver effective development and good governance in their territory.
2. Local governments both in the North and partner countries must also ensure that all **their local government cooperation initiatives are not isolated and fragmented, but rather well coordinated** and developed within the **framework of country development strategies**, which take into account the national socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts.
3. Through their associations, local governments in partner countries need to engage in a **dialogue with donors and national governments** to ensure that the needs and concerns of their communities are clearly understood and supported.
4. What's more, **they also need to be an example of the proposed multi-stakeholder development approach**. To this end, local governments, particularly in partner countries, must promote, genuinely and substantially, **participatory development processes in their territories**, to allow the full and rich diversity of the community voices to be heard.
5. Finally, local governments in the “north” and partner countries need to **explore and develop long-term partnerships** with other development actors (e.g. bilateral and multilateral donors, CSOs, private sector, etc.).





Some examples that illustrate LG efforts:

1 Coordination in local government reconstruction and effective service delivery in Haiti: After the earthquake of 12 January 2010 in Haiti, the Haitian Ministry of Interior and Local Government, a number of mayors and other representatives of cities affected by the earthquake put forth a request to France, Canada and the Netherlands to support a series of communes in Les Palmes region. Since that moment Cités Unies France (CUF), the Communauté d'agglomération de Cergy-Pontoise, the Communauté d'agglomération du Centre de la Martinique (CACEM), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Union des Municipalités du Québec (UMQ), the City of Montreal VNG International, the international cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, and the City of Paris have been working to strengthen the capacity of a series of Haitian local governments, restoring the functionality of the governance system, building channels of communication between the local governments and their citizens, and reconstructing municipal capacity to function as permanent institutions in the political and administrative landscape of Haiti.

1 The Skellefteå Municipality (Sweden) and Jinja Municipal Council (Uganda) both had concrete plans to furnish green areas and both faced challenges regarding how to engage citizens so as to build a sense of ownership. Therefore their **partnership aimed at strengthening the capacity** of both cities for participatory city planning. Peer-to-peer exchanges and participatory workshops were organised in both cities. **Through preparatory research, the inclusion of all stakeholders had been achieved.** Challenges related to citizen participation had been identified with Swedish and Ugandan stakeholders (i.e. primary school children, churches, local community representatives), who also were involved in the workshops that were held to plan the revitalisation of the green areas. The partnership led to improvement of different aspects of their parks, including improved sanitation condition, accessibility to the park, green space management and security and utilisation of the area.

FINAL MESSAGE: All in all, it is quite an ambitious agenda. But the time is ripe. Going back to the words used in the introduction, the future is and will be local. Development needs strong, accountable and democratic local governments.

