
CityFuture in Africa

United Cities and Local Governments
- Executive Summary -



The focus of UCLG’s CityFuture Program is to help local governments and their associations to formulate and implement city development strategies. The fight against poverty, the management of urban growth and administrative reforms present complex challenges for development. During the last decade in Africa, many reforms addressing territorial authorities and frameworks have been achieved with the intention to equip local governments with more proactive tools for urban management. International development cooperation must consider that the success of planning depends on the legal framework, budget, social structure, and economic realities of each country and city.

United Cities and Local Governments, in Africa and worldwide, the South African Local Government Association, and the host City of Johannesburg organized the first CityFuture workshop in Africa. The workshop united cities and associations to advance city development on the continent and streamline efforts for localizing the Millennium Development Goals. Inherent in the MDG challenge is a requirement for planning – planning at the local level capable of delivering complex development programs to people, especially in the ever-expanding urban areas. In the spirit of “Each One Teach One”, it is critical that those who have made inroads into and gains in effective development methodologies and approaches share that knowledge with their continental compatriots, including serving as coaches and mentors. Local government associations and their members become critical vehicles in this regard, with progressive skills within them, ensuring sustainable long term investment in the development of municipalities in Africa.

Urban Planning by local authorities in Africa has to go beyond the immediate response to resolve the urgent needs and become a more preventive long-term perspective. Cities expressed the challenge of balancing between creating quantitative “facts” in service delivery, or to include and support all stakeholders, and thus encouraging a maximum of local potential for sustainable development. To implement these sound planning practices in Africa, it is critical to raise the profile of the cities on the political agenda, as cities are core to the transformation of the continent. In this regard, national local government associations are important as the voice of the cities and should be recognized as such.

The key obstacles identified, hindering local authorities on the continent to advance city development, are primarily local capacity inadequacies. Shortage of skills and knowledge is the main obstacle in the planning phase, and the lack of sustainable fiscal resources is undermining the implementation.

The conclusions of the City future workshop emphasized the need for increased and concentrated collective action in the future in five strategic areas:

1. Enabling environments

Local Governments have to respond to challenges of high complexity. Decentralization, urbanization and segregation can only be faced by local governments by claiming their adequate role of overall governance, following the principle of subsidiarity. National governments, maintaining the necessary macro focus, must equip local governments with supportive legislative and fiscal environments, enabling them to respond with clear authority, legislation, and resources. The World Bank underlined the need of enabling environments before starting individual CDS work in most countries. South Africa, for example, has developed a framework with integrated development plans (IDP), a legislative requirement ensuring national attention to local planning.

2. Strategic thinking

Strategic development of cities is to be incorporated into local and national policies. As it takes a long path of legal reforms to settle local urban instruments in the national agenda, instruments like the IDP could also be bypassed by clear CDS processes that are monitored by national institutions. A solid legal base, like the IDP, is helpful for streamlining urban development, however, the CDS is a more strategic and dynamic tool. The example of Durban shows a coherent long-term strategy, focusing first on participation and now on competitiveness. The main focus of strategic development should be improving inclusive governance, service delivery, financial sustainability and economic development, additionally to core spatial planning tasks. This would not only confront Africa's urban issues, but also directly promote the achievement of the MDGs.

3. Urban planning

Planning is a holistic and communicative approach and is crucial to advance local administrations, the community and private sector onto a common leitmotiv for inclusive, productive and sustainable communities. The spatial and technical components of urban planning are equally needed and provide the backbone for development. Africa still lacks basic infrastructure and key planning instruments (i.e. land management) are not under local authority. Local governments need to articulate the local profile to raise the attention of cooperation partners, like shown in the experience of urban planning and slum upgrading in Maputo. As expressed by the Secretary General of UCLGA, local governments and associations need to be aware of the 'momentum' associated with strategic community planning, the expectations and forces should not be lost and promises must be kept.

4. Networking

Increasing partnership between local governments and institutions on the continent is crucial to build capacities and advance the existing sound planning practices. The knowledge gap can be closed by increasing the dissemination of available methodology and knowledge, collaboration and involvement of local government partners across and between institutions, regions and countries. Associations should support integration into, and follow up to existing networks.

5. Partnerships

The rapid pace of urbanization on the continent requires that the strategic partners of Africa help to translate planning into implementation. Development partners should advocate the necessity of assistance for Africa in creating enabling environments, for without these, irreversible sustainable democracy will not take root. Estimates suggest an initial annual minimum of \$25 per capita is required to meet the MDGs, currently this figure stands at \$10. Local governments are prepared to become direct partners of international aid. Fiscal shortages also can be leveled by active involvement of the private sector and efficient financial management, showcased in the city of Johannesburg. The momentum at the local level must be translated into the rise of urban issues on the regional, national, and international agenda. It is upon the delegates and development partners to raise this profile today.

As a follow up, Cities were eager to intensify partnerships within the Cities Alliance. For themselves, they discussed and underlined to move from strategic planning to implementation. Cities like Lilongwe, Kampala and cities of Mozambique want to apply lessons learned from mentor cities and prepare proposals. Not all cities are able to develop and implement urban development strategies. In such cases, the local governments associations are interested in preparing joint proposals with its member cities.

The donor agencies presented their programs and outlooks in the region. The local governments and association should address their concepts and demands to UCLG/A for advising on various linkages for the different approaches to cooperation.

The next step is up to the participants, to be proactive and innovative and draft their coherent proposals. The *UCLG World Congress in Jeju*¹ can be an important space to address Cities Alliance and other spearhead partners of city development. The regional and global associations will continue facilitate matchmaking between cities and possible development partners. The request for intensified networking inside UCLG is welcomed and could also be addressed by the participants during the UCLG World Congress in Jeju to identify interests of other members for possible activities and networking.

¹ See: <http://www.uclg2007jeju.org/>



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