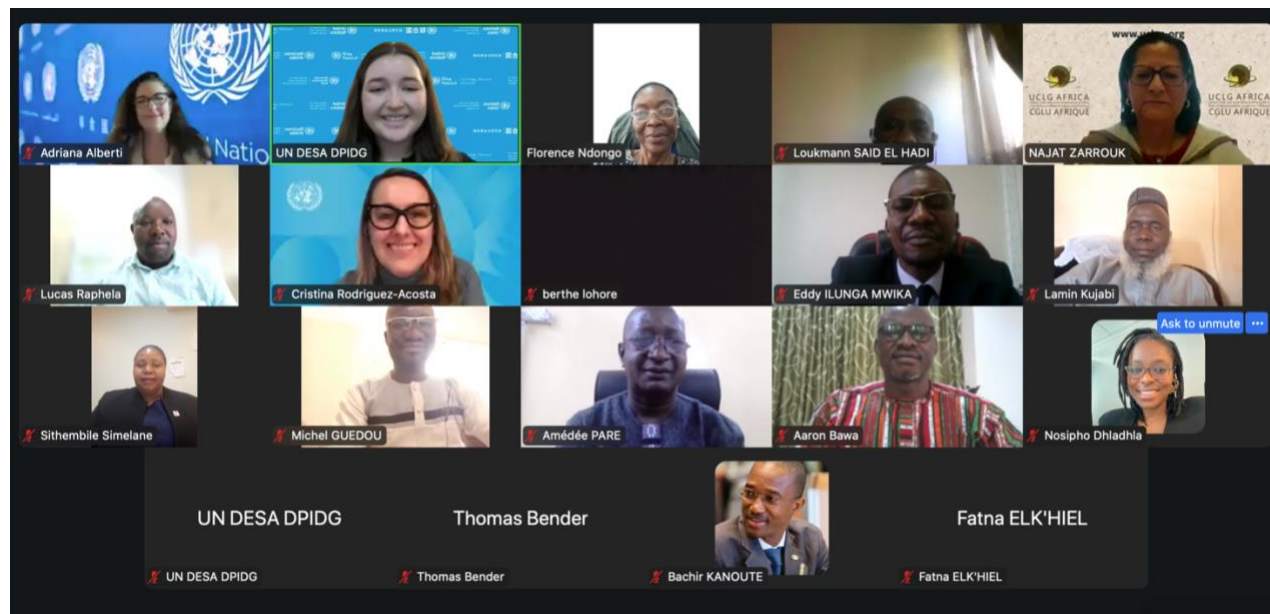


United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)

Follow-up Webinar on the Future of Governance and New Mindsets, Knowledge and Competencies Fit for the 21st Century: Commitments and Next Steps Key Messages

2 April 2025
9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.



Opening Remarks

UN DESA

The session began by welcoming participants that their presence reaffirms a shared vision, with a future where governance at the local level is dynamic, forward-thinking, and equipped with the capacities and mindsets to meet the challenges of the 21st century. From 9 to 13 December 2024, during the Capacity Development Workshop that was held in Morocco, participants made commitments to drive change not only at the individual level but also within institutions and organizations to foster new skills, competencies, and new ways of thinking. It was agreed that three months after the Workshop, participants and organizers would meet again and reflect on progress made, exchange insights, and also assess how far we have come in turning these commitments into action. This is intended to demonstrate how the knowledge and strategies shared during the workshop have been applied to participants' respective fields and how they are shaping policies, driving innovation, and enhancing effective, inclusive, and accountable governance at the local level. It was emphasized that it is the continuation of an ongoing

dialogue that fosters peer-to-peer learning, strengthens collaboration, and reinforces the collective mission to deliver the highest public value and create a governance framework that truly serves the people. It was highlighted that the momentum built should continue to grow.

UCLG Africa

The Capacity Development Workshop was held in Tangier, Morocco last December 2024 under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and in the framework of FAMI 8 organized by UCLG Africa. The workshop was prepared and organized based on the partnership between UN DESA and UCLG-ALGA. Approximately 30 African countries benefited from the workshop. They came to learn, share, and commit to their part for the governance we want for Africa. It was emphasized that the follow-up webinar is not just a routine check-in, but a meaningful moment of collective reflection, accountability, and renewed commitment for the future. The meeting in Morocco allowed participants to acknowledge the urgent need to rethink governments and shift mindsets from the individual to the institutional level. Participants committed to equipping themselves and their institutions with strong values and principles, skills, and a transformational leadership approach to be ready to respond to the governance challenges of our century. The follow-up webinar was described as a space for open dialogue, grounded interest, and a common and shared vision for the transformation needed in Africa and the world. One of the most meaningful outcomes of the Morocco workshop was that participants made personal and institutional commitments.

UCLG Africa emphasized the active participation and sustained engagement of politicians, leaders, practitioners, academics, and civil servants. This level of commitment was presented as a strong indicator of the power of peer learning, mutual accountability, and co-creation in reshaping governance culture and mindsets. The webinar was framed as an opportunity not only to reflect but also to strengthen networks and foster collective thinking toward further progress. It was reiterated that transforming governments begins with individual transformation. By embracing new mindsets, developing relevant competencies, and upholding shared values, public servants can drive change. The goal is to build a public sector that is more agile, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the people.

Objectives of the Webinar and Key Messages from the Workshop

Participants were reminded that the objective of the webinar is to provide platform for participants to reflect on what has worked, what has not, and what areas still require further learning. The discussion centered on how the implementation of participants' commitments has contributed to transformational change, leadership development, and the emergence of a new organizational culture.

Key messages from the Morocco Workshop were highlighted, including the following:

1. Governance must evolve to be more adaptive, inclusive, and anticipatory—able to navigate complexity, uncertainty, and rapid changes in the 21st century.
2. Changing mindsets and adopting new competencies is needed to achieve institutional effectiveness, accountability, and inclusiveness, which results in effective SDG implementation.
3. Achieving SDG localization requires planning with strategic foresight to drive shifts across policy and regulatory frameworks.
4. Transformational leadership is essential to drive large-scale development in Africa and align national strategies with global goals like Agenda 2063.
5. Digital transformation in Africa involves bridging the urban-rural digital divide, enhancing digital skills and capacity building, and leveraging international collaboration and best practices.

UN DESA

The commitments made by participants during the Morocco Workshop were summarized. Rather than reviewing each individual pledge, the presentation highlighted recurring themes that emerged through a word cloud analysis. Frequently cited concepts included change, the SDGs, mindsets, development, governance, and digital transformation. Participants had committed to integrating the SDGs into their daily work, raising awareness among colleagues, and promoting shared learning from the Workshop experience. Many also recognized the need to address mindset change as both a personal and professional challenge essential for advancing the SDGs. A number of commitments focused on increasing digital awareness and positioning themselves as agents of change. Key areas of action included training initiatives, localizing the SDGs, and encouraging active engagement at the community level. Participants were then invited to provide brief three-minute updates on their progress, challenges faced, and lessons learned, with the aim of fostering peer learning and identifying collective opportunities for further support.

Bénin

The participant shared that since December, significant steps have been taken to advance commitments, particularly within the municipality of Cotonou. Following a submitted report, discussions were held with municipal leadership on how to operationalize the proposed changes. This led to the decision to develop procedural manuals, with the initial focus on drafting job descriptions aligned with a new organizational dynamic. A concept note and terms of reference were prepared to support this process.

Efforts were also made to advance digitalization within the administration. One initiative involved finalizing the rollout of professional email accounts to improve information flow and reduce unnecessary direct interactions between users and civil servants. A major focus area has been land management, identified as a sector with persistent challenges. A working group was established to fully digitize land records and update directories, providing municipalities with more reliable data. This was deemed essential given the broader implications for document issuance and access to financial services. Additionally, the municipality began reviewing and updating legal directories related to land governance, in collaboration with policymakers and other municipal departments. This process requires extensive coordination and communication efforts, but early results indicate progress. It is anticipated that by the end of 2025, improvements will be seen in multiple aspects of public service delivery.

Uganda

The update highlighted ongoing efforts from the African Association of Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) and also Uganda Management Institute (UMI). From the AAPAM perspective, preparations are underway for the 44th Roundtable Conference of a public administration association, scheduled to take place in Eswatini in November. A full day of the conference is expected to be dedicated to discussions on mindset change and the digitalization of government services. The event typically brings together senior public officials from across Africa, offering a platform for high-level dialogue and exchange.

From the Uganda Management Institute side, a comprehensive curriculum review process is ongoing. Governance modules are being revised to include content on mindset change, with the aim of accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Burkina Faso

The participant reported progress and remaining challenges in implementing commitments made during the Morocco Workshop. Upon returning, a report was delivered during the first session of the special communal delegation responsible for local governance. This report shared insights from the capacity-

building activities and helped disseminate key lessons. One of the key commitments to support SDG localization has not yet been fully realized. While external support was anticipated, it has yet to materialize. There remains a strong interest in receiving assistance and learning from other municipalities that have advanced in this area, particularly drawing from experiences in Morocco.

Nonetheless, notable progress was reported in promoting greater transparency and efficiency within the commune. Improvements included the public display of available services and timelines, contributing to better communication with citizens. These efforts reflect a shift in administrative behaviors and values inspired by the Morocco Workshop. The speaker noted their current role as Secretary-General of the town hall in northern Burkina Faso, signaling a change in institutional affiliation since the previous engagement.

Cameroon

The participant shared that a report on the Morocco Workshop was submitted to the Director General, who found it highly relevant for its focus on future governance and the importance of new mindsets and competencies for the 21st century. The report highlighted the need to adapt to technological transformation and evolve leadership skills in public administration. In response, the Director General prepared a formal note to the Minister of Development, Decentralization, and Local Development to underscore these issues. The participant, who works closely with mayors, prioritized promoting local ownership of global agendas, especially in light of the alarming statistic that only 6 percent of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets are currently on track in Africa. This prompted reflection on key questions such as: *Why is progress so delayed? Why is there a lack of motivation to implement the SDGs?* Emphasizing the importance of inclusive governance, the participant underscored the need to engage local elected officials in national and global processes, citing the United Nations as a model of cooperative global governance. In all forums attended, mayors and regional leaders are actively encouraged to participate in governance reform efforts. The participant is also involved in a pilot project on resilient cities, aimed at leading change and applying practical tools in governance. The experience of closely following and implementing these tools was described as particularly rewarding. The update concluded with a call to rethink global decision-making processes to ensure more inclusive stakeholder participation and advance the transformation of governance mindsets.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Following the Workshop, a report on the activity was shared, emphasizing the importance of governance across local, regional, provincial, and national levels as well as the relevance of digital transformation and transformational leadership. These insights were well received by the institution's management, which requested further exploration of how to implement the workshop's teachings internally. Following a recent leadership transition, the institution was invited to support the rollout of new governance mechanisms, particularly the implementation of a quality management system. This includes leading the development of procedural manuals for various institutional functions.

At the individual level, efforts are underway to mentor young trainees preparing for senior public service roles. In alignment with SDG 4, the institution is focused on strengthening education, ethics, and leadership skills. Trainees are taught that ethical conduct is essential for meaningful contribution to national development, regardless of technical competencies. Discipline, patriotism, and solidarity, both nationally and across Africa, are emphasized from the outset of their training. While acknowledging the institution's intermediate position in the decision-making hierarchy, the update stressed the strategic importance of shaping future leaders who can internalize and practice sound governance. Though significant progress has been made, the speaker concluded by noting that many challenges remain ahead.

Eswatini

The update shared progress on two primary commitments made during the Morocco Workshop. The first involved organizing an informal orientation session to share key takeaways from the training with staff and counselors. This was successfully carried out and received positively, with strong political interest and a collective willingness to align future programs with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The second commitment focused on influencing ongoing policy reviews to ensure inclusivity and alignment with SDG principles. Specific attention was given to the land allocation policy, where new provisions were successfully introduced to reflect the principle of leaving no one behind, particularly by improving access to affordable land for marginalized groups. While the process involved significant effort to gain understanding and support, the eventual buy-in, especially at the political level, enabled the integration of SDG-aligned elements into key governance and leadership strategies.

An additional update was also provided. The local authority conducted a self-assessment and identified capacity gaps in executing developmental programs. In response, a twinning agreement was negotiated with a smaller local authority to foster collaboration and solidarity in implementing the SDGs. It is hoped that this partnership may serve as a model and potentially influence practices across the broader local government landscape.

Côte d'Ivoire

Following the Morocco Workshop, a participant from Côte d'Ivoire shared UN DESA reports and presentation materials within local government structures to encourage broader access. The participant made a personal commitment focused on improving English proficiency, with efforts made to use online tutorials and engage colleagues interested in pursuing similar language development. A key area of focus was the localization of SDGs, especially those related to climate change. The region launched a low-carbon reforestation and agroforestry project in the Grands Ponts region and is currently working with partners to develop a climate plan that includes training, webinars, and community engagement. The participant now serves as the regional focal point for climate change, population vulnerability, and resilience. The Morocco Workshop complemented earlier academic preparation and supported regional climate initiatives.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, an SDG office was formally established within the Abuja Municipal Area Council, marking the first of its kind since the era of the Millennium Development Goals. A desk officer was appointed to coordinate SDG activities, liaise with the Federal Capital Territory SDG office, and oversee program implementation and monitoring. Despite institutional challenges such as limited strategic planning and resistance to change, the creation of this office reflects progress in SDG localization. Efforts are also underway to join national VNR processes and strengthen engagement across departments. A strategic meeting is planned with the Senior Special Advisor to the President on SDGs to further support coordination and alignment with national priorities.

Senegal

In Senegal, the outcomes of the Morocco Workshop were shared through two webinars. From the position of Secretary General at the Observatory of Participatory Democracy, the participant launched a Local Leadership Excellence Award in partnership with the African Union and UCLG Africa. The initiative identifies best practices and innovations from local governments, national ministries, and academic institutions. It focuses on four themes: participation, transparency and accountability, inclusion and equality, and public policy localization. The program, which will run through October, aims to establish a learning and sharing mechanism among municipalities, governments, and research institutions across Africa. The initiative will culminate in an awards ceremony in Dakar.

Tanzania

Significant progress in governance modernization has been achieved in Tanzania. Government revenue collection is now conducted electronically, and local government systems including work attendance are fully digitized. A new policy mandates that 10 percent of local government revenues be allocated to vulnerable groups, including women (4 percent), the youth (4 percent), and persons with disabilities (2 percent). A Local Government Week has been introduced to allow municipalities to showcase accomplishments and plan for the future. Each council is expected to have a five-year development plan aligned with the national vision and the SDGs. Challenges remain, particularly in ensuring strategic planning across all councils and in building leadership capacity among women officials. Capacity-building programs are underway to address these gaps.

The Gambia

An internal presentation was delivered at the financial level to share key takeaways and contextualize them for the local council. This included briefing the council chairman to secure support for future policy proposals. Recognizing the training gap that existed, a new HR training policy was developed and presented on 28 February, with plans for council validation in an upcoming meeting. Additionally, a community consultation was held on 16 January with development committee members and the market community to foster collaboration in one of the council's key economic areas. This led to improved cooperation and a market-area cleansing initiative driven by community members. Recognizing the need for partnerships, the council, in collaboration with the national association GALGA, is organizing a two-day capacity-building workshop on 11–12 March for 80 Ward Development Committee members. The participant also engaged in several UN online trainings, including modules on sandboxing, public sector ethics, disaster preparedness, and urban health. Ongoing efforts include participation in the Making Cities Resilient by 2030 initiative and an e-learning course on effective national-to-local governance. A ward fund initiative was introduced to support projects across all 10 wards, with an evaluation scheduled for the following month. Key challenges include limited financial resources, capacity gaps, and resistance to new ideas, but in-house training and persistent advocacy continue to strengthen buy-in and institutional support.

Comoros

In Comoros, recent efforts have focused on strengthening local governance following the March 2 municipal elections. A workshop was organized to raise awareness on human rights and the role of women in public policy, aiming to engage newly elected officials in inclusive governance practices. A local development plan was developed with an emphasis on digital inclusion to improve interaction between elected officials and citizens. Looking ahead, the institution is preparing initiatives to further local engagement, particularly through youth involvement. Recognizing that youth make up the majority of the local population and are highly active in sports, a new project is being designed to use sports as a tool for civic inclusion and engagement in local governance. A workshop is currently being planned to support this initiative. The participant credited the momentum of these actions to the institution's involvement in the ALGA network, which has inspired renewed activity and commitment to inclusive, participatory governance.

UCLG Africa

UCLG Africa shared several initiatives undertaken since the Morocco Workshop, despite limited resources, emphasizing the importance of strategic, win-win partnerships. Five key commitments were highlighted. First, a study tour was organized for 20 elected officials, mayors, and civil servants from Senegal to visit Morocco and learn about local governance responses to climate change. Second, a presentation was delivered to students at the University of Prince Sultan in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the

values, principles, and ethical behavior essential for effective public service. Third, in celebration of women's rights in March, UCLG Africa partnered with a Belgian NGO to promote the economic empowerment of women and girls by showcasing good practices from local governments and cooperatives. Fourth, in collaboration with the International Center to Promote Human Rights based in Graz, Austria, a three-part initiative was launched to empower women at the local level. This includes events on women's participation in local politics (held in March), prevention of gender-based violence (scheduled for June), and inclusion through sports (planned for October). These initiatives reflect the organization's commitment to localizing SDG 17 by building multi-actor partnerships that leverage resources, expertise, and tools to advance inclusive governance.

Next Steps Closing Remarks

Participants were encouraged to continue sharing progress and best practices via a dedicated WhatsApp group. UCLG Africa proposed a structured reporting format based on key workshop messages. A suggestion was made to evaluate progress and link activities with core areas such as governance, leadership, and digital transformation, which would enable to see the different types of knowledge and mindset changes at these different levels.

UN DESA

The session concluded with a strong acknowledgment of the impressive actions taken by participants. Highlights included promoting political buy-in, influencing policy to align with the SDGs, conducting internal assessments, and preparing notes for ministers on key governance concepts. Many institutions have introduced new training modules focused on changing mindsets and inclusion, established working groups, and created new offices and partnerships aligned with SDG 17. A leadership award was launched, and several innovative practices from local authorities and academia were identified and shared. The initiative of holding an annual local government week in different cities was also noted as a forward-looking practice. One participant was commended for utilizing the UN DESA online training courses, which others were encouraged to explore. Promoting public value was described as a continuous journey, and challenges should be viewed as opportunities for growth. Participants were congratulated for their many achievements and encouraged to continue advancing transformational change as agents of public value.

UCLG Africa

The value of mindset change as a catalyst for empowering youth and public servants was emphasized. Gratitude was expressed for the strong support provided by UN DESA and the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, underlining their role in empowering networks during challenging times. The diversity of the group, including leaders, civil servants, academics, NGOs, and international organizations, was celebrated as a key asset, enabling a whole of government and whole of society approach to governance transformation. Participants were encouraged to continue their commitments and serve as multipliers of change within their institutions. UCLG Africa pledged to sustain its support through the sharing of tools, methodologies, good practices, and potential funding opportunities. The group was invited to reconvene at the next FAMI event, reinforcing the importance of ongoing peer learning and capacity development to advance the vision of "the Africa we want."