

## CLGF briefing June 2013

# An analysis of the role of local government in the high-level panel's report on the post-2015 development agenda: *'A new global partnership: eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development'*

### Executive summary

Local authorities, along with multilateral organisations and national governments are identified as having provided experts to the consultation process and, as primary stakeholders, are appropriately second only to the poor as informants to the process. The report emphasises the need for quality public services, efficient and accountable public administration and skilled professions to make governments at all levels efficient. The issues of natural resource management and environmental degradation effecting small island states are highlighted as are the changing dynamics of a more urbanised post-2015 world.

The role of local governments in five transformative shifts are outlined in the next section with local authorities playing a key role in ensuring the necessary access and security needed to fulfil the *'leave no one behind agenda'* and in putting *'sustainable development at the core of the new agenda'* where they are explicitly called upon to *'transform the way they generate and consume energy, travel and transport goods, use water and grow food.'* For this second transformative shift the panel calls for governments at all levels to develop appropriate incentives including appropriate taxes, subsidies and regulations to ensure consumption patterns do not continue as they currently do, and leads on to the role of local governments in transforming economies for jobs and inclusive growth. Transparency and accountability are key attributes of local government that the panels calls for to help build peace and effective, open and accountable public institutions and that local authorities will play a key role, along with national government, international organisations, businesses, civil society, philanthropy, and people in *forging a new global partnership* to ensure the success of the post-2015 development agenda.

The third section of the analysis indicates possible roles that local governments can play in developing and monitoring the new goals and the importance the panel gives to local variability in targets, whilst ensuring minimum standards for all. Of the cross cutting themes, urbanisation and the management of cities are highlighted with the panel going so far as to state that *'Cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost'* and the final section of the analysis show how local governments will play a vital role unifying *global goals with national and local plans*, within *multi-stakeholder partnerships*, as a vital linchpin in *holding partners to account* and as a key player in the *Global Partnership on Development Data*.

### Commonwealth Local Government Forum:

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## Key quotes from the panel's report

'**Local authorities** form a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens and will have a critical role in a new global partnership. The Panel believes that one way to support this is by recognising that targets might be pursued differently at the sub-national level – so that urban poverty is not treated the same as rural poverty, for example.' (page 10)

**Local authorities** have a critical role in setting priorities, executing plans, monitoring results and engaging with local firms and communities. In many cases, it is **local authorities** that deliver essential public services in health, education, policing, water and sanitation. And, even if not directly delivering services, **local government** often has a role in establishing the planning, regulatory and enabling environment—for business, for energy supply, mass transit and building standards. They have a central role in disaster risk reduction – identifying risks, early warning' (page 10)

'The Panel recognised that **city governments** have great responsibilities for urban management. They have specific problems of poverty, slum up-grading, solid waste management, service delivery, resource use, and planning that will become even more important in the decades ahead. The post-2015 agenda must be relevant for urban dwellers. Cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost. Yet the Panel also believes that it is critical to pay attention to rural areas, where three billion near-poor will still be living in 2030. The most pressing issue is not urban versus rural, but how to foster a local, geographic approach to the post-2015 agenda. The Panel believes this can be done by disaggregating data by place, and giving **local authorities** a bigger role in setting priorities, executing plans, monitoring results and engaging with local firms and communities.' (page 17)

'The world is now more urban than rural, thanks to internal migration. By 2030 there will be over one billion more urban residents and, for the first time ever, the number of rural residents will be starting to shrink. This matters because inclusive growth emanates from vibrant and sustainable cities, the only locale where it is possible to generate the number of good jobs that young people are seeking. **Good local governance, management and planning** are the keys to making sure that migration to cities does not replace one form of poverty by another, where even if incomes are slightly above \$1.25 a day, the cost of meeting basic needs is higher' (page 18)

## Introduction

This analysis of the recent Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda '**A new global partnership: eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development**' shows that the recommendations put local authorities squarely at the forefront of both the delivery and monitoring of the post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDG). 'Local' is mentioned no less than 60 times throughout the document including mentioning local authorities and local governments explicitly eighteen times and local communities eight times. Local authorities are seen by the panel as key actors '*form[ing] a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens and will have a critical role in a new global partnership*' and the report highlights how the panel envisages the role of local government in both developing the priorities for, as well as delivering and monitoring the post-2015 development agenda.

This summary analysis below draws out the various roles the panel envisages for local governments throughout the four chapters of the report from the vision and framework through to action, impact, implementation accountability and building consensus.

## Chapter 1: a vision and framework for the post-2015 development agenda

Local authorities, along with multilateral organisations and national governments, are identified on the very first page of the main report as having provided experts to the consultation process and on page two as primary stakeholders, appropriately second only to the poor as informants to the process:

*'The Panel heard some similar **priorities voiced by mayors and local elected officials**. These leaders deal daily with marginalized groups asking for help getting food, shelter, health care, meals at school, education and school supplies. They strive to supply their constituents with safe water, sanitation, and street lighting. They told us that the urban poor want jobs that are better than selling small items on the street or picking through rubbish dumps. And, like people everywhere, they want security so their families can safely go about their lives.'* (page 2).

Other identified stakeholder groups included young people, women and girls, people with disabilities, indigenous groups and local communities as well as businesses. The report emphasises the need draw on the lived experiences of people at the grassroots and that local authorities and civil society are based placed to both facilitate this discussion and to deliver the post-2015 agenda.

The report goes on to emphasise the need for quality public services, efficient and accountable public administration and skilled professions to make governments at all levels efficient. Page four emphasises the people everywhere expect both businesses and '**governments [at all levels] to be open, accountable and responsive to their needs**' (page 4), and summarises the need for good governance in the following paragraph:

*'People care no less about sound institutions than they do about preventing illness or ensuring that their children can read and write – if only because they understand that the former play an essential role in achieving the latter. **Good institutions are, in fact, the essential building blocks of a prosperous and sustainable future**. The rule of law, freedom of speech and the media, open political choice and active citizen participation, access to justice, non-discriminatory and accountable governments and public institutions help drive development and have their own intrinsic value. They are both means to an end and an end in themselves.'* (page 4)

Issues of natural resource management and environmental degradation effecting small island states are also emphasised where the report refers to the UN millennium ecosystem report 2005 identification that there are '*threats to 75 per cent of the world's coral reefs, mostly in **small island developing states** where dependence on reefs is high.*' (page 4)

Chapter one ends by emphasising the changing dynamics of the post-2015 world, one which is more urbanised and where developing countries '*must make smart choices to **turn cities into vibrant places full of opportunities, services and different lifestyles, where people want to work and live.***' (page 6)

## **Chapter 2: from vision to action - priority transformations for a post-2015 agenda**

This chapter outlines five transformative shifts the panel believes must take place to ensure a forward-looking, compelling and integrated sustainable development agenda. These are outlined below, highlighting the specific roles of local government in each.

### **1) Leave no one behind**

Access and security are the themes that run through the 'leave no one behind agenda', with local government playing a key role in ensuring both. The quote below illustrates the range of areas which need to be addressed, all of which clearly have a local government dimension:

*'The new agenda must tackle the causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality. It must connect people in rural and urban areas to the modern economy through quality infrastructure – electricity, irrigation, roads, ports, and telecommunications. It must provide quality health care and education for all. It must establish and enforce clear rules, without discrimination, so that women can inherit and own property and run a business, communities can control local environmental resources, and farmers and urban slum-dwellers have secure property rights. It must give people the assurance of personal safety. It must make it easy for them to follow their dreams and start a business. It must give them a say in what their government does for them, and how it spends their tax money. It must end discrimination and promote equality between men and women, girls and boys.'* (page 7)

To ensure that the benefits of this access and security reaches not just those in the major urban centre but also the most marginalised in rural local government areas. The report continues:

*'To be sure that our actions are helping not just the largest number of people, but the neediest and most vulnerable, we will need new ways of measuring success. Strategies and plans will have to be developed to reach those not adequately covered by existing programmes. The cost of delivering services in remote areas may be only 15 to 20 per cent higher than average, to judge by practical experience in many countries. This seems reasonable and affordable, given higher tax revenues expected in most countries, and sustained aid to the lowest income countries.'* (page 8)

The report identifies numerous barriers to achieving this access and security which alongside poor health and education includes poor local leadership as a core barrier for those living in poverty.

### **2) Put sustainable development at the core**

The second transformative shift, to put sustainable development at the core of the new agenda explicitly calls for local governments; along with national governments, businesses and individuals to *'transform the way they generate and consume energy, travel and transport goods, use water and grow food.'* (page 8) and calls for governments at all levels to develop appropriate incentives – taxes, subsidies and regulations to ensure our consumption patterns do not continue as they are.

### **3) Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth**

This brings the previous two transformative shifts together and focuses on the necessary prerequisites for ensuring everyone has access to a decent job and secure livelihood within a sustainable economy with local governments ensuring an enabling environment through focusing on the following four priorities: a) creating opportunities for good and decent jobs and a secure livelihood – including providing those entering the job market with the education, training and skills needed – and requiring better government policies and fair and accountable public institutions; b) to constantly strive to add value and raise productivity; c) countries must put in place a stable environment that enables business to flourish, and d) growth will also need to usher in new ways to support sustainable consumption and production and governments should develop and implement detailed approaches to encourage sustainable activities and properly cost environmentally and socially hazardous behaviour. (pages 8&9)

#### 4) Build peace and effective, open and accountable public institutions

The fourth transformative shift is a call to *recognise peace and good governance as core elements of well-being, not an optional extra*. Whilst identifying freedom from conflict and violence as the most fundamental human entitlement, this shift also acknowledges that:

*'people the world over want their governments to be transparent, accountable and responsive to their needs. Personal security, access to justice, freedom from discrimination and persecution, and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives are development outcomes as well as enablers.'* (page 9).

To ensure this, the panel identifies the key role of transparency and accountability and that governments:

*'need to build effective and accountable public institutions that support the rule of law, freedom of speech and the media, open political choice, and access to justice. We need a transparency revolution so citizens can see exactly where their taxes, aid and revenues from extractive industries are spent. We need governments that tackle the causes of poverty, empower people, are transparent, and permit scrutiny of their affairs. Transparency and accountability are also powerful tools for preventing the theft and waste of scarce natural resources.'* (page 9)

The panel further identifies the vital role of peaceful citizen-government dialogue:

*'In order to play a substantive role, citizens need a legal environment which enables them to form and join CSOs, to protest and express opinions peacefully, and which protects their right to due process.'* (page 9)

And the use of international and domestic forums to assist government in addressing tax avoidance, corruption and the illicit trade in drugs and arms – and (though not mentioned explicitly) – by implication - human trafficking.

#### 5) Forge a new global partnership

*'A new global partnership should engage national governments of all countries, **local authorities**, international organisations, businesses, civil society, foundations and other philanthropists, and people – all sitting at the table to go beyond aid to discuss a truly international framework of policies to achieve sustainable development.'* .. *'The United Nations can take the lead on monitoring at the global level, drawing on information from national and local governments, as well as from regional dialogues. Partnerships in each thematic area, at global, national and local levels, can assign responsibilities and accountabilities for putting policies and programs in place.'* (page 10)

Within this global partnership, the *'critical'* and *'vital'* role of local governments is laid out in the quote at the start of this paper, and includes *'recognising that targets might be pursued differently at the sub-national level'* (page 10) and that the majority of the financing for sustainable development will be domestic and that:

*'[all] countries must continue efforts to invest in stronger tax systems, broaden their domestic tax base and build local financial markets.'* (page 12)

### Chapter 3: Illustrative goals and global impact

In this chapter the panel outlines their vision for the types of goals and monitoring processes that will enable the achievement of above five priority transformations. They call for goals that are SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound and that the target date for the post-2015 agenda should be 2030. They outline that *'the agenda should also include monitoring and accountability mechanisms involving states, civil society, the private sector, foundations, and the international development community'* (page 13) and there is clearly an integral role for local government to play here. Alongside keeping those living in extreme poverty and all the neediest and vulnerable at the heart of the post-2015 agenda, they identify that calling for *'improving the quality of services'* as a key step forward beyond the quantitative focus of the MDGs.

The panel gives examples of how priorities and targets for different income groups may differ and the role of local governments can be seen in many of the illustrative examples given:

*'[S]ome **high-income countries** might be expected to move further and faster on clean energy targets, because most start from a low base and all have responsibilities to do more to move towards sustainable consumption and production patterns. Many can also do more to provide **equitable access to health and education services for isolated, poor or immigrant communities** at home. And youth unemployment is a serious problem everywhere.*

The priorities expressed in consultations in **middle-income countries** focused more on reducing inequality, a good **education**, better quality **healthcare**, reliable **infrastructure**, a transparent and **responsible government**, especially at **local levels for improved city management**, creating more and better jobs and livelihoods and freedom from violence.

Similar priorities are expressed in **low-income countries**, as well as the need to transform economies and reduce extreme poverty. **Landlocked countries** often call for better connections to the global economy; **small island developing states** for economic diversification and a stronger response to climate change.' (page 14)

The discussion goes on to outline the pros and cons of target setting – and how not all targets can be universal. However of those that should be universal a clear role on protection of rights for all citizens and of minimum services can be identified for local governments:

*'in a few cases the ambition for the whole world should be the same: to establish minimum standards for every citizen. No one should live in extreme poverty, or tolerate violence against women and girls. No one should be denied freedom of speech or access to information. No child should go hungry or be unable to read, write or do simple sums. All should be vaccinated against major diseases. **Everyone should have access to modern infrastructure – drinking water, sanitation, roads, transport and information and communications technologies (ICT)**. All countries should have access to cost-effective clean and sustainable energy. Everyone should have a legal identity.'* (page 15)



For goals where it would be unrealistic to set universal targets for all countries, the panels recommends that *'in most cases, national targets should be set to be as ambitious as practical, and in some cases global minimum standards that apply to every individual or country should be set. We would suggest that in all cases where a target applies to outcomes for individuals, it should only be deemed to be met if every group – defined by income quintile, gender, location or otherwise – has met the target.'* (page 15)

The panel give a suggestive illustration of the following twelve universal goals with national targets- which each has four to six targets (totalling 54 targets) – (page30-31)

- (i) end poverty;
- (ii) empower girls and women and achieve gender equality;
- (iii) provide quality education and lifelong learning;
- (iv) ensure healthy lives;
- (v) ensure food security and good nutrition;
- (vi) achieve universal access to water and sanitation;
- (vii) secure sustainable energy;
- (viii) create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth;
- (ix) manage natural resource assets sustainably;
- (x) ensure good governance and effective institutions;
- (xi) ensure stable and peaceful societies; and
- (xii) create a global enabling environment and catalyse long-term finance.

As the goals and targets are not prescriptive, they don't go into the roles of the various levels of government, international community, civil society may take etc., however the large majority of the suggested targets clearly have a local government dimension.

Finally, whilst all the other cross cutting themes that the panel has identified have a role for local government- peace, inequality, climate change, concerns of young people, girls, and women, and sustainable consumption and production patterns – it is in managing cities and the urbanisation process where the reports identifies a clear leading role for local government.

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*'The world is now more urban than rural, thanks to internal migration. By 2030 there will be over one billion more urban residents and, for the first time ever, the number of rural residents will be starting to shrink. This matters because inclusive growth emanates from **vibrant and sustainable cities**, the only locale where it is possible to generate the number of good jobs that young people are seeking. **Good local governance, management and planning** are the keys to making sure that migration to cities does not replace one form of poverty by another, where even if incomes are slightly above \$1.25 a day, the cost of meeting basic needs is higher' (page 18)*

## Chapter 4 Implementation, accountability and building consensus

### 1. Unifying global goals with national plans for development

For developing national priorities, targets and plans the panel suggests the national coordinating group 'could receive input on what is realistic and achievable in each target area from citizens, officials, businesses and civil society in **villages, towns, cities, provinces and communities.**' (page 21)

### 2. Global monitoring and peer review

The panel recommends that regional peer reviews are used to assist with global monitoring 'reporting and peer-review at the **regional level** could complement global monitoring. It is often easier to review policies in-depth with friendly and constructive neighbours than with the whole world.' (page 22)

### 3. Stakeholders partnering by theme

The panel calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships to be formed to address different development needs, many of which local government will form a vital lynchpin for the partnership between the citizenship, civil society and experts from academia and business.

'Such groups are sometimes called 'multi-stakeholder partnerships'. They bring together **governments (local, city, national)**, experts, CSOs, businesses, philanthropists, universities and others, to work on a single theme. These partnerships are powerful because each partner comes to the table with direct knowledge and strong evidence, based on thorough research. This enables them to innovate, to advocate convincingly for good policies, and thus to secure funding. They have the skills to apply knowledge of what has worked before to new operations, and to scale up promising ideas to reach large populations in many countries – 'implementation and scaling up.' There are already a number of such global multi-stakeholder partnerships delivering promising results, at scale: in **health**, nutrition, **education**, agriculture, **water**, energy, information and communications technology, financial services, **cities and open government.**' (page 22)

### 4. Holding partners to account

In highlighting appropriate accountability channels, the high level panel puts local governments squarely in the centre in ensuring both accountability of themselves to their communities and also in providing an enabling environment where national governments are in turn held accountable, as are corporations and civil society.

'Accountability must be exercised at the right level: governments to their own citizens, **local governments to their communities**, corporations to their shareholders, civil society to the constituencies they represent.' (page 23)

### 5. Wanted: a new data revolution

The panel recommends that data will need to be 'disaggregated by gender, geography, income, disability, and other categories' (page 23) and this will involve **local governments** both as data collectors, data managers and as data users and will be key players in the proposed **Global Partnership on Development Data.**