

THE LOCAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE POST-2015 ERA

The role of Local and Regional Governments and Decentralized Development Cooperation
in the future development cooperation of the post-2015 era

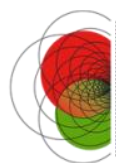
**A side event of the
ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum**

NY 10-11 July, 2014

SIDE EVENT SUMMARY

Organized by:

**United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**



GLOBAL TASKFORCE
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS
FOR **POST-2015** DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
TOWARDS **HABITAT III**



UCLG

The Global Network of Cities,
Local and Regional Governments



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Goal of the side event

This side event aimed to reflect and discuss among all stakeholders on the strategic role of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and Decentralized Development Cooperation (DDC) within the post-2015 era. The debate revolved around the importance of the local level and of synergies between the diversity of actors and tiers of government engaged in development cooperation. It particularly discussed development cooperation approaches, mechanisms and instruments that could effectively support the implementation of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local level.

Localizing development and development cooperation beyond 2015

Any new development agenda will only impact people's lives if successfully implemented at the local level. Critical objectives of the Post-2015 Development Agenda such as eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities and exclusion, and achieving environmental sustainability, depend on local action and leadership, coordinated with all levels of governance. The discussions around the Post-2015 Agenda, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and the ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum have stressed the importance of enhancing the **localization of development cooperation**. In the context of the consultations on the means of implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda that the UN Development Group (UNDG) is spearheading during 2014, one of the six thematic areas is focused on "Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda",¹ with the objective of identifying and proposing critical elements that will allow a successful implementation of the new development agenda at the local level. Similarly, the Busan partnership document and the Mexico Communiqué of the High Level Meeting of the GPEDC stress the importance of LRGs in development, of effective, locally owned solutions appropriate to specific country contexts as well as of country-led knowledge sharing for development effectiveness, involving North-South, South-North, South-South and Triangular approaches.

Over the past few decades LRGs have built a strong track record in development cooperation. Guided by a wide variety of motivations (peace, understanding, solidarity, economic prosperity, etc.) and in a rich spectrum of forms, LRGs and their associations are today involved in many partnership and cooperation initiatives across the world. They promote peer-to-peer approaches with their homologues in other countries, who face similar challenges. The wealth of knowledge, experience and innovations embedded in local institutions and actors represents a great potential to be mobilized through DDC, developing capacity building and knowledge sharing across local actors. LRGs are also advancing new forms of South-to-South and North-South-South (triangular) cooperation. National governments play a key role in mobilizing the knowledge and excellence of their territories, as the exchange of local-level solutions and innovations can increment the effectiveness and sustainability of both local and national processes.

¹ <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/localising2015>

Background

In the context of the ECOSOC DCF, this side event builds on the initial 2010 DCF references to DDC and the key role of LRGs in development and development cooperation as captured in the ECOSOC President's Official Summary,² on the discussions of the 2012 DCF and on the work during the 2012-2014 DCF cycle. The 2012 DCF was an important step in further positioning the potential of DDC and LRGs within the international development agenda and of the territorial approach to tackle key development challenges, as reflected in the Official Summary by the ECOSOC President.³ Particularly relevant were the discussions of the DCF panel *Going Local: the potentiality of Decentralized Cooperation*, supported by LRGs through their associations (UCLG / FOGAR) and UNDP ART, which evidenced the important role that LRGs, DDC and the territorial approach can play in the definition and effective implementation of globally agreed development goals.

The 2012 DCF discussion developed into a specific work stream on DDC for the 2012 – 2014 DCF cycle. This two year process has combined analytical work, with the UN DESA commissioned study on DDC supported by UNDP, through the ART Initiative, the engagement of LRGs in the various high-level symposia (Addis Ababa, Montreux, Berlin) and the special policy dialogue on DDC during the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders, 4th UCLG Congress in Rabat, which discussed both the UN DESA commissioned study and the *UCLG Policy Paper on Development Cooperation and Local Government*. All these efforts culminated in the 2014 DCF which takes place during a crucial juncture in the definition of post-2015 development agenda.

Key messages

Following are the key messages that emerged from the discussion on the local dimension of development cooperation in the post-2015 era, which are relevant to the diversity of actors and tiers of government engaged in development cooperation at the local level:

- **Recognize the importance of LRGs as key actors for implementing the future SDGs.** LRGs play a crucial role in development. They face critical challenges, many of them being global concerns with a strong local impact. LRGs have a critical role in setting priorities, executing plans, monitoring results and engaging with local businesses and communities. Their policies respond to local economic, social and environmental contexts and inform national and global strategies and policies. They form a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens and will have a critical role in the implementation of SDGs which should be defined and monitored starting from a bottom-up approach.

² http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf10/2010_dcf_president_long_summary.pdf

³ http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf12/ecosoc_prez_summary_22_oct_2012.pdf

- **Promote conducive environments for LRGs to maximize their full role in development.** Three key recommendations were echoed in the discussions for national governments, multilaterals and financial institutions to support LRGs' role in development cooperation:⁴
 - Further recognize LRGs and their associations as key development actors and hence provide support for their fully fledged participation, consultations and engagement in national and sectorial policy dialogues on development cooperation;
 - Provide adequate funding for LRGs and their associations to participate in development cooperation processes;
 - Ensure that legal frameworks and legal development mechanisms are in place to guarantee that LRGs take part in the decision-making processes around development policies that affect them and their communities.

- **Support a territorial approach to development based on multi-stakeholder and inclusive partnerships at local level.** There is an evolving development landscape which is shifting development cooperation from the donor-beneficiary logic and North- South divide towards more inclusive partnerships engaging a diversity of actors, including national governments, multilaterals, CSOs, the private sector and LRGs. There is therefore a need to promote a territorial approach to development to foster synergies and partnerships between these various actors operating at local level to implement a post-2015 paradigm of inclusive, equal and sustainable development. These inclusive partnerships should include marginalized groups and be gender responsive.

- **Foster effective development cooperation at local level.** The increasing number and diversity of development actors has great implications at country level, particularly at local level where the interventions of the various stakeholders converge and ultimately impact citizens. This calls for approaches and instruments fostering effective development cooperation at local level, in order to avoid fragmentation and overlap of actions.⁵ In order to provide effective responses to the needs of the citizens in terms of service delivery and the provision of public goods, international cooperation should move from the project-based approach towards supporting long-term local governance and development processes, aligning itself to local priorities and strengthening local services.

- **Put in place systems at local level to support accountability, monitoring and transparency.** Given their proximity to the citizens, LRGs are the level of government immediately accountable to their communities and act as a transmission belt between citizens and national governments. LRGs are key in ensuring accountability and transparency of development and development cooperation interventions, enabling local ownership and leadership through transparent and participative local planning processes and decision-making. Equally, local NGOs and other relevant civil society actors

⁴ For further elaboration on these points, please refer to UCLG Policy Paper on Development Cooperation and Local Government http://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/DCCD_C.7_ENG_Policy_Paper_1.pdf

⁵ Refer to the exercise to measure effective development cooperation at the local level in Ecuador, *SETECI, UNDP* <http://www.pnud.org.ec/art/frontEnd/images/objetos/EFFECTIVENESSeng.pdf>

play a key role in ensuring that public bodies, also LRGs, remain accountable and transparent. It therefore becomes central to foresee transparent multi-level and multi-stakeholder accountability frameworks linking LRGs among themselves, with citizens, CSOs, national governments and Development Partners.

- **Use Decentralized Development Cooperation as a modality to implement the future SDGs at local level.** DDC has proved as a useful modality to establish a dialogue between territories on issues of common interest as will be the future SDGs, promoting the exchange of knowledge, peer to peer learning and local solutions to development challenges. DDC should be acknowledged and used as a modality to support the implementation of the future SDGs at local level and as a means to support the illustration of targets and indicators of the SDGs and their feasibility at local level. For this, the complementarity between DDC and the multilateral framework can play an instrumental role.