

# Local Authorities Priorities for Action and Examples of Good Practice

Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting  
13<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development  
1 March 2005

Local Governments call for the following Priorities for Action, as reflected in UN publication E/CN.17/2005/5 "Major groups' Priorities for Action in water, sanitation and human settlements", and support this call with concrete examples of good practice as listed below.

## **1. Consolidation of the links between the local and national spheres.**

Local Governments call for greater links between the national, regional and local levels of government, for example the involvement of Local Authorities in national planning strategies for the reduction of poverty and sustainable development. As implementation will take place at the local level, national plans which better reflect local conditions and priorities will be most effective.

*Effective cooperation between the national and local levels of government is already taking place in several countries, for example in Norway, South Africa and the Central-Local Partnership in the UK. The involvement of Local and Regional Authorities in drawing up the National Strategies for Sustainable Development of Mexico and the Philippines are further examples. Successful cooperation can also be demonstrated in Thailand, where a concerted effort by all levels of government over five decades has led to 98% sanitation coverage in rural areas<sup>1</sup>.*

## **2. Capacity-building programmes for local decision-makers and local government staff.**

Capacity building is key to the effective implementation of sustainable development and urgently needs further support by national governments and international agencies. Principle areas which require strengthening include: instituting rights-based values, political governance and urban management skills, targeted support of practitioners, building participatory processes, and increasing information for decision making skills.

*Examples of programmes targeting specific capacity building needs of Local Authorities, particularly in developing countries, include UN-HABITAT's Sustainable Cities programme<sup>2</sup>, the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme<sup>3</sup>, UNDP's Capacity 2015 Programme<sup>4</sup> and ICLEI-Local Government for Sustainability's distance learning programmes for municipal leaders<sup>5</sup>.*

## **3. Decentralisation of regulatory powers and resources.**

In order for Local Governments to increase their capacity to implement sustainable development in the field of water, sanitation and human settlements, national governments need to delegate sufficient regulatory and financial powers to the local level.

*A World Bank study indicates that national support for financial decentralisation can enable greater overall efficiency (reflecting local priority needs), accountability (to local service users) and manageability (encouraging greater innovation and competition between service providers at the local level)<sup>6</sup>. UNDP also recognises the importance of financial decentralisation to the regional and local level, specific examples being its poverty programmes in Bolivia, Ghana, Nepal and Uganda<sup>7</sup>.*

Cont/...

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/wes/wf15e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unhcs.org/programmes/sustainablecities/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.clgf.org.uk/pdf/GPSleaflet.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://capacity.undp.org>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.iclei.org/itc>

<sup>6</sup> Shah, A (1999) *Expenditure assignment*. Decentralisation briefing notes. World Bank.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP (1998) *New ways of financing poverty reduction*. Workshop B of the First Forum of the World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty. Proceedings 1998, Lyon, France.

#### **4. Improved access to funding for service provision at the local level.**

As called for in the recommendations of the Camdessus Report on Financing Water Infrastructure<sup>8</sup>, new mechanisms involving national and local governments, international financial institutions and development cooperation agencies need to be developed. Groupings of local associations at the regional level can also facilitate access to funding.

*A large slum relocation project in Mumbai, India, was delayed by almost five years due to bureaucratic hurdles. Finally, with funding from the World Bank, more than 11,000 families were moved to either permanent homes procured by the state, or into transitional houses constructed under the supervision of an Indian NGO<sup>9</sup>.*

#### **5. Effective local governance.**

Principles of "good urban governance", as defined by UN-HABITAT, are sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and security. The urban governance indicators developed by UN-HABITAT are currently being pilot-tested enthusiastically by Local Authorities in various world regions<sup>10</sup>. National governments need to provide support to Local Authorities to further implement these principles.

*The drawing up of Local Agenda 21 plans in over 6,400 cities throughout the world is an excellent example of the success of participatory processes contributing to good governance and sustainability. In a specific case in Jinja, Uganda, marginalised women's groups became the official custodians of the wetlands and developed by-laws which were adopted by local government. New standpipes and self-sustaining water kiosks were developed, and access to clean water within the community increased to 95%<sup>11</sup>.*

#### **6. Poverty reduction through human settlements strategies.**

National governments can play a large role in supporting Local Authorities to combat poverty with concrete measures relating to human settlements.

*In the UK, a national Homelessness Act calls on all Local Authorities to formulate a strategy on tackling homelessness, and is supported by concrete guidance and training<sup>12</sup>. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, informal settlements are being integrated into new neighbourhoods by project teams formed of city workers and local residents<sup>13</sup>.*

#### **7. International cooperation among Local Governments.**

Networking between local and regional governments worldwide is an effective mechanism to exchange experiences, learn about good practice, solve problems and improve implementation of sustainable development policies. National governments are urged to support organisations facilitating such cooperation.

*ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, a membership association of over 450 Local Governments worldwide committed to sustainable development, runs a whole range of campaigns and programmes including on water, climate protection, sustainability management, urban governance, sustainable procurement and resilience, and provides networking, information services, case studies, training and conferences<sup>14</sup>. A further example of cooperation is the new partnership between UN agencies and the world association of United Cities and Local Governments on 'Localising the MDGs'<sup>15</sup>.*

#### **Contact (organising partner for the Local Authorities Major Group):**

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Toronto, Canada, Tel: +1-416 / 392 1462, Email: ruth.tregale@iclei.org

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/financing\\_water\\_infra.shtml](http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/financing_water_infra.shtml)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sparcindia.org/documents/MUTP%201%20Sept.html>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.unhabitat.org/campaigns/governance/activities\\_6.asp](http://www.unhabitat.org/campaigns/governance/activities_6.asp)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bestpractices.org/cgi-bin/bp98.cgi?cmd=detail&id=16000&key=ElAtyrkbfah>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hmsso.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/20020007.htm>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.iclei.org/csd/#settlements>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.iclei.org>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.cities-localgovernments.org>