



21st Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written input by International Communities Organisation

Agenda Item 6: Application of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level

The International Communities Organisation (ICO) is pleased to share its insights for the session titled “Application of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level [Item 6] which is planned to be held on the 5th of April 2022, Tuesday. The Institute for Local Government Innovation is our initiative focusing on research, publication and promotion of local policies and initiatives that have impacted lives across communities worldwide. We conduct independent research and analysis, engage with key stakeholders and establish strategic partnerships to progress the core mission.

ICO recognises the crucial role of local governance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and especially SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. ICO’s activities are designed and implemented to strengthen participatory governance at the subnational level through partnerships with different stakeholders (public servants, municipality departments, businesses, academics, policy makers and other civil society representatives and organisations). ICO provides support to enable democratic participation, civic dialogue and sustainable development and increase the quality of life of communities. We conduct evidence-based research and deliver policy making recommendations in partnership with local focal points, and value the principles of participation, inclusiveness, collaboration, innovation and competence.

The implementation of SDGs at local level has been challenged in several ways, we have identified that the main obstacles in implementing SDGs at the local level are the organisational factors that limits collaboration skills with non-state actors. This limits the capacity of public policy formulation and implementation, blocking the creation of a coherent framework and a realistic capacity development agenda that answers the needs of its residents.

ICO, therefore, humbly submits the recommendations arrived at by our collaboration and communication in the following geographies: Jerusalem, Douala, and Mitrovica.

Jerusalem:

- Community Councils in Jerusalem are non-profit entities recognised by the city as representatives of neighborhoods in a given geographic region. In fact, the majority of their boards of directors are elected by the residents. However, there are separate Community Councils for the Arab/Palestinian neighborhoods and the Israeli/Jewish neighborhoods and city services such as education, welfare, and infrastructure are delivered separately as well.
- Terrorist violence on the one hand and repressive police responses on the other have led to almost complete separation between the populations of neighborhoods such as Abu Tor and Al-Thuri and East Talpiot and Zur Baher, even though they are geographically contiguous to each other.
- The Good Neighbors Jerusalem Project is a partnership between contiguous Community Councils on the East-West Jerusalem seam, which is based on a new model of joint identification of common needs and interests and mutual collaboration to achieve solutions for the benefit of both neighborhoods.
- The local governance processes that empower and expands collaborations and coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem's neighborhoods requires equitable partnerships with joint responsibility and resources between the Israeli and Palestinian Community Councils/Neighborhoods. Democratic decision-making processes can be enabled through mutual acquaintance and communication, assistance to existing projects and development of new projects in the field of shared living that goes beyond disconnection and polarization between communities.

La Marie de la Commune d'Arrondissement de Douala

- In Douala, local governance faces multiple challenges in the effective delivery of "ordinary" services such as refuse collection, water treatment, public transportation to social housing due to the limited resources. The challenges extend beyond ordinary services, and can be observed in underdeveloped strategic management, policy development and governance strategies.
- ICO has created a forum with representatives from a number of local councils who seek international cooperation to improve on their delivery of fundamental public services (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Renewable Energy, Economic Development and Tourism, Youth Vocational Training, Affordable Healthcare, Institutional Strengthening, Entrepreneurship Promotion, New Technologies, Community Engagement in Local Governance, Cultural Exchange, International Cultural Exchange, Agricultural

Promotion). Current representatives include: 1- *Dschang, West region* 2- *Fokoué, West region* 3- *Fongo-Tongo, West region* 4- *Nkong-Zem, West region* 5- *Kkyé-ossi, South region on border with Equatorial Guinea* 6- *Dibombari, Littoral region near Douala* 7- *Buea, South West region.*

- This forum seeks to progress the trend towards decentralisation, which has been identified as key outcome of the National Dialogue held in Cameroon in 2019 by enabling newly created local structures. Establishment of effective mechanisms for feedback and evaluation is important, because it ensures that decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect. The result aims to ensure better targeted public services, greater growth and stronger partnerships between public, private and community leaders in local areas. This collaboration and innovative approaches lead to a greater sense of autonomy and ownership of local activities by community members and greater accountability for decisions which affect local people.

Mitrovica:

- Mitrovica has become a living symbol of segregation between Albanians and Serbs, who are physically divided by the Iber/Ibar River that runs through the town. There are also several other ethnic communities living in the city and its surrounding villages. For all practical purposes, the two largest communities live in different public policy systems with different languages, currencies, telecommunications, electricity supply, and so on.
- The northern part of the city is governed by a range of international, Serbian, and Kosovar institutions. The southern predominantly Albanian part is governed by its own municipal institutions.
- The security situation in Mitrovica is tense, and unemployment is very high, with over 65% officially unemployed. Youth unemployment at around 60% in the city is furthering frustration, causing an exodus looking for better opportunities. Despite these immense challenges, the situation lately seems to be improving, and Mitrovica continues to benefit from a very active civic society community
- The community leaders from South Mitrovica and North Mitrovica have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ICO, dated 08 February 2021 to promote cross-community activities between Albanians, Serbs and other communities in the region, to bridge the economic, social and cultural capital of these communities. This cooperation between South and North Mitrovica aims to achieve greater social cohesion and impact in the longer term, in accordance with the Brussels Agreement.

Lessons Learnt

The above case studies highlight local governance attainment on implementing positive city and community development. We have observed that providing appropriate and relevant grassroots tools can improve quality of life. In supporting effective governance principles at the subnational level, we have identified a number of significant catalysts for an inclusive, resilient and sustainable outcomes:

- areas for capacity development, particular in Mitrovica and Douala, in terms of coordination and sustainable management across multiple governance levels in order to deliver on effective programmes. This has shown us the importance of external consultation and implementation support that can be provided through capacity building programmes, which are tailored to the needs of specific local communities, and also can encompass a range of requirements such as budget management, strategic management, partnership building, civic engagement and democratic participation.
- external support is further impactful when strong local leaders are in place and can act as drivers of change. When willing to learn from experiences outside their communities and participate in international collaboration, they have the opportunity to enact significant progressive interventions. This is especially the case when local governance interests are rooted in benefiting all members of the community across societal lines.
- strong and effective leadership is best supported by collaborative ecosystems which empower community members and civic society actors. We see, especially in Jerusalem, that women play a considerable role in promoting inclusion, participation and delivery that is beneficial to all, as women have demonstrated an acute ability to put baggage aside for the benefit of cross-community development. Young people's commitment to building a more prosperous future makes them a significant collaborator and being open to innovative problem solving.
- collaboration is particularly effective when it is founded in a shared vision that enables policy changes and activities to be acted on and pursued in the long-run. This shared vision is best devised by local people whose innate proximity to the issues that are faced in their communities makes them experts in outlining the most appropriate course of action. Local knowledge and participation must be central to any local community development plan.
- local governments benefit from a less threatening status due to a reduced public profile compared to national governments. Their smaller constituency pool and geographical

mandates presents them as a great laboratory for developing new ideas and testing the impact on a small scale. They can progress the implementation of SDGs by enacting change in hyper localised way and within practical parameters.

With the right external support, local leadership and participation of women and young people local governments can impact change and present themselves as unbiased community champions. With a collaborative supportive ecosystem that values inclusion and participation, traditional community knowledge can be combined with new innovative tools and resources that empowers communities to become self-reliant, furthering the progress of SDGs at the subnational level.