Executive Summary with Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

In our fast-changing world, we face new and difficult challenges which have a powerful impact on local governments, and on development at local level. At the same time, the role of local government is becoming increasingly recognized as necessary if the world is to succeed in meeting these challenges.

Due to the current crisis, we are witnessing, in particular in Europe, that several national governments (and some local governments) are considering reducing, or even entirely removing, their long-standing financial support for local governments’ development cooperation.

Against this, there are also positive trends to note. We can see various new forms of cooperation between local governments have emerged, such as ‘south-south’ or ‘triangular’ cooperation. The current crisis has resulted in the international community and donors rethinking their approach. In December 2011, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation confirmed a welcome shift in perspective from ‘aid effectiveness’ to ‘development effectiveness’.

Given all of these changes and developments, UCLG’s Development Cooperation and City Diplomacy Committee (DCCD) and Capacity and Institution-Building Working Group (CIB) decided to draw up a Policy Paper and Advocacy Strategy on Development Cooperation and Local Government to advance UCLG’s work and objectives. UCLG members have been consulted on all the key issues.

PART I – WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS

Members of UCLG are well aware of why local government (LG) is so important. But if we are to convince governments and the international community to support LG’s international cooperation for development, it is important to restate some key points for our public advocacy strategy.

The Paper therefore sets out briefly the key roles played by local governments worldwide:
• They provide the voice, leadership and ‘strategic vision’ for their city and the people they represent;
• They provide or organise local public services essential for people’s well-being; and
• They act as catalysts and drivers for the local development process, in all its dimensions.

It states that local government is and will be of growing importance for four connected reasons:
• Because decentralisation and local democracy are essential to our future;
• Because local governments are closest to the community and are able to ensure citizen participation and partnerships;
• Because changing demography and rapid urbanisation demand good local leadership and governance; and
• Because local governments are the leaders and catalysts for local development.

PART II – THE POLICY CONTEXT

1. Local governments’ international cooperation and partnerships

Local governments, and their associations, have cooperated in international partnerships for many decades, from a variety of motivations (peace, understanding, solidarity, economic prosperity, commitment to development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)), and in a variety of ways, which have evolved and continue to do so. Partnerships take a wide range of forms, e.g. bilateral partnerships, multilateral programmes, and network partnerships. Partnerships may focus on building the internal (institutional) capacity of LGs or local government associations (LGAs), or focus mainly externally, e.g. on local development strategies and partnerships, or on the local dimension of global issues like climate change.

This Policy Paper focuses specifically on those forms of partnership and cooperation where the main purpose is to address the development needs of one or more lower income country partners.

In addition to their international partnerships, local governments also often promote international development in other ways, e.g. through financial support for local development non-government organizations (NGOs), or to enhance citizens’ awareness of and support for development assistance and the MDGs.

Recommendation:

UCLG must emphasize the cooperation and partnerships between LGs and with or between LGAs for development. UCLG must also reaffirm its support for all positive forms of local governments’ promotion of the interests of its citizens, the MDGs and objectives of international development. UCLG must promote a broadened partnership with civil society and the private sector.

2. Some issues around LG cooperation and partnerships for development
North-South?

Development cooperation is often described as ‘north-south’ or ‘south-south’ cooperation. The Paper notes that much of development cooperation in geographical terms no longer fits these labels. The recent Busan Partnership document still uses these terms, whilst noting that “today’s complex architecture...has evolved from the North-South paradigm”.

Cooperation between regional governments

This complexity of architecture is also found in local governments, which include several levels of governance ranging from the commune (first level) to the province or department (second level), and to the region (second or third level, as the case might be). This Policy Paper includes the cooperation between regional governments, which is being done on the same scale and is similar in nature.

Development cooperation between local governments at the regional level is being ramped up almost everywhere in the world due to the important role that regional authorities currently seem to play in consolidating economic development objectives, as well as taking into account ecological considerations and sociocultural cohesion at the regional-territory level.

Regional governments may also play the role of donor agency for cooperation between local governments.

Recommendation:

UCLG should take into consideration and promote the specific roles of regional governments and recognize and acknowledge the specific responsibilities in cooperation in the domain of sustainable economic development of its members representing regions and metropolises.

Towards a clearer concept of local government development cooperation

Within the global local government family, different terms are used to describe the forms of cooperation, e.g. “decentralised cooperation”, “city-to-city cooperation”, “twinning” or “municipal international cooperation”. For ease of reference, this Paper refers to LGs’ Cooperation for Development.

There is no single clear definition of LG development cooperation, and internationally there is no clear definition of ‘development’. The Busan Partnership document usefully highlights several of the key components of successful sustainable development, where we know LG has an important role, including sustainable growth, democracy and good governance, anti-poverty strategies, and social protection. To these we may add issues like climate change, risk reduction, individual and collective security, culture, human rights, etc.

Local self-government and development cooperation – a creative tension?

We can see the role of local governments in development cooperation from two very distinct perspectives, which at first sight may seem to be in opposition, and which add a creative tension which runs through this policy paper and advocacy strategy.

On the one hand, local governments have and should have strong powers of local self-government and one important goal for UCLG must be to ensure that in every country, there is a positive legal framework for LGs to cooperate internationally.
But secondly, UCLG has to ensure that if LGs and LGAs are to seek and obtain significant and growing external funding for their international development cooperation, the LG sector’s contribution must demonstrate positive, cost-effective demonstrable results.

3. The building blocks of LG development cooperation

The Paper examines, in this section, the main goals, methodology, motivations, principles and other key elements which underpin the practice of local government development cooperation. In summary, the main points are proposed as follows:

**Goals**

- To strengthen the role and place of local development in development strategies;
- To promote the territorial coordination of development-cooperation actions so they will produce the maximum positive impact on improving the living conditions of citizens;
- To establish references for measuring development-cooperation performances among local governments (benchmarking);
- To strengthen and support good local governance, so that the LG can better carry out its development roles (building strong local public institutions, public services, civil society participation for development, etc);
- To support effective decentralisation and devolution; building LG capacity to perform new roles, maximising the added value of LGAs in policy-making and implementation;
- To improve LGs’ capacity to deal with the impact of global challenges on local development, e.g. climate change, culture, human rights, etc.; and
- To strengthen the capacity of LGAs to support their members in achieving local development (e.g. as advocate and negotiator, promoter of learning and good practice).

**Methodology**

Cooperation between local governments depends on learning in pairs and in exchanging good practices within its intervention strategy. It is this particular feature that distinguishes it from all other forms of international cooperation. This approach helps local coalitions emerge to develop insofar as the dynamic of cooperation integrates the cooperation of all local actors (which includes civil society and the private sector). It also allows for mutual accompaniment and support over time, which guarantees the sustainability of cooperation programmes.

**Main motivations for local governments**

- Share a co-responsibility for development;
- Help meet basic human rights and MDGs;
- Share a mutual interest in facing global crises;
- Tackle issues arising from growth in population and urbanisation;
- Enhance resources and capacity development;
- Promote multi-actor partnerships;
- Create longer-term economic benefit;
- Work with diaspora communities;
- Increase professional development opportunities; and
- Develop a positive international image for the LG.

**Key elements**
In addition to these motivations, we can identify a set of key elements which underpin successful LG development cooperation, and relate closely to the Busan document principles:

- Co-ownership and co-responsibility for the activities and outcomes;
- Realistic objectives and a shared commitment to account for results;
- Transparency and openness, between partners and with local communities;
- Cooperation is politically supported, but not party politically aligned; and
- Shared commitment to ensure that learning is spread and disseminated, also using the LGA and other vectors for multiplier effect.

**Recommendation:**

That UCLG confirm the proposed ‘building blocks’ (goals, methodology, motivations, and key elements) which underpin LGs’ cooperation and partnerships for development.

4. Strengths, Opportunities and Weaknesses of LG development Cooperation

**Strengths of LG development cooperation**

The main ‘strengths’ of local government development cooperation are:

- Local government development cooperation works through existing structures, as opposed to project offices: LGs are legitimate, key public institutions for the long term;
- The partnerships make use of the unique in-depth knowledge that LGs have of:
  - Responsibilities as providers of concrete basic services to enhance local communities’ quality of life
  - Being accountable institutions towards citizens
  - Implementing and advocating for decentralization and devolution policies;
- The ability of LGs to build linkages between the partners’ local civil societies; and
- The potential for peer learning.

**Opportunities**

Key ‘opportunities for LG development cooperation are:

- The growing worldwide trend towards democratic decentralisation. The increasing urbanisation will lead to increased demands for services. Local governments should be prepared to address these challenges and should be prepared to meet the expectations of the citizens. Professional organizations that understand the political and technical dimensions of the context can support this process;
- The international community has become increasingly aware of the role of LG in development cooperation and has increasingly ‘targeted’ LG in recent years, and may continue to do so. Local governments have an important role to play in the post 2015 global development goals. In the past the focus was on “what must be done”, the new development goals will need to focus on “who has to act and to be supported”. In order to achieve the goals and targets, local governments have been an important stakeholder in the MDGs that should be involved more in the definition of the new targets to achieve more results; and
- Donors are sensitive to the voice of ‘the south’, but the LG voice of the ‘south’ has not yet been strong enough; this can be developed and improve through ownership of cooperation programmes, in which their priorities are respected. Local government associations should be strengthened in order to advocate on behalf of their members in national and international dialogues on development priorities. Therefore, Association Capacity Building, in which one association coaches the other, is a good mechanism to develop “the voice of the south”.

**Recommendation:**
UCLG should endorse the above main strengths of LG cooperation for development, which can be used in support of the advocacy strategy.

**Weaknesses**

The main ‘weaknesses’, for effective implementation of LG development cooperation programmes are:

- Donor agency financing programmes are governed by regulations that are not always adapted to the reality of local governments, as they are conceived by donors rather than by LGs. This makes partner ownership and accountability difficult;
- The practice of preferred budget support by donor agencies in applying the recommendations of the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action leads to recentralizing public budgets in spite of decentralization laws. This threatens local ownership;
- Lack of financial resources for LG development cooperation; and
- Inadequate legal framework for cooperation at the national level.

Several of the above are mainly problems with national financial and legal frameworks, rather than weaknesses in the way LGs work. To deal with these, the UCLG advocacy strategy needs to target national governments and the international community.

Weaknesses that can be addressed by LGs themselves include:

- Most of the partnerships between local governments don’t use sufficient systematic approach. Therefore, a concentration of partners in some local government exists, whereas others lack of support or don’t have partners that support them;
- The priorities of the “southern” partners are not always achieved. The ownership of programmes remains a point of discussion;
- Partners may suffer from a lack of continuity due to political changes;
- Many partnerships suffer from a lack of professionalism:
  - too little focus on results
  - The work and results are not strategic or transferable enough
  - Monitoring and evaluation is insufficient;
- Many partnerships do not benefit from citizen support; and
- Partnerships between local governments lack coordination and remain fragmented.

To address weaknesses UCLG and its members should:

- Have clear focal points and goals in its programmes and systems of evaluation;
- Provide tools and instruments for a public policy of LG cooperation;
- Provide professional international affairs offices services of LGs or their associations;
- Provide citizen education on the value of local government cooperation for development;
- Develop more programme-based approaches, with clear monitoring and evaluation tools and indicators on impact; and
- Enhance exchange of information on projects and programmes among UCLG members, through the CIB Working Group.

**Recommendation:**

That UCLG note the above main weaknesses of LG cooperation for development, the proposed responses, and the main perceived threats, as issues which need to be addressed in developing and implementing the advocacy strategy.

**5. How far do we meet the goals of aid / development effectiveness?**
UCLG will surely support many of the key points from the Busan Partnership document (December 2011), including its proposal to move from aid to development effectiveness. The Busan document recast the principles set out in the 2005 Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, which are now:

- Ownership of development priorities by developing countries;
- Focus on results;
- Inclusive development partnerships; and
- Transparency and accountability to each other.

UCLG must convince stakeholders in international development cooperation to model their development cooperation practices on LGs, because they:

- Favour long-term action that promotes and strengthens ownership of projects and programmes;
- Target the accomplishment of tangible results that help improve living conditions as well as friendly relations and harmony between the populations concerned;
- Ensure the mutual strengthening of institutional capabilities for guaranteeing the sustainability of implemented actions;
- Promote the partnership between public authorities, civil society and the private sector with a view to building local coalitions for development; and
- Contribute to the development and international cooperation education of citizens through the support given to NGOs and the diaspora.

**Recommendation:**

UCLG should defend the necessity to convey at least 15 to 20% of financial flows of development cooperation towards local governments. Part of these funds can be channeled through local government development cooperation, which has a longstanding tradition in analyzing the impact of the interventions on the ground and in development of institutional capacity of the local governments that are part of the partnerships.

**6. How far are LGs recognized as actors for development?**

In several international forums, LGs are recognized, for example, in dialogues on the effectiveness of aid. At the national level, more recognition can also be observed; for example, in national dialogues on development. Nevertheless, local governments are still often counted among the non-state actors, or among all the ‘interested parties’. Within the UN, major progress has been observed, as the president of the UCLG is a member of the top-level panel put in place for the post-2015 development agenda.

**Recommendation:**

UCLG must reaffirm its position with regards to the fact that LGs and their associations are legitimate development actors, while at the same time their role as local development agents in the context of national development in their country and by their international cooperation in favour of development.

**7. Examples of practical support for LG development cooperation**

In addition to any formal recognition of local governments as actors for development, funders of partnerships of local government cooperation for development have given practical recognition to this role, even where it is not made explicit. This section gives brief examples of programme-based action by LGs and LGAs, with support provided by
international organisations and by a range of ‘northern’ governments who have financed LG development cooperation programmes.

8. Examples of ‘south-south’ and triangular cooperation

In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in the number and scale of LG ‘south-south’ cooperation, both bilateral and through networks and programmes. This reflects wider shifts in the ‘paradigm’ of development cooperation, which the Busan Partnership document highlights.

This section provides some examples, including initiatives from South Africa and Brazil, as well as initiatives already supported by UCLG itself, in the field of peer learning and mentoring. The new programme for decentralised cooperation provided by the Brazilian government is also noted.

PART III – DEVELOPING THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY

9. Who are the main ‘targets’, what are our objectives?

Recommendations:

(1) Targets - UCLG’s advocacy strategy should be mainly directed towards:

- National governments;
- Local governments, including their representative LGAs and networks
- The World Bank and regional development banks;
- Relevant international organisations (e.g. OECD) and UN agencies, in particular who support development cooperation policies; and
- Other donors/funders (e.g. CSO, private sector foundations);

(2) The main objectives for the advocacy strategy should be:

(i) Towards the international community, national governments and funders:

- To recognise LG development cooperation as a positive public policy, with a supportive and appropriate legal framework in all countries;
- To promote more and better decentralisation, with the involvement of LGs and LGAs at all stages, and using LG development cooperation as a significant support mechanism;
- To give recognition of local governments, ‘as actors for development, (a) through their local development role for their territory and people (b) through LG international partnerships and cooperation for development;
- To ensure that funders’ programmes take account of the specific role and reality and priorities of local governments;
- To increase substantially the volume of financial support for LG development cooperation programmes, and the number and range of governments and funders in this sector; and
- To make available more direct financial support for cooperation to LGs in lower income countries, including partnership development between local governments

(ii) Towards local government:

- To enhance the quality, effectiveness and impact of LG development cooperation, through improvements in policies and practices;
• To influence international development policies, including aid and development effectiveness, affecting the mandates and missions of local governments;
• To persuade more LGs to recognize LG development cooperation as a positive local public policy to have a positive local impact on the strengthening of the institutional capabilities of local governments, on the connection and partnerships between people, and on citizens’ openness toward understanding the invaluable role of development cooperation for promoting a world that is more just and more peaceful.

10. Key messages for national governments and other policy-makers and funders

The advocacy strategy needs to have a set of relatively simple key messages, which encapsulate much more complex underlying positions, but which enable everyone to understand the essential issues and ‘asks’. From the analysis in the different sections of the Policy Paper, UCLG is recommended to adopt a set of ‘key messages’ towards governments and donors for its campaigning use.

**Recommendation:**

That UCLG agree to the following key messages towards international policy-makers, governments and funders:

1. The implementation of global agendas defined by the international community cannot be translated into activities on the ground without taking into account the local level;

2. As a consequence, LGs are the international community’s invaluable partners to ensure that their agendas have a sustainable impact on the ground;

3. As the level of government closest to the citizens, LGs are the first to understand and respond to problems that become visible at the level and can inform the international community of these needs. Therefore, they must be recognized in this role and receive support from their counterparts in the framework of partnerships of LG cooperation models for development; and

4. Through their longstanding partnership practices, LGs and LGAs have developed mechanisms, tools and methods that have shown their effectiveness in development and in contributing to reinforcing empowerment and ownership. These conditions are indispensable for sustaining development cooperation programs and LGs are presenting this experience to the funding agencies.

11. Key messages for local and regional governments

Any advocacy strategy needs to have a set of relatively simple key messages, which encapsulate more complex underlying positions, but which enable everyone to understand the essential issues and ‘asks’. From the analysis in the different sections of the Policy Paper, UCLG is recommended to adopt a set of ‘key messages’ towards governments and donors for its campaign.

Since the other main target group is our own community of local governments, we need to clarify our key messages towards them too. These also arise from the analysis set out in the different sections of the Policy Paper.
Recommendation:

That UCLG agree to the following key messages to local governments:

1. LG development cooperation brings benefits to both partners – and contributes to a more international perspective;
2. LG development cooperation has the greatest impact when it is part of a coordinated larger programme, with an agreed set of development objectives for the region or country in question;
3. Ensure LGs and LGAs have a strong professional approach to your development cooperation;
4. Maintain a strong focus on results and outcomes;
5. Ensure LGs and LGAs have political support for your cooperation activities, but don’t be politically partisan;
6. Involve other partners, widen your basis of support and participation; and
7. Be committed to continuing improvement, learning and exchange.

12. Building alliances

In the advocacy strategy, it is essential to identify allies and ‘resisters’; to adopt strategies to broaden the base of support, mobilise allies, and seek to win over or neutralise those opposed.

UCLG should first analyse who are the committed supporters inside the broad umbrella of the organisation. In assessing other potential allies, UCLG needs also to look at:

- Sympathetic international/UN agencies and organisations, including individuals within them, e.g. OECD, UN Habitat, UNDP;
- Parts of the EU and other world regional bodies, known to be sympathetic;
- Sympathetic governments and bilateral donors who have shown an understanding of the value of LG development cooperation;
- International and continental organisations representing NGOs and civil society organisations;
- Foundations committed to development and democratic local government;
- Networks and associations of local and regional governments, at all levels; and
- Private sector actors who can play a positive role in local development partnerships.

In assessing those who may resist or be opposed to the objectives, the bigger problem may be a tendency to ‘negative passivity’, reinforced by the current economic and fiscal crises.

Recommendation:

That the World Secretariat of UCLG analyse, with the CIB Working Group and relevant committees, the range of potential allies and opponents, in relation to the objectives and ‘messages’ of UCLG’s advocacy strategy.

13. Taking the advocacy strategy forward

The advocacy strategy will require strong political support from UCLG’s leadership, as well as sustained support from the World Secretariat, if its further development and implementation are to be successful.
A methodology and timetable will be required, to focus on the following questions:

- Which international events can UCLG participate in to promote its messages, and what is the most effective way of doing so?
- What other opportunities exist or can be created to lobby key ‘targets’
- Can UCLG organise one or more events around the themes of the advocacy strategy?
- Does UCLG wish to develop a ‘branding’ and specific communication tools to promote the strategy?
- How can we most effectively harness our supporters? And deal with opponents or ‘doubters’?

In addition to taking part in externally organised events, it is recommended that UCLG consider (having regard to resources) organising its own conference or event on the future of LG development cooperation.

Such an event could offer a great opportunity to attract interest and participation from funders, allies, partners and practitioners, and a forum to get our key messages across to potential funders, and to local and regional governments. One possibility would be to use the opportunity of a relevant OECD event, given UCLG’s membership of OECD’s Development Assistance Committee.

**Recommendation:**

That UCLG take advantage of external opportunities to promote the Advocacy Strategy objectives. Further, they should consider whether to organise an international conference or event to promote the agreed objectives and messages, e.g. in coordination with the OECD.

**14. The future role of UCLG**

UCLG’s recently-adopted set of strategic priorities (Florence, December 2011) includes work on policy and lobbying on decentralised cooperation, so the present proposed strategy fit neatly into this framework. Moreover, in the CIB Working Group and the Development Cooperation and City Diplomacy Committee, it has means – at practitioner and political levels - for maintaining an ongoing exchange and overview of developments in this field.

Respondents to consultation were asked what other roles UCLG should play for the future. From the responses, at least three key potential roles received broad support:

- **Advocacy and representation:** Taking a full and active part in dialogue with the international community, as partner and participant;
- **Information and learning:** Research, information provision and professional development on LRG development cooperation, with a focus on good practice and improvement; and
- **Coordination:** Networking and coordinating with the diverse community of local and regional governments, keeping up to date with activities and changes

The CIB Working Group pages of the UCLG website already provides useful information, but this could usefully be enhanced (in content and visibility) to help the organisation perform these roles to best advantage. Dedicated resources to work on these issues would also help greatly to upgrade UCLG’s capacity and impact.
**Recommendation:**

(1) To agree on the three roles of UCLG in taking forward the advocacy strategy, and in serving members in this field, namely
   - Advocacy and representation;
   - Information and learning; and
   - Coordination

(2) To agree to develop specific information, exchange and learning tools.