



Local Economic Development: a framework for localising Sustainable Development Goals

CLGF Southern Africa Regional Conference

28 - 29 June 2016, Johannesburg, South Africa

Meeting conclusions

Ministers, local government leaders, senior officials, representatives from local government associations, development partners and representatives from the private sector met on the 28 and 29 of June 2016 to discuss the localisation of the SDGs and local economic development as a means of implementation.

Participants agreed that the meeting offered a timely chance to reflect on how to move towards localisation of the SDGs, how to build a strong national dialogue around alignment of national development strategies and the SDGs, and within that, how to ensure that local government has the necessary skills and capacities to take the framework of the SDGs and align the priorities of local communities with these important national and global commitments. Understanding of local economic development - already an important function for local government in the region - has significantly evolved into a strategic approach to address social, economic and spatial development to enable local government to play a strong role in achieving the SDGs.

They noted the current challenges facing SADC countries and the international community, including the serious global economic and political consequences of the UK decision to leave the EU, and agreed that current development challenges which include inequality, unemployment, poverty, climate change and urbanisation among others, require local government to play a more developmental role in the delivery of services. The priorities set out in the Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement are not new for local governments, which are already actively involved in delivering many of the core services that will contribute to achieving them, such as water, sanitation, primary health care, and infrastructure. However to deliver its core mandate and fully contribute to achieving the SDGs and addressing climate change, local government needs the requisite capacity, finances, and empowerment.

Lessons learned and good practice

The meeting recognised the important lessons and good practice emerging from the work supported by DFID and, more recently, the EU, and highlighted the following ongoing issues affecting local government's ability to effectively implement LED in the region:

- Incomplete decentralisation;
- Changing labour markets and informality;
- Disruptions and opportunities of new technology and ICT;
- Lack of capacity within local authorities (political and technical);
- Lack of appropriate local data;
- Lack of access to financing for development;
- Limitations of existing land use planning and management systems.

Participants recognised that LED is different in different contexts, and the country and local context must be at the centre of rolling out LED processes if they are to be successful. Pilot projects implemented in Botswana, Swaziland, South Africa and Zambia highlighted important principles for effective local development:

- mainstreaming LED across local government functions and responsibilities
- partnership with communities, private sector, civil society, traditional authorities and other public sector organisations
- community ownership of and participation in development processes
- transformational leadership at all levels
- national enabling frameworks
- a locally-owned strategic vision for development
- effective local institutional arrangements for multi-stakeholder engagement
- strong inter-governmental frameworks and cooperation.

Building on these core outcomes participants prioritised the following actions which will be key in achieving the SDG:

- Scaling up and rolling out efforts so as to entrench LED as a holistic approach (through national policies and programmes)
- Strengthening technical and leadership capacity of all stakeholders involved in LED to ensure full political buy-in at all levels
- Strengthening local government's ability to enter into vertical and horizontal partnerships (including public private partnership) and enhancing intergovernmental frameworks
- Strengthen LGAs as advocates for localising the SDGs and building the capacity of their members to deliver local development
- Building local government's ability to raise revenue and access financing for development
- Building local government's capacity to collect locally appropriate data to enable planning, attract investors, M&E and to feed into national reporting processes
- Embracing the use of ICT to improve democratic engagement, strengthen service delivery and support M&E
- Supporting inter-regional exchange and cross-border cooperation
- Championing localisation of the SDGs and raising awareness across the region, including on the importance of local government involvement in national SDG monitoring processes
- Strengthening community development, including building entrepreneurial skills for women, youth and marginalised communities, to address inequalities
- Recognising informality and the informal economy and enhancing local government's strategic planning capacity to ensure inclusive local development towards achieving the SDGs
- Building inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and the proposed New Urban Agenda which is expected to be agreed at Habitat III.

Participants encouraged:

- Ministers of local government to champion the localisation of the SDGs, including putting in place the necessary enabling environment in their respective countries;
- The private sector to move from corporate social responsibility to good corporate local citizenship;
- Local and central government to work together to encourage SADC to recognise and support the role of local government in delivering development and in localising the SDGs in the region;

- Development partners to continue supporting local development including providing direct support to local government and coordinate their support at a local and regional coordination;

They recognised the supportive role of CLGF's Southern Africa office in the project implementation and in supporting regional exchange and dialogue. They welcomed a greater focus on knowledge sharing and exchange, and requested CLGF reflect these conclusions in their future programming. They highlighted the importance of strengthening the capacity of the office and encouraged it to support the SADC Local Government Forum (Ministries and LGAs). Finally they expressed appreciation to DFID and the EU for support provided for CLGF's work and looked forward to continued engagement with them and other partners including from the private sector.

Johannesburg, June 2016