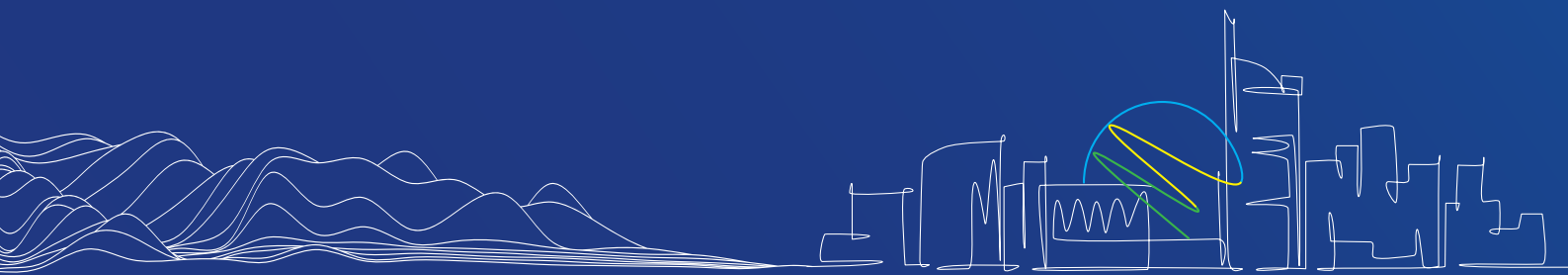# Local Government: Building Resilience Across the Commonwealth

Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) was founded in 1995, as a focus for action on local democracy in the Commonwealth. It works to promote and strengthen democratic local government across the Commonwealth and to encourage the exchange of best practice. It has some 200 members in 45 Commonwealth countries including national ministries of local government, local councils and local government associations

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Resilience for Ensuring Inclusive Local Communities and the SDGs

Introduction

As institutions and communities grapple simultaneously with multiple challenges, the term resilience has emerged as a concept that offers the promise of coherence. It has the capacity to help policy makers from all sectors make sense of a seemingly ever more dynamic and chaotic context.

Local government is on the front-line in facing up to these challenges: eradicating extreme poverty, reducing disaster risk, combating the causes of climate change, enabling economic development and fostering peace and security. In the midst of the COVID pandemic, it was local institutions that communities turned to, and in the post-pandemic global order it is clear that local government is a first port of call both for the day to day needs of citizens as well as a first responder in extremis. Local government is responding to global and macro level issues, which manifest locally in increased demand for services and support. These challenges also call for strategic responses and shifts in policy, for example, by adapting to structural economic shifts or demographic change.

Resilience has particular salience for developmental local government, which responds to failures of centraliseda and top-down approaches and recognises local agency. Resilience offers a holistic framework that can help local government understand the interconnected challenges it is facing. It can help develop joined up responses that make the best use of local assets and resources, which are strengthened as they are mobilised. In the current global context, which recognises the complexity of developmental challenges, local resilience is a key factor in reinforcing the multi-actor multi-level actions needed to affect systemic change and coordinated efforts to reduce inequalities.

Planning for inclusion is a key characteristic of developmental local government. Resilience provides a framework for planning because it embraces a systems approach. This acknowledges that local government operates in an open system, with diverse and distinct inputs and influences. In this context, resilience posits shocks and spikes as part of the system rather than one-off events. Resilience can be seen as the process of continuously strengthening local capacities to deliver inclusive development within an open system.

The term resilience gained credence once more during the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a policy response to growing global levels of insecurity and complexity. In the aftermath of the 2008-2009 global financial crisis and a prevailing economic slowdown, insecure working and living conditions due to poverty and large-scale unemployment presented stubborn challenges across the Commonwealth.

At that time, during the lead up to the Paris climate talks in 2015 there was widespread concern at the lack of progress or ambition in relation to climate change targets while ever more violent manifestations of the phenomenon wrought havoc through storms, floods and wildfires. The 2015 Climate Agreement and its subsequent implementation have moreover seen growing recognition of the vital role local government has in addressing both climate adaptation and mitigation; numerous cities and local governments across the world have moreover declared climate emergencies and set their own local targets for the achievement of zero carbon emissions. Added to this, rapid urbanisation was established as a policy priority following the crossing of the symbolic threshold in 2007 when for the first time more people were living in urban settlements than in rural areas globally.

In the 2020s, policy makers have once more reached for resilience as they look to frame coherent responses to these issues and the challenges of the slowdown of the global economy following the COVID-19 pandemic and the on-going cost-of-living crisis due to rising energy and food costs following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. It is significant that the importance of urbanisation was recognised by Commonwealth Heads of Government in the meeting in Kigali in 2022 and the same year saw the first ministerial meeting on urbanisation and climate the UN Climate Conference, COP27, in Sharm El Sheik.

Thus Commonwealth leaders, meeting in Kigali in 2022, adopted the **Declaration on Sustainable Urbanisation** which inter alia emphasises *'that urban areas are a key contributor to rising greenhouse gas emissions and that cities are also where many of the solutions to climate change will be realised'*. It further agrees to *'support cities, municipalities, and other urban authorities to mobilise resources to develop comprehensive,*

scalable programmes to address key challenges of sustainable urbanisation and build climate resilience to reduce risk and vulnerability'.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030)[1], endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2015, emerged out of a dialogue between governments, civil society and other development stakeholders to provide a framework with achievable targets, standards and legal instruments for disaster risk reduction. The process was significant in highlighting the need for Agenda 2030 to address disaster risk and climate change and it reinforced the currency of resilience in the prevailing development discourse.

At the heart of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 is the concept of localising the SDGs. The OECD has estimated that at least 100 of the 169 SDG targets require implementation at local/community level which means that cities and local governments have a key role[2]. This focus on localising the SDGs has been reflected in the developmental work of many international agencies with which CLGF is engaged including UNDP, UN Habitat and the EU. It has also led to local governments integrating SDG implementation into their own strategic planning and contributing to UN review process through data collection on SDGs and contributions to national voluntary reviews, local voluntary reviews.

For each of these global development challenges and initiatives, local government has been at the forefront. It has been responding to the needs of local populations through increasing services to the most vulnerable, communicating essential information and maintaining core services with reduced personnel and shrinking revenue streams. In the face of these ongoing emergencies, the theme of resilience has new currency as an essential framework for how cities and local government plan for and adapt to local and global shocks. CLGF has a track record of championing local government as an agent of resilience through its national and regional programme work and in pursuing the localisation of SDGs. This report responds to the need from its stakeholders for progressive narratives that can bring policy coherence to development planning – not least in the context of post COVID recovery.

The paper aims to provide a resource for local government stakeholders – local government

officials, elected representatives as well as central government counterparts with a mandate to support and enable effective and efficient local government. It will help colleagues understand and navigate the resilience discourse and enable the use of the concept as a framework for policy and practice. It starts by exploring the diverse definitions of resilience as a development concept. It then traces the evolution of resilience as a paradigm. While the paper will discuss some of the critiques of the concept of resilience. it will argue for and expand on the utility of resilience. To conclude, the paper will highlight the applications of resilience for local government through examples that illustrate various dimensions of the concept.

2.0 Defining Resilience

As noted by Brown, there are three salient dimensions of resilience.[3] The first, and most conventional, dimension of resilience is the ability to resist, cope and bounce back in the face of a developmental challenge. This perspective is cited most often in the formulation of disaster risk reduction approaches. Consideration of the capacity for individuals and communities to adapt to change and uncertainty is a second dimension. This has featured in the shaping of adaptation strategies related to climate change. The third aspect of resilience speaks to the capacity for transformation and to take advantage of prevailing uncertainty to become stronger. As posited by Brown, it is this third aspect of resilience has been relatively underdeveloped and may provide a useful a framework for holistic and coherent policy making.

What can be termed "resilience thinking" acknowledges that change is ever present and that the systems that institutions operate in are dynamic and unpredictable. This requires adaptive management that enables responses to change (whether rapid, gradual or heralded by the crossing of a threshold). This kind of thinking recognises the potential of shocks and crises to provide the impetus for transformational change. In turn, this requires an appreciation of the nature of systems and the ways in which formal and informal

1   https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sendai-framework
2   OECD A Territorial Approach to the SDGs. 2020
3   Brown, K., 2015. Resilience, development and global change. Routledge.

institutions interact with and affect each other. This brings an understanding that challenges can compound or offset each other (e.g., COVID and climate change) rather than manifest in isolation. Understanding resilience also necessitates an appreciation that it can be both good and bad. It is not an inherently "good" concept. For example, the ways in which people become trapped in poverty can be resilient and resist efforts to address them.

3.0 Where has Resilience come from?

Academics trace the development of the resilience discourse to C.S Holling's[4] work published in 1973. Through an ecological lens, Holling described resilience as governing the durability of relationships within a system. He defined it as a measure of the ability of systems to absorb changes and yet persist. This definition distinguishes between resilience (the ability of a system to respond) and stability (the ability of a system to return to a state of equilibrium). Ecologists in the 1970s understood the need to look at ecosystems as a whole instead of individual organisms. Holling observed freshwater lakes as systems subject to change – whether natural or manufactured. He set out to define a concept that made sense of real-world ecosystems and took account of dynamic processes in all their randomness and diversity, influenced by manifold variables on multiple levels.

Libby[5] observes that Holling's work has its roots in the then contemporary discourse among ecologists about planetary boundaries. They sensed that there was a limit to what the planet could take in the pursuit of economic growth and could not be expected to recover and revert to a constant state of equilibrium. Libby recognises that when presented with the multiple development challenges of political and economic instability, and climate change, development organisations started to express interest in resilience as a concept. This opened up a new dimension of resilience – more explicitly connected to the sphere of international development.

This school of thought drew on the work of Alinovi et al[6], which introduced the concept of resilience into food security literature as a means of measuring the capacity of households to absorb the impacts of crises rather than predicting the occurrence of such events. Furthermore, Barrett and Constas[7] set out a theory of development resilience which focussed on the individual and collective

human capacity to avoid and escape from poverty in the face of multiple pressure points and shocks, introducing a rights-based element to resilience thinking. They contended that the theory required a holistic and rigorous explanation of the interrelated dynamics of human development, the environment, and the management of risk. From this perspective and in the context of development, resilience is the capacity of a person, household, or other group to avoid poverty when subject to multiple shocks or stresses. Resilience can only be said to exist if the capacity to avoid poverty remains high.

Reflecting on the way in which the resilience discourse has evolved, Bousquet et al[8] identify two principal schools of thought which are apparent in development policies and programmes. These can be summarised as either focussing on; the resilience of social-ecological systems (see Folke[9]); or more recently, development resilience. Social-ecological systems resilience locates humanity as an integral part of the biosphere with development outcomes contingent on the biosphere's continuous production of ecosystem services (e.g., agroecosystems, forest ecosystems and aquatic ecosystems). Development resilience focusses on the capacity of people (individually or collectively) to withstand, adapt, and recover swiftly following a period of stress or crisis.

To illustrate the different lenses, Bousquet et al use the example of food security. In this case development resilience highlights the importance of the ability of households to respond to unexpected scarcity and shortages and the

4   Holling, C.S., 1973. Resilience and stability of ecological systems. Annual review of ecology and systematics, 4(1), pp.1-23.
5   Robin, L., Sörlin, S. and Warde, P., 2013. The future of nature. New Haven/London.
6   Alinovi, L., Mane, E. and Romano, D., 2008. Towards the measurement of household resilience to food insecurity: applying a model to Palestinian household data. Deriving food security information from national household budget surveys. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy, pp.137-152.
7   Barrett, C.B. and Constas, M.A., 2014. Toward a theory of resilience for international development applications. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111(40), pp.14625-14630.
8   Bousquet, F., Botta, A., Alinovi, L., Barreteau, O., Bossio, D., Brown, K., Caron, P., Cury, P., d'Errico, M., DeClerck, F. and Dessard, H., 2016. Resilience and development: mobilizing for transformation. Ecology and Society, 21(3).
9   Folke, C., 2006. Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social–ecological systems analyses. Global environmental change, 16(3), pp.253-267.

learning required to recover quickly. In response to the same issue, social-ecological systems resilience highlights the importance of social learning, establishing early warning signals, and the stewardship of ecosystem services. While social-ecological systems resilience promotes sustainable pathways between systems, development resilience promotes positive outcomes for the well-being of people and communities most at risk.

These are not irreconcilable differences but there has been relatively little cross-fertilisation between these two schools of thought. This, despite persistent poverty and inequality as well as the continuation of manifestly unsustainable development trajectories.

There are several areas of convergence between the two perspectives as both highlight the following characteristics of resilience:

- Diversity (for example, in terms of a plurality of stakeholders or a variety of institutional approaches).

- Dynamism (in the systems that stakeholders act within, their capacities as well as the variables at work).

- Uneven trajectories of change (characterised by thresholds or tipping points, and traps i.e., where change is not possible for example if a threshold has not been reached).

- Social capital (for example in stewarding natural resources or in post disaster recovery).

4.0 Critiques of Resilience

Contemporary enthusiasm for resilience as a paradigm is rooted in a growing frustration and disillusionment with development practice. The prevailing approaches and institutions can be traced back to the 1950s when the substantive development challenges were different. The concept of sustainable development, which started to be aired at the time of the UN Conference on the Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 continues to be questioned to this day and resilience can be seen as its successor. The attraction of resilience lies in its ability to make connections between the multiple development challenges faced in the 21st century and communicate the need for systemic change.

In the 2020s, the need to update the development discourse – including the way that resilience has

been framed is even more apparent. Resilience is still defined as the capacity to "bounce back" after an external shock. In this frame, resilience assumes that "back" is a desirable destination and the underlying causes of insecurities are not addressed. The purpose of resilience building becomes to "correct" self-created vulnerabilities. Bouncing back to the status quo means returning to a flawed system and missing an opportunity to consider systemic transformation.

References to resilience remain related to economics and climate change primarily. The 2008 financial crisis prompted interrogation by the OECD[10] and regional institutions of dominant macro-economic policy and prevailing financial regulatory regimes. At the same time, the global consensus on the climate change responses of mitigation and adaptation came under increasing scrutiny at COP15 in Copenhagen. Climate resilience has been posited as an alternative to adaptation by advocates for systems change.

Bene et al[11] track the growth of the resilience discourse between c2000 and c2015 and its widespread adoption by development agencies, including NGOs, bilateral and multilateral institutions. The resilience of resilience as a concept is observed as it has evolved and been redefined, they liken it to a moving target. Bene et al criticise the way that resilience places emphasis on the workings of systems in a way that underplays the agency of individuals and their ability to make choices and engage directly with the challenges they face. This is illustrated by the way in which resilience has, in some cases, been posited as the opposite of vulnerability. Advocates in the global south have challenged the way in which a narrative of vulnerability denies their agency and further entrenches and perpetuates dependency on aid and concessions from Bretton Woods institutions. Resilience should be able to convey the sense that people can be vulnerable and resilient simultaneously.

Critics also take issue with the way that resilience is increasingly presented as a normative construct

10 Sánchez, A.C., Rasmussen, M. and Röhn, O., 2015. Economic resilience: what role for policies? *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 1251, OECD Publishing

11 Béné, C., Newsham, A., Davies, M., Ulrichs, M. and Godfrey-Wood, R., 2014. Resilience, poverty and development. *Journal of international development*, *26*(5), pp.598-623.

(inferring a positive outcome or desired state). This downplays the negative aspects of resilience (for example, some communities may have improved their resilience but in doing so may have had to make trade-offs that have been detrimental). This is at odds with the use of the term as a technical characteristic of a system, which is neutral and does not automatically lead to positive impacts.

Resilience has become a shorthand for desired states and positive development outcomes and a universal definition has proved difficult. This has presented difficulties in managing for resilience. There is no consensus on how to measure or assess progress. In turn, identifying common indicators makes comparison difficult. This is a significant barrier to the multilevel, inter-systems analyses that resilience is widely promoted as encapsulating.

In the context of the Commonwealth, there has been much attention to the vulnerability of small states, which comprise a majority of the 56 Commonwealth member states and is reflected in the Commonwealth Universal Vulnerability Index[12]. While immediate focus here is on resilience to climate change, given the existential dangers this poses to many small island developing states, SIDS, vulnerability has a wider application, relating also to issues of economic and political instability including with regard to the rule of law and governance. This is why CLGF, working with its members, has sought to strengthen local democratic structures in the SIDS.

5.0 The Value of Resilience for Local Government

Resilience is a powerful and enduring concept that has far reaching utility for developmental local government. It has the ability to highlight the importance of the linkages between people living at the margins of society and the systems and services they depend on. It places emphasis on geographies and so helps to frame issues for example, related to urbanisation[13]. Most importantly, it provides an integrating narrative that has the potential to bring different disciplines and communities of practice together. In the context of post COVID recovery and the cost-of-living crisis, it provides the opportunity to integrate health, climate, and economic considerations through a single frame.

A systemic frame can help communities navigate contemporary development challenges, which are understood as comprising multiple variables and requiring inputs from diverse stakeholders. The concept is particularly relevant where vulnerable people are dependent on others who themselves are similarly challenged by the same set of stressors or shocks. The holistic nature of resilience and its emphasis on the interdependency of distinct system components enables the use of tools such as vulnerability mapping to identify commonalities and interrelationships between diverse communities.

Resilience can also help us understand that, while some of the variables that affect communities and their environments are local, others emanate from places that are remote. These variables interact and reinforce or neutralise each other. This understanding can help identify where inputs are needed and can help target interventions.

Early discussions on the role of local government in applying resilience have focussed on disaster risk reduction (DRR). Johnson and Blackburn[14] reviewed the activities of more than 50 city local governments on DRR. The review served to illustrate the ways in which city governments framed resilience and used this to adjust plans, engage with stakeholders, mobilise finances, assess risk, make improvements to informal settlements, and implement planning and building regulations. This shaped a definition of resilience for local governments in the context of DRR: resistance + coping capacity + recovery + adaptive capacity.

Johnson and Blackburn explored the interrelationship between DRR and sustainable development finding that many city governments had integrated DRR into existing environmental

12 The Commonwealth Universal Vulnerability Index, Commonwealth Secretariat 2021

13 Arup has developed a City Resilience Framework and City Resilience Index with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. These provide a basis for assessing and measuring resilience at a city scale. The Framework identifies variables that contribute to the city's 'immune system', across four dimensions of city resilience:
   - People: The health and well-being of everyone living and working in the city
   - Organisation: The systems within the economy and society that enable urban populations to live peacefully, and act collectively
   - Place: The quality of infrastructure and ecosystems that protect, provide and connect people
   - Knowledge: Appropriate leadership and strategy enabling the city to learn from the past and take timely action

14 Johnson, C. and Blackburn, S., 2014. Advocacy for urban resilience: UNISDR's making cities resilient campaign. *Environment and Urbanization*, *26*(1), pp.29-52.

programmes. They noted that this occurred at a local level while the institutions and policies of climate, disaster risk, and development at a national and international level remained compartmentalised. A resilience discourse has seen city governments address global issues such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions (for example, through investments in public transport). Cities have also invested in natural resources (for example, parks and public gardens) that provide ecosystem services as part of their commitment to risk reduction. These examples show that municipalities have acted to strengthen resilience-building and simultaneously reduce vulnerability as part of broader strategies to enable cities to thrive within environmental constraints.

6.0 Dimensions of Resilience Illustrated

This paper has identified the universal characteristics of resilience as diversity, equity and sustainability. These can be applied to the pressing development issues across the Commonwealth in the areas such as climate, economics, urbanisation, international migration, and gender equality. In addition, in the wake of the global COVID pandemic, we must also explore ways to strengthen resilience in pandemic preparedness, management and recovery. For each of these issues, CLGF has an interest in exploring policy responses and the ways in which local government institutions have progressed these challenges.

6.1 Climate and Resilience

Climate change represents an existential and escalating threat for the Commonwealth's small states, which played little part in creating the crisis. Climate change amplifies linkages between land, energy, water, food, agricultural and other policies. For example, climate change directly affects agricultural production and output on which many countries rely, in turn affecting international competitiveness and terms of trade. The lack of predictability of rainfall can fuel domestic and regional conflict, migration, poverty levels, and put pressure on other services. Closely linked to addressing climate change is the need to tackle the global crisis in biodiversity and habitat losses. The interconnection between these two issues was recognised at both the 2022 UN Climate Summit (COP27) and the subsequent UN Biodiversity Summit (COP15).

Cities, with their high concentration of population, industry and infrastructure are estimated to consume two thirds of the world's energy and to account for 70% of global CO_2 emissions. Buildings are responsible for a third of global energy consumption and the IPCC estimates that by 2050 the global building stock will need to have 80-90% lower emissions than 2010 levels to achieve a 1.5 degree Centigrade consistent pathway; this will require a minimum 5% rate of energy retrofits of existing buildings in developed countries, as well as all new buildings being built fossil-fuel free and near-zero energy. Likewise, by 2050, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC calls for 30% reduction in energy use from transport and for renewables to supply 70-85% of electricity.[15]

New multilevel governance systems are needed to enable collaboration and inclusion in building climate resilience. These systems can highlight the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, youth and other marginalised groups. Accountability mechanisms can facilitate the reporting back to affected populations on outcomes of international climate negotiations. Civil society and small state governments can build alliances through new governance systems, including at local government level, to effect action on climate change.

Case Study: Dominica National Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP)

As part of its Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP) Dominica is adopting an innovative approach to capacity and resiliency building at the local community level. The plan is targeted for full implementation by 2030 and is looking to build resilience around three focal areas: (1) Physical environment (2) Vulnerable groups (3) Institutional weaknesses. Within this context the plan looks to reinforce community level infrastructure, including housing, reach out to specific target groups such as single parent households and people over 70, and reinforce local coordinating bodies such as local government and disaster planning committees.

15 CLGF, Dr Carl Wright EU Policy and Support for Climate Finance for Sustainable Urban Development, 2022

Drawing lessons from the experience of Hurricane Maria, where some communities were cut off for up to 15 days, Dominica's Community Emergency Readiness Initiative (CERI) is working to build the capacity of local governments and community-based organisations towards self-sufficiency in emergency situations. Community Disaster Management Committees and Disaster Management Plans will ensure the necessary equipment, food, water, and backup power generators are in place to support 15 days' autonomy.

CLGF's engagement with climate resilience has come through its participation in global processes – particularly those focussed on cities. CLGF remains an active partner at UN level in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments established in 2013 and in the monitoring and advocacy of the implementation of the SDGs and Paris climate targets[16]. It has taken part in the annual UN Climate Summits as part of the Local Government and Municipal Authorities group (LGMA), coordinated by its partner organisation, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI). CLGF has also been an active participant at the World Urban Forum (WUF) which has been an important proponent of the importance of urban planning and investment to reflect climate mitigation and adaptation. This excerpt from the WUF10 outcome statement in 2020 highlights the need for integrated thinking in building climate resilience:

"Strategic integrated urban planning provides the tools to ensure the integration of urban heritage, culture, local economic needs, environmental considerations, biodiversity, low carbon development and climate resilience to ensure the creation of sustainable, prosperous, liveable communities." WUF10 outcome statement (the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions[17])

CLGF is also active at a regional level ensuring the voice of local government is well represented in forums such as the Caribbean Urban Forum most recently in Suriname in May 2023 (CUF2023) and the Pacific Urban Forum most recently in Fiji in September 2023 (PUF6) where the existential threat of climate change is front and centre in discussions. In these contexts, local government has championed climate action that recognises the multi-facetted impacts of the climate crisis (on livelihoods, housing security, environmental degradation, health and social cohesion) and works to address these in an integrated multisectoral manner, as the outcome commitments from PUF6 participants illustrates below:

"Commit to fostering sustainable risk informed urban development practices that prioritize resilience, justice, equity, and the protection of vulnerable communities, especially those residing in informal settlements, against the devastating impacts of climate change, disasters health emergencies and non-communicable diseases in Pacific Island nations." (The Suva Statement for a Sustainable Urban Pacific[18]).

Mayors across the world regions are coming together in different formations on specific elements of the climate crisis. An example of this is the Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA), which was launched in 2015, part of the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM). Jointly funded by the European Union (EU), the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ), and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). GCoM mobilizes the collective efforts of more than 10,000 cities and local governments and provides a frame for a voluntary commitment to increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in their territories.

Mbabane, Eswatini

At a local level In Mbabane, Eswatini, more than 1000 people from low-income communities or informal settlements have been trained in sustainable environment management and income generation, with support from the Eswatini Local Government Association. Nearly 900 climate smart gardens have been established and reusing waste materials has led to the production of 3,400 kg of compost. Some of the compost has been sold and some used in the Climate Smart Gardens and other

16 See https://www.global-taskforce.org
17 World Urban Forum 10th Session: https://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/WUF10_final.pdf.
18 Pacific Urban Forum 6 Outcome Statement: https://pacificurbanpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PUF6_OutcomeStatement.pdf

commercial products using reusable waste materials. The project has brought food security, improved socio-economic status and better environmental management for low-income communities. The project was funded by the UK Department of International Development and support from the European Union.

A vital dimension of achieving climate resilience, as indeed other forms of resilience, is securing climate finance. Greenhouse Gas Emissions in cities can be reduced by almost 90% by 2050 with technically feasible, widely available methods. However, to accomplish this and reach Zero Carbon, a staggering US$4.5- $5.5 trillion in annual urban climate finance flows is required. In contrast, actual climate finance flows only amounted to $384 billion in 2017/2018, mostly for climate mitigation measures. A mere $4 billion of funds went to South Asia and only $3 billion to sub-Saharan Africa, underlining the massive climate finance requirement gap faced by developing countries. Yet global Covid commitments of $11 trillion spent in urban areas in 2020 shows that resources can be mobilised if the political will exists[19].

Financing climate action is a significant challenge for cities. There are a number of organisations and initiatives working with cities to support their mobilisation of funding. One example is the City Climate Finance Gap Fund (the Gap Fund) which supports cities in developing and emerging countries to realize their climate ambitions. It provides early-stage technical assistance to turn low-carbon, climate-resilient ideas into strategies and finance-ready projects. It also works to facilitate the connection with prospective financing partners as well as between cities to share knowledge and experience.

There are also concrete opportunities for local government accessing climate (and other) development funds through partnership with organisations like the EU. The **Partnership Agreement with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACP)** acknowledges *'the role and contribution of local authorities in enhancing democratic accountability and complementing governmental action* (Actors; Article 5.1). It also agrees *'that engagement with …local authorities…is integral to well-informed decision making and to furthering the objectives of this Partnership* (Engagement with Stakeholders,

Article 95.1). These legal formulations accordingly provide a clear basis for local government engagement in the Partnership and accessing funding support with help of bodies such as CLGF and its Brussels-based partner PLATFORMA.

6.2 Economic Development and Resilience

Approaches to green and blue economy have received significant attention as means of addressing growing financial uncertainty and vulnerability. They have been promoted as offering a more resilient and sustainable economic path; one that re-balances the social, environmental and economic drivers. These approaches have currency for all Commonwealth states as they consider post Covid economic recovery strategies and "Green New Deals.[20]"

Post pandemic, there is a need to develop economic paradigms that acknowledge planetary boundaries and the need for equity. Scaling up and sharing knowledge and experiences of emerging economic approaches can support governments and civil society working locally, nationally and regionally. Local government can continue to support economic resilience by ensuring greater space for the voices and perspectives of those most vulnerable to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and help identify opportunities that can be shared across the Commonwealth.

CLGF concluded a three-year programme in 2021 (funded by the UK government), which demonstrated the utility of local government as a facilitator of sustainable economic development. The programme highlighted the need for connections and linkages between trade policy and local economic development (LED) at the local, national and international level[21]. LED has been framed as a means of building resilience by broadening and deepening sustainable development. The background paper for the 2019 CLGF Southern Africa Regional Conference[22] developed this theme:

19 CLGF 2022 Dr Carl Wright op cit
20 https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/ZOE_WWF-Report_201119.pdf
21 CLGF paper: Local Economic Development as a Driver of Trade in the Commonwealth https://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/Publications/reports/Local_Economic_Development_%28LED%29_as_a_Driver_of_Trade_in_the_Commonwealth.pdf
22 CLGF (2019), Promoting Local Government and Local Economic Development in Southern Africa: Towards the Localisation of the Development Goals: Background Paper for: CLGF Regional Conference, 25-26 June 2019, Lusaka, Zambia

"LED contributes to strengthening social trust and cohesion, helping to build societies that are more stable and resilient to growing, complex and widespread risks, preventing conflict, and ensuring sustainable development."

In the post pandemic period this emphasis on economic diversification and livelihood resilience has only increased. Local governments are key drivers in strengthening the local economy and in collaborating with local business and other spheres of government to ensure equitable economic opportunities. The multiple and converging challenges impacting at the local level such as the cost-of-living crisis, food security and weakening global supply chains must be addressed in an integrated manner to achieve sustainable and equitable development. In CLGF's recent West and Central African Regional meeting participants recommended:

"Local and regional government should prioritise demand driven LED which supports local livelihoods, green jobs and provides for value addition industries making use of local resources. Women, young people and people with disabilities should be empowered to realise their potential." *(CLGF CWA Outcome Statement 2023)*[23]

LED can improve the resilience of local stakeholders by: creating an enabling environment; expanding the market; reducing costs; and supporting redistribution and economic participation.

Port Loko City Council, Sierra Leone

When Port Loko City Council was established in 2018, it was given a mandate to ensure development across the city and the surrounding areas. In 2019 it began a programme to create a conducive local environment for local businesses. It built the capacity of local SMMEs to engage with council procurement processes, and made procurement contracts more accessible for SMMEs. The programme aimed to keep council expenditure circulating in the local economy.

The registry of businesses operating within the city was updated and SMMEs were provided with training on basic bookkeeping, record management, business development and basic concepts in procurement. The training improved the day-to-day operations of most

SMMEs and enabled businesses to record inflows and outflows, reducing their losses and improve profitability. The training also supported the establishment of new businesses and helped keep start-up costs to a minimum. The programme also worked to increase local council staff awareness and capacity for local economic development. This process resulted in more contracts being awarded to small businesses, as well as the inclusion of additional clauses in bigger contracts to promote local SMME participation through sub-contracting.

The economy of Ilembe District Municipality (IDM) in South Africa's KwaZulu Natal Province is structured around cultural heritage tourism and agriculture (principally sugar cane). About 30% of the land is owned by private sugar farmers in this largely rural district. Unemployment rates are high and some parts lack essential services. To address social, economic and spatial inequalities, the local government established a private company to: improve its regional competitive advantage; facilitate the economic participation of stakeholders; and strengthen the district's technical capacity to promote trade and investment. The local government also established an LED Forum to bring together local stakeholders. This included representation from the local municipalities within the district, business, labour, national government, provincial governments, state-owned enterprises, donors and CBOs. In this example, the local government identified spatial inequality as a barrier to LED and provided an arena where issues could be tabled, and solutions generated. It also demonstrated the value of using an arms-length agency to strengthen capacity to promote LED.

6.3 Urbanisation and Resilience

More than half of the world's population now lives in cities and by 2050 the proportion is expected to rise to 70%. Cities are home to extreme deprivation and environmental degradation with one billion people living in slums and informal settlements. At the same time, approximately 75% of global economic activity is urban; as the urban population

23 CLGF (2023) "Building Back Better: Social and Economic Strategies to Strengthen Resilience in West and Central Africa" Regional meeting Outcome Statement

grows, so will the urban share of global GDP and investments. Planning for urban resilience requires multi-level governance and participatory systems. It calls for collaboration between local governments and communities. It also requires coordinated and integrated policy approaches between national and local governments.

Effective and resilient urban planning provides an opportunity for agencies and communities to engage with the complexity and inter-related nature of urban 'ecosystems.' Rather than isolate planning for economic infrastructure and commerce, there needs to be a holistic perspective, connecting the economic with social amenities and environmental infrastructure.

Resilience in this context must enable coordinated responses to urbanisation. This highlights the importance of central government agencies with responsibility for local government. For example, the migration of labour from rural areas may present challenges for agricultural and require policy measures to help ensure national food security. This exemplifies the way that resilience can engender systems thinking.

Freetown City Council, Sierra Leone

In 2019, Freetown City Council launched Transform Freetown as an ambitious strategic planning process, supported by the national government of Sierra Leone. The city generates 30% of the country's GDP, houses 15% of its population, and occupies less than 0.5% of the national land mass. The planning process gathered input from a broad spectrum of community stakeholders to ensure that the Transform Freetown priorities reflect the needs of Freetown and its residents. Planner drew on data from a needs assessment conducted at a local level, as well as inputs from service providers.

Transform Freetown's priorities are grouped within four clusters - Resilience, Human Development, Healthy Cities and Urban Mobility. Working Groups set targets in each priority sector and shaped the plan around them. Resilience was identified as a priority in recognition of the pressing challenges of environmental management, revenue mobilisation and urban planning and housing. The plan highlighted the need for community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives including increasing

vegetation cover across the city by 50%. The focus on revenue generation outlined steps to automate property rates and business licensing, while diversifying the city's income through better use of its assets. The urban planning and housing priority called for the development of more than 5,000 quality low cost housing units and strengthening compliance with planning regulations.

The first G7 U7 Urban Summit, held in June 2021, on cities unlocking recovery and resilience brought together local government and city networks including: CLGF, ICLEI, EUROCITIES, Global Parliament of Mayors and United Cities and Local Government (UCLG). The summit took place against the backdrop of the pandemic and COP 26. The summit's outcome statement[24] highlights the importance of cities as conglomerations of resources, focal points for policy development and agents of change. The statement calls for cities to be included in national planning processes and provided with the powers and resources to play their part as nations look to a more resilient future.

6.4 Migration and Resilience

The international community has recognised the substantial benefits migration can bring.. Migrant networks have helped to build social capital and increase the resilience of communities of origin through remittances. They have also contributed to social resilience in recipient countries with new knowledge and insight. Agenda 2030 also highlights the need to build resilience as migration presents new challenges, for example in relation to social cohesion and resourcing which often have an impact on communities at the local level.

Building systems that enable resilient societies necessitates building policies that address the complex realities of migration in all its forms, from internal migration from rural to urban areas as well as movement of individuals fleeing poverty, war or famine across international borders. In this context, a holistic assessment of the underlying causes of these vulnerabilities can help build resilience through inclusive development.

23 G7 U7 Urban Summit Declaration: https://www.corecities.com/ sites/default/files/field/attachment/Final%20Statement%20 G7%20U7%20Summit%5B7%5D.pdf.

The political declaration[25] issued at the 2019 World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments' Summit underscores support for a "rights-based approach to migration beyond issue of border management, providing access to basic services and opportunities for social transformation through inter-cultural dialogues."

Koboko Municipality, Uganda

In Uganda, Koboko Municipality has become a focal point for refugees, with kinship and tribal ties, common language and heritage. The result of the prevailing government policy is that the refugees are not repatriated but neither are they officially recognised. In practice this means that the municipal government receives no additional central government resources to supplement its budget in order to meet the needs of a growing population and the associated stress on local services such as schools and health centres. There have also been conflicts over access to natural resources such as water and firewood. It is common for refugees move between the city and the camps where they are housed, leading to additional social problems such as child exploitation and prostitution.

In response the municipal government has focussed on engaging with the refugee community for example by identifying tribal leaders and using informal local governance mechanisms that have evolved. This has enabled a degree of regulation, including through self-policing. This has also helped to inform local government policy to address particular challenges that refugees face. In this context local government that engages with a refugee community provides is resilient, when compared to a camp-based approach that relies on humanitarian inputs from international agencies. This is contingent on central government support through legislation (for example by recognising the legal status of self-settled urban refugees) as well as resources for local government.

6.5 Gender Equality and Resilience

Initiatives that support women's rights and gender equality make institutions more resilient by enabling the fullest participation of all. Holding agencies accountable for a lack of progress against policy commitments on gender equality can open up spaces for further consideration of ways in which resilience can be strengthened.

Resilient societies are built when women's voices are heard and integrated in policy making. Open channels for inclusion guarantee women's meaningful representation. While there have been improvements in some aspects of women's representation in local and national governments this has not been matched by substantive improvements in women's rights more broadly. Educational, religious and traditional institutions must also be reformed to ensure more equitable and resilient societies.

With funding from the European Union, CLGF has developed the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network (ComWLG) to advance the achievement of SDG 5 on gender equality, particularly on strengthening women's participation in local government. Launching the network at the CLGF Conference in 2017, The President of Malta, HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca emphasised: "gender parity as a vital contributor to the success of all of our institutions and across our communities and societies."

Local Government Elections, Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the Local Authorities Elections Act (2017) was amended (The Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2017) to ensure that local councillors were elected using proportional representation so that 60% of them represent single member or multi member wards and 40% are returned from a list called the 'additional persons' list without a ward-based constituency. The total number of local government councillors increased from 4486 to 8356. Under Section 27F of the Amendment, 25% of the total number of members in each local authority had to be women members.

The new electoral system provided an opportunity to make local politics more resilient by legislating for closer engagement between the people and their representatives at the ward level. The women's mandatory quota added a missing dimension by bringing an

25 UCLG Durban 2019 Political Declaration https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclg_thedurbanpoliticaldeclaration_en_rv.pdf.

underrepresented section of the community into the public domain of representative politics. By increasing women's participation in politics, changing public perceptions about women's place in public life and breaking an established culture of patronage, the reform made local politics in Sri Lanka more resilient.

6.6 Global Health Preparedness and Resilience

The pandemic was experienced differently across the Commonwealth, revealing pre-existing capabilities and vulnerabilities. Where formal institutions were unable to respond to the demands placed on them, informal arrangements drew on and mobilised community resources. In this context local government played an essential role in enabling and coordinating community response as well as deploying its own assets. This experience also highlighted the importance of constructive central-local government relationships that provided councils with the political mandate to act as well as the financial resources they required. In Kigali, Rwanda for example the city undertook a major vaccination awareness campaign in 2021 to address vaccine misinformation and hesitancy. In addition to a major social media awareness campaign the city trained 3,747 community health workers on Covid messaging. The two-month campaign resulted in 93% of Kigali's population having received a first dose and 56% having received a second by mid-September 2021.[26]

CLGF has a record of supporting local government engagement with health for resilience. It is a partner in the Commonwealth Healthy Cities Agenda which supports a network of Commonwealth city leaders and links them with international health advocates, vector borne disease, tuberculosis (TB) and Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) specialists, experts on the built environment, philanthropic and other external funders and pharmaceutical companies to address vector-borne (especially mosquito-transmitted), TB and NTD prevention in cities.

In the longer term, this initiative aims to mobilise substantial and sustainable support for urban health investment across the Commonwealth, with a strong focus on vector-borne diseases, TB

and NTDs, with city and local government leaders playing a central role in decision-making at local, national and global level.

Vancouver Healthy City Strategy

Since 2012 the city of Vancouver has been focussing on health as a key city priority. Originally focused around seven priority areas (Healthy housing; Food security, Early care, Active living, Health service, Social connection and Built environment), the strategy looks to underpin social, economic and environment advances through a focus on health in the city. Guided by a vision of A Healthy City for All the strategy focuses on continually improving the conditions that enable highest level of health and well-being possible. Now in its third phase, with ambitious targets set for 2025, the Healthy City Strategy is comprised of 13 long-term goals for the well-being of the city and its people. In 2023 the city was recognised internationally for its efforts to make public health data more inclusive and accessible by launching an online public health data tool that tracks population health indicators.[27]

COVID has highlighted the need to prioritise the prevention of illness, especially in urban centres. The essential role of local government in raising awareness of, and implementing, control measures has made them highly visible, even though central government is generally responsible for health policy. The Commonwealth Healthy Cities Agenda aims to build on this recognition of the need for local leadership to ensure city leaders are recognised as key partners in addressing important health challenges.

7.0 Partnerships for Resilience

Many international institutions recognise the importance of supporting resilience – particularly at a local level. This can be seen as a response to Agenda 2030, in particular the localising the SDGs Agenda, as well as a recognition that inclusive development is done best when it is done locally.

26 https://preventepidemics.org/stories/campaigns-build-vaccine-confidence-in-rwanda-and-uganda/

27 https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/public-health-and-social-issues.aspx

Bloomberg Philanthropies 2021 Mayors Challenge

The 2021 Global Mayors Challenge is working to uncover the 50 most innovative solutions transforming cities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. 631 cities in 99 countries submitted their best ideas for consideration 50 Champion Cities were selected in March. These cities will have access to world renowned experts in innovation and data to help them improve their innovative ideas to tackle the most pressing challenges facing their cities. They will all resubmit by the end of 2021, and 15 of the 50 will become Grand Prize Winners and each receive $1M to bring their ideas to life. The retained projects will focus on issues such as measuring carbon footprints; reforestation; community upskilling; waste treatment; and improving water, sanitation and hygiene.

The European Union has played a leading role in recognising the importance of local government. and the role they play in so many factors that impact the continent's future. Over 60% of decisions taken at the European level have a direct impact on municipalities, provinces, and regions and 70% to 80% of public investments in Europe are made by local and regional authorities[28]. The EU strengthens resilience within Europe, for example through the Recovery and Resilience Facility. This makes €723.8 billion available through grants and loans to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for coming challenges and opportunities. The EU has also placed the concept at the heart of its development assistance programmes for example by making the connections between peace, security and resilience and in the 2013 Communication "Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes"[29]. In addition, the EU is an established development partner that works alongside local government champions and has Framework Partnership Agreements with AIMF, CLGF, PLATFORMA, UCLG and UCLG Africa providing both political and financial support to the local government sector.

Local government is increasing recognised at the UN level as a key actor in development and resilience. The UN office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Making Cities Resilient programme (MCR2030) Recognises mayors and local governments as both key targets and key drivers in building urban resilient. The initiative looks to improve local resilience through advocacy, sharing knowledge and experiences, establishing mutually reinforcing city-to-city learning networks, technical expertise, supporting multi-level governance and building partnerships. The MCR2030 aims to ensure cities become inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2030, contributing directly to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11) "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", and other global frameworks including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

8. 0 Conclusion

The theme of resilience has particular salience for the Commonwealth. The institution developed its own vulnerability index for developing countries, highlighting the challenges facing small states more than 20 years ago[30]. Today, facing large scale youth unemployment and existential threats to small states, there is an acute awareness of the impact of continuous shocks on the resilience of member states. Covid has served to deepen multiple crises in developing Commonwealth countries. It has also exposed the fragility of institutions and policy responses in developed Commonwealth member states. Resilience now has global salience and can be applied in many contexts.

CLGF, as the Commonwealth's agency for local government, prioritises strengthening local democracy; promoting effective local development by improving policy, governance, and service delivery capacity; and supporting cities and sustainable urbanisation. It is well placed to play a key role in strengthening the efforts of local government as agents of resilience across the Commonwealth's 56 member states.

28 https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/local_government_structuresandcompetences_2011_en.pdf

29 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0280:FIN:EN:PDF

30 Atkins, J., Mazzi, S. and Easter, C., 2000. A Commonwealth vulnerability index for developing countries. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, Economic Paper, 40.

The organisation's regional networks and partners mean that resilience programmes can be tailored to the particular contexts. This is essential as the paper has demonstrated that resilience does not lend itself to template approaches. CLGF's stakeholders include both local government and central government line ministries. The paper has also highlighted the importance of intergovernmental dialogue and an enabling environment for municipalities to deliver resilience.

Through this report, CLGF aims to renew its commitment to developmental local government and foster an understanding that resilience offers a framework that can bring diverse stakeholders together in common cause. A fundamental critique of contemporary development practice is that policies and institutions are not pulling in the same direction or that they are working at cross purposes. Resilience encourages an appreciation of the complexity and interconnectedness of the current development challenges and encourages stakeholders (local government, the central government line ministries and agencies responsible for local development, as well as civil society and the private sector) to work together. Resilience thinking goes further and encourages stakeholders to look forward rather than back.

CLGF's vision toward the Commonwealth Local Government Conference 2023

The Commonwealth Local Government Conference is an important moment in the Commonwealth calendar, bringing together key local government stakeholders – city and local leaders, LGA representatives, ministers of local government and officials, as well as other key partners active in ensuring sustainable local development. In 2023, post the global pandemic, and at a time when the world is facing climate crisis, conflict, economic downturn and growing inequality, the meeting will focus on the importance of ensuring resilient and agile institutions at the local level, responsive to the needs of local communities and able to negotiate and plan for future shocks and challenges. At the heart of the discussions will be a focus on how the sector must do things differently in order to achieve inclusive, just and sustainable local development. Agenda 2030 speaks to multi-level governance and working in partnership at all levels, including at the local level.

The discussions in Kigali will consider the different dimensions of resilience and how they apply to or impact local government in the Commonwealth. The paper already highlights a number of these, notably climate; economic development; sustainable urbanisation, migration, gender; and health. Youth will be mainstreamed throughout the Conference as part of the Commonwealth Year of Youth 2023, and there will also be a focus on building fiscal capacity to underpin resilience at the local level.

We would like to invite participants to consider some key questions in the run up to the Conference and during the event:

- What does resilience mean to you in your local context (local agency, coherence, systems and approaches)?

- Vulnerable communities are often more resilient – how can we learn from this and strengthen resilience building to reduce vulnerability?

- How can local government effectively bounce back from local and global shocks?

- How can we build more effective intergovernmental partnerships to address global and national challenges?

- How can we continue to localise global commitments eg climate commitments; sustainable urbanisation, and Agenda 2030?

- Local governments are on the frontline of managing disasters and in making cities and local government resilient – what actions are needed to reinforce local disaster risk reduction?

- How can we enhance local economic development as a means of building local resilience and creating opportunity?

- How can we ensure that local resilience is inclusive - gender equity and inclusivity (race, gender, youth, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups) must be at the heart of building local resilience.

- How can we strengthen local leadership for a more resilient future?

- How do we ensure that local government has access to adequate resources and finance for infrastructure investment, service delivery and local development?

- What is the role of partnership and multi-level governance in ensuring a more resilient future for all?

The recommendations made at the conference will highlight key strategies for local resilience; consider the role of a cross section of actors in working together to achieve a more resilient future; and provide a framework to guide CLGF's future work with members.