

**Joint CIB position on how local government development cooperation can contribute to achieving the objectives presented in the [UCLG Decalogue for the post-COVID-19 era](#)**

**14 October 2020**

**Introduction**

1. The COVID-19 virus has affected all people around the world and challenged all parts of society to adapt, including local and regional governments, who have had to act swiftly on the frontline in combatting the virus and its effects to ensure the safety of all citizens through these unprecedented times.
2. Over the past months, it has become clear that the crisis caused by COVID-19 will have lasting effects. The local recovery will need to be about **building resilience, ensuring democratic principles and promoting decentralization** to ensure the viability and sustainability of local and regional governments in the future.
3. In response to the impact of the crisis on local and regional governments, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) adopted the **UCLG Decalogue** that outlines **10 key recommendations for the post-COVID-19 era**. The document focuses on the commitment of local and regional governments to build a world of solidarity: 1) guarantee public services; 2) provide for financial support packages; 3) boost proximity models of global consumption and production; 4) announce a worldwide green deal; 5) facilitate new citizenship and freedoms for renewed democracy; 6) strengthen generation equality; 7) take care of public providers, in all territories; 8) use culture as an antidote for the secondary effects; 9) boost the interurban system and; 10) evolve towards next generation multilateralism.
4. UCLG's Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) Working Group, consisting of local and regional governments and associations active in development cooperation programmes, welcomes the UCLG Decalogue. This joint CIB position aims to outline **how the CIB member organisations can contribute to meeting the objectives of the UCLG Decalogue by adapting and reorienting international municipal cooperation programmes**<sup>1</sup>. CIB strongly believes that local government development cooperation is one of the key instruments to tackle the challenges ahead of society, such as health, social or climate impacts. Moreover, development cooperation delivered by local and regional governments can help achieve the SDGs, also in the renewed context.

**How the CIB Working Group and its members can concretely contribute to meeting the objectives as outlined in the UCLG Decalogue**

- ❖ Through strong exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned and by coordinating efforts of its members, the CIB Working Group hopes to **enhance crisis prevention, management, response and recovery activities** of local and regional governments around the world, and to avoid duplication of efforts, in view of development effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'International municipal cooperation programmes' refers to all forms and types of international cooperation between local governments, regions and national associations of local/regional governments.

- ❖ The CIB Working Group **recognises its responsibility to adapt and innovate ongoing international municipal cooperation programmes to the new reality that local and regional governments are experiencing.** These programmes can contribute to improved (access to) public services, boosting local economic development, enhanced resource mobilisation, building resilience, supporting the energy transition and the fight against climate change, improved intergovernmental relations, strengthened decentralisation processes, improved local health systems, strengthened local, inclusive and participatory democracy and less inequality.
- ❖ The CIB secretariat plans to strengthen its collaboration with the **UCLG Working Group on territorial prevention and management of crisis** in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. In past years, ties with this Working Group have always been strong but the crisis and its aftermath provide new opportunities for enhanced collaboration, most notably through the suggested set-up of a UCLG international solidarity fund.

The CIB Working Group can concretely contribute to the objectives mentioned in the UCLG Decalogue by:

1. **Assessing how COVID-19 has affected the capacities, resources and needs of partner countries, through research and structural dialogue,** to make sure that the capacity development offer matches the quickly changing needs and demands of beneficiaries. Local actors know best what is needed in their community; it is the responsibility of CIB and its members to listen and adapt accordingly and base local project interventions on research, facts and evidence about the current local situation.
2. **Building the case for continuation of international cooperation between local and regional governments, also within CIB member organizations.** Even when local and regional governments around the world are facing times of crisis and budget cuts and shifting of priorities, CIB still believes that international cooperation is now more important than ever. In times when freedom of movement is severely restricted internationally or nationally, alternative modalities of city diplomacy and decentralised cooperation need to flourish.
3. Acknowledging that in the post-COVID-19 era **technical assistance is not going to be enough:** financial issues are now an even larger challenge for developing countries. New distant learning and delivery materials should therefore **provide (further) assistance on how to gain more funding,** how to access loans, grants and local tax revenues and make clear what would be the added value of this.
4. **Investing in digital working environments, at home and abroad, and in distant learning and delivery methods, tools and techniques.** The COVID-19 crisis requires office workers to reinvent their usual way of doing (international) business, incl. how to exchange knowledge, deliver and participate in trainings etc. Areas with weak internet connections need to be able to participate offline, while stakeholders (i.e. governments and private sector) solve the current digital divide. It is very likely that the digital approach to technical assistance and learning will remain popular, independent from COVID-19. It is therefore necessary to develop

a sustainable digital learning strategy for the long run, which is scalable and repeatable.

5. **Making planning and projects more flexible.** New realities and paradigms are forcing CIB members to review ongoing programmes. Furthermore, beneficiaries of international municipal cooperation programmes will also need to review their local or regional development plans, as the current planning and policies will have become outdated in the current crisis, at least to some extent.
6. **Making sure that local government development cooperation (recovery) activities help build back better.** All spheres of governments are calling to build back better. When contributing to local or even national recovery plans, the CIB Working Group will ask itself whether it is effectively contributing and/or encouraging the targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building back better also means working towards an integrated, coherent sustainable policy in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including the most vulnerable groups.
7. **Adapting the already existing resilience and crisis management tools, so that they are applicable to the new context.** Many CIB member organizations were already working on resilience building, risk awareness, crisis prevention and preparedness, crisis response and support programmes prior to COVID-19. The previous experiences, approaches, methods and tools can now be adapted to a different context and put to use. CIB member organizations take note that vulnerable and marginalised groups should be involved in recovery and resilience-building measures and in recovery planning tools and approaches, to structurally embed them in future frameworks.
8. Strengthening the capacity, knowledge and expertise of **national and regional associations of local governments**, as linking pins between individual local governments and other spheres of government and many other sectors. Local government associations have five main roles with regard to resilience building: awareness-raising, advocacy, capacity building, establishing linkages and coordination and monitoring. CIB members further commit to making these roles and their effects more present in their work and activities, thereby boosting the profile of local government associations and supporting them in getting a seat at the table of any recovery dialogues, resulting in a more enabling environment and inclusion of all local and regional governments in future structures and frameworks.
9. **Collaborating with NGOs and humanitarian organisations, thereby creating an alliance of development partners<sup>2</sup>.** In the midst of a crisis, humanitarian organisations and (international) NGOs often take a leading role in crisis response, especially if the local government lacks sufficient capacities. The CIB member organisations aim to further strengthening the capacity of local and regional governments, so that they will become more able to take on a coordinating role in crisis situations, liaising with NGOs, humanitarian organisations and other third parties, while constantly connecting with their communities through clear communication and implementing adequate mitigation measures.

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<sup>2</sup> Making use of the vast knowledge and network of the UCLG taskforce on territorial prevention and management of crises.

10. **Collaborating with the private sector**, to accelerate and multiply CIB members' actions on the ground. There is and will be a need for more financial means for local and regional governments; the private sector and the local government development sector have to jointly work towards better access to financing. Many local and regional governments already have vast experience with public-private partnerships; how can they move forward from there and deepen relations with the private sector, locally and internationally?
11. **Collaborating with academia and communities of innovators**, to boost the local government development cooperation sector. The COVID-19-crisis has shown the weaknesses and deficits of pre-existing systems, and perhaps even of (elements of) international municipal cooperation programmes. Now is the time for innovation and improvement. The CIB members aim to seek for and capture this innovation, through dialogue with academia and communities of innovators, and move forward swiftly. At the same time, CIB members acknowledge that beneficiaries of international municipal cooperation programmes and activities might have difficulty to absorb many new activities/ideas and information in times of crisis. Therefore, CIB member organisations have the responsibility to **focus on capacity building with regard to fundamental functions of municipalities and associations**, to make sure that local and regional governments can play their role in their communities and that they have the best opportunity to solve issues locally.

Individual CIB member organisations will see how to transform this list of ideas for concrete contributions into **action plans for their organisations**, in the months to come.

#### **Recommendations to national governments and the international donor community**

- ❖ To be able to concretize or boost many of the relevant contributions and activities mentioned above, the CIB Working Group calls upon national governments and the international donor community to **include local and regional government capacity building in upcoming COVID-19 response and recovery programmes**. Support for the developing world cannot only be limited to humanitarian assistance and multilateral organisations. Local and regional governments, which are rooted in local communities and are there to stay need capacity building to be better prepared for upcoming threats and shocks.
- ❖ Moreover, COVID-19 and its recovery phase provide an opportunity to accelerate action on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. In line with this agenda, **national recovery plans should be green, inclusive and enhance equality**. Local and regional governments have been actively implementing and localising this agenda from the start, at home and in international cooperation activities, and will continue to do so, post-COVID-19.
- ❖ **CIB members are concerned that things will evolve differently: the SDGs are receiving less attention in many countries and Official Development Assistance is at risk for the next years**, with decreasing GDP worldwide. A shift towards supporting grass root organisations and (local) civil society organisations (CSOs) can already be witnessed, at the expense of local and regional governments as legitimate local democratic institutions, and providers of essential local public services. The refocusing of development cooperation budget on health and emergency aid creates uncertainty for the continuity of long-term development and municipal capacity building efforts, while local and regional governments are actually crucial partners for humanitarian organisations,

CSOs and national governments with other local aid or development interventions. Not only do local and regional governments bring knowledge of the local conditions, communities, and the whole intervention or development policy framework to the table; they also carry a responsibility for a coherent and sustainable development of the territory.

❖ Therefore, the **CIB working group strongly recommends that national governments and the international donor community:**

1. **Engage in structural dialogues with local and regional governments**, to learn about needs and challenges of their populations. Local and regional governments play a strong signalling function and are able to identify issues before they become lasting problems. It is therefore crucial to build strong and equal partnerships and remain in dialogue at all times and especially in crisis times and the aftermath. In line with this, national Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) and/or Development Cooperation ministries should engage in a structured dialogue with local and regional governments (through their associations) active in international cooperation.
2. **Make use of the capacity, knowledge and expertise of associations of local and regional governments** and their international departments. Associations should be further empowered to provide support to their members, through suitable legal frameworks and financing agreements.
3. **Mobilise sufficient funding for capacity building of local and regional governments** with regard to **resilience**, in the short term. Structural budget for capacity building of local and regional governments needs to be made available in the next years.
4. **Help local and regional governments to access capital markets**, in the medium term. This could be facilitated by the development of subnational banks and special purpose vehicles for risk transfer and pooling. Experiences such as the International Municipal Investment Fund (blended finance in support of local government capital investment) and the African Territorial Agency (pool financing) should be scaled-up.