

Narrative report January – December 2021
UCLG Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) Working Group

Implementation

- As was the case in previous years, the CIB secretariat arranged for **regular communication to and with the CIB membership** throughout the year. We published 5 CIB newsletters, including many news items from members themselves, various circulars and were also active in the CIB whatsapp group and on social media. We closely collaborated with the UCLG communication team on all of these products.
- At the end of the year we hired expertise to develop some **CIB communication materials** for the website and twitter (banners etc.), as well as an image wishing the members a good new year in which we reconnect.
- On October 12 and 13, we organised a second **virtual CIB Annual Meeting**, hosted by FCM. Over 50 members gathered in this online 2-day event to discuss and exchange on developments in our sector of international cooperation at the local level. We had an extensive exchange through a 1,5 hour “Tour de table” and arranged for a presentation and discussion with IDS on their research ahead of the development of a dedicated UCLG-CIB policy paper. The second day saw different sessions on trends in the donor community, gender projects and how to innovatively engage in city-to-city cooperation. We also gathered valuable feedback and questions from the membership on the aforementioned research and policy paper. The minutes of the meeting are attached to this narrative report.
- This year we jointly organised the Voluntary Subnational Reviews trajectory with the UCLG GOLD team and a variety of associations of local governments, following less intensive engagement in previous years. CIB was involved in the following activities:
 - The introduction / kick-off meeting with all participating LGAs on the VSR process at the UCLG Retreat (19 February, 2021)
 - Structural exchange between the participating LGAs, through the creation of an online Google Drive space for exchange, where action plans, presentations, background information and draft VSRs were shared.
 - 4 in-depth VSR workshops (EN, FR and ES) on VSR development, as online exchange of knowledge events and for peer coaching and inspiration, in coordination with UCLG GOLD team.
 - 12 March: first workshop
 - 22 April: 2nd workshop
 - 25 May: 3rd workshop
 - 11 October: 4th workshop (validation of guidelines with 2020 and 2021 LGAs)

- Elaborating a VSR roadmap/guidelines for the next years, based on the experiences this year and last years
 - UNDESA pre-launch: 26 October
 - online launch: 24 November

CIB took the lead on developing the roadmap/guidelines, which should help all local government associations to develop their own VSR in the near future. The guidelines were based on the experiences of the LGAs participating in 2020 (Benin, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal) and 2021 (Cape Verde, Germany, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Tunisia, Zimbabwe). The guidelines were written in a flexible manner, based on a rich, participative and co-production process, so that each LRGA can adapt them to its own needs, objectives, resources and capabilities.

It is important to note here that the guidelines are not the first guidelines for SDG reporting, but rather build on a growing toolbox for SDG reporting of UCLG (and UN Habitat).

Advocacy

- Over the last period of time we have further coordinated and developed the renewed UCLG CIB policy paper with different members of the working group and the Institute of Development Studies. This resulted in the finalized research paper on development cooperation by local governments. We supported this work by reaching out to many of our members for example to collect all the needed inputs on the extensive questionnaires that were developed.

We furthermore facilitated and moderated the UCLG-CIB workshop on the paper on June 8 2021. The agenda of the event [can be found here](#). In this workshop, together with the UCLG Learning Team, we discussed all components of the (at that time) draft research paper with different local government actors. We therefore made use of the new UCLG-PLATFORMA Module 4 – a learning tool in which the SDG framework is interlinked with the practice of development cooperation. It provides useful exercises for participants to get acquainted with topics, in this case the paper. After plenary presentations and panel conversations, we dived into specific subtopics in four different break-out groups.

CIB organized more than 15 coordination calls with IDS and the policy paper CIB reference group (with representatives of Generalitat Catalunya, FCM and the UCLG World Secretariat). Of course the paper was also one the key topics of discussion at the CIB Annual Meeting.

Monitoring & follow-up

- On the afternoon of March 31st, in the presence of 25 CIB members, we launched the CIB guidance note on 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (M&E&L) in times of COVID-19'. Independent M&E&L consultant Kaia Ambrose presented the outcomes of the survey and

interviews with different CIB members, differentiating between ‘the good’ and ‘the frustrating’ of this very relevant aspect of international cooperation by local governments in COVID times.

Based on her earlier conversations with CIB members, Kaia Ambrose shared some of the key M&E&L considerations to take into account in distant times, which included:

- Take a step back: Review your M&E framework to make sure the basics are in place (these should be there regardless of COVID-19!)
- Retrofit to pivot: Look at scope, look at mixed methods or adjust tools, timing...
- Embrace technology: Not only for data collection, but also to improve reflection and sense-making, which can be an ultimate opportunity in continuing building relationships.
- Consider equality: Whose voice is being heard? How can those voices that count be heard?
- Get creative, and be comfortable with ‘good enough’!

After highlighting the main recommendations of the note, Kaia Ambrose kicked-off a more in-depth conversation with CIB members on the topic. Ana Maria Vargas (Swedish ICLD) and Lance Joel (South African Local Government Association SALGA) joined in in a fireside chat, in which they shared some first-hand experiences. They concluded, among others, that ‘during COVID-19 times, (no) access to technology has become a decisive factor for how successful and participative MEL is.’

The exchange continued with contributions by Sara Hoeflich (UCLG Learning), Cemal Bas (UMT), Najat Zarrouk (UCLG Africa) and others, who all stressed the importance of trust and true partnerships with local partners to successfully monitor, evaluate and learn in international cooperation, ‘We risk that the attention for learning decreases as crisis management/daily issues take up most of our time - but (mutual) learning remains crucial.’

The final version of the guidance note [can be found here](#).

Learning

- CIB supported the roll-out of UCLG & PLATFORMA’s ‘SDGs and decentralized cooperation’ module at the Training of Trainers event with UCLG members in the ASPAC region. The event was held on 3 – 5 May. The secretariat contributed with a lecture on the importance of effective reporting, including some key considerations for reporting on SDG-linked DC programmes and sharing practical tips for reporting. CIB joined another module 4 event with UCLG ASPAC in November. In this event, the secretariat shared advice on how to design capacity building programmes, using logical frameworks or Theories of Change, while using SDGs as indicators.
- CIB’s publication on advancing gender equality within capacity building programmes at local level
In April 2021 we finalised the first CIB gender publication, which provides for stories, instruments and tools that will help our members to implement gender strategies in their work. The document includes practical guidelines, technical tools as well as twelve best practices/case studies, which demonstrate how local government development cooperation projects can



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concretely improve gender equality at both the local and regional level. The brochure [can be found here](#). To further disseminate the publication we organised a launch event, which gathered over 40 participants, on 23 June.

Strengthening the UCLG network

- On Tuesday 18 May 2021, we co-organized, together with UCLG, a session in the context of the UCLG Executive Bureau. This session was held under the auspices of the consultation mechanism “Policy Council Opportunities for All”. In this session we connected with over 100 participants around the world to discuss the fundamentals of the earlier mentioned UCLG-CIB policy paper on development cooperation & local governments.
- Throughout the year, we have been in contact with partner network DELOG on different occasions. CIB was present at their virtual networking coffee events to highlight the work of UCLG and our Working Group in particular, and also contributed to their Annual Meeting series by moderating the second part of their opening event. We will continue to explore collaboration throughout 2022.

Annex: Minutes of the CIB annual meeting (October 2021)

Pascal Lavoie, acting Senior Director FCM Programs, kicked off the meeting by welcoming everyone and expressing his appreciation to everyone present for taking the time to join, even in busy times. Politically seen, the current times are very interesting in Canada, recently having made important steps in the reconciliation process with the indigenous people that started in 2008, as well as having had elections in September, resulting in a minority government. The fact that FCM is a membership driven organization, makes it possible to work independently from the government. FCM is, however, quite representative for the Canadian population, representing 2000 of the 4000 municipalities, enabling them to well embody local governance at the national level. Although FCM exists since 1901, its efforts in development work started in 1987. Currently, FCM is rethinking its international programs, as the world is changing. Pascal experienced that the number of collaborations they are managing to maintain is lower than it used to be 15 years ago and wondered whether other CIB members might experience similar tendencies. The pandemic has not made the work easier either and has unfortunately hit the most vulnerable people disproportionately. Furthermore, it has impacted women specifically, e.g. keeping them out of public positions. It shows that such issues like this pandemic can really divide people again, however, has also shown to be able to unite people.

Peter Knip, Chair of the CIB Working Group and Director of VNG International, expressed his hopes for the next CIB meeting in Flanders to be in real life again, now that international travel is restarting again. We have had and are still living in difficult times with a lot of challenges, thus another hope Peter has, is that our work can help to find the right solutions to these difficulties in the world. The international orientation of local governments is never a given, which makes it worth to emphasize the importance of our joint mission in the world. Peter strengthened this claim using a statement of former Dutch minister of foreign affairs, Sigrid Kaag, from when she visited the VNG International office, stressing the importance of local democracies to act in a coalition to protect inclusive democracy.

Furthermore, Peter announced his upcoming retirement and thus withdrawal from the position as Chair of CIB. He celebrated his 65th birthday a few weeks ago and will finish his work as director of VNG International next year. Around the same time, he will step back from the position as Chair of the working group, thus there are still some remaining months to discuss it and find the best solution going forward. He is very glad that VNG is prepared to continue with both the secretariat of and chairing CIB, if this is what the network supports.

Although it is not a definite goodbye yet, Emilia Saiz, secretary general of UCLG, wanted to thank Peter for the work that he has put into the CIB and UCLG and expressed that she is confident that VNG International will continue to play a strong role in this movement. Continuing on Pascal's and Peter's words on these difficult times during the pandemic, Emilia added a very positive remark. Namely, that in the worst of times in the world, the best of times there are for the movement, as something like this pandemic can function as a motor and as a glue to keep on working together and find the right solutions. We do not fully know yet what has hit us and what the consequences of the pandemic are going to be. Therefore, it is important for the CIB to check what and where we need to innovate. We are the implementing arm of the national and international policies, but there is an additional part that we should commit to. That is the innovation around cooperation and development work. This development should be universal, there should not be a north, south, east or west and most of all: it should be

feminist. We need feminist leadership, a leadership that approaches the role of nature and consumption differently, a leadership that is for men and women.

During the tour the table, where every member organization had the chance to share how the organization has been doing and what is coming up, the effects of the pandemic were again a much discussed topic. Whereas for many the main change was having to move all the work to online platforms and meeting spaces, for others the pandemic has had quite an impact financially as well. E.g. some of the membership based organizations in this network have seen a decrease in payments from their members during the pandemic. Fortunately, such situations could be balanced out by the fact that travelling was impossible or difficult and thus less costs were made on that side. Another advantage of the situation is that in some situations accessibility of events increased, as online capacity is oftentimes easier to upscale than for physical events and it can save travelling time. Then again, this aspect has a downside for others, as the situation increased the digital divide too. All in all, we can conclude that the pandemic has caused disadvantages, but luckily also some advantages.

Highlights/requests/announcements from the Tour the Table:

- SALGA has an interesting year ahead, with an expected 70 percent of new councilors coming in after the upcoming elections. This places a huge obligation on the association, as SALGA will need to train those people on capacity building, which is going to be difficult in the coming months, but interesting.
- Deutscher Städtetag is joining the COP 26, for a session on multilateral collaborations. The session will take place on 2nd November, 2pm. It is a multilevel cooperation to implement the Paris Agreement and European Green Deal on local level. They are searching for a Speaker from the UN, who can respond to municipal expectancies. If you have any suggestions, please inform: sabine.drees@staedtetag.de.
- The Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT) have an announcement for EU member states: If you are interested in collaborations/twinning projects with Turkish municipalities, mainly on green development, the UMT can provide grants. The fund for each is €120.000. Please get in touch with cemal.bas@tbb.gov.tr to learn more about this.
- Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (VVSG) shared some interesting [materials on SDG's](#) during the meeting, as well as a [publication on SDG's in municipal international cooperation, with 40 'inspirational examples'](#).
- CEMR-PLATFORMA participated in the European Week of Regions and Cities. Together with the CoR, Eurocities, Regions4 and the OECD they joined forces again to accelerate SDG localization in Europe and beyond in times of COVID-19. Their session aimed to foster exchanges of European and international experiences on how the SDGs can provide a blueprint to ensure resilient recovery policies that leave no one and no place behind. A video of the session can be watched [here](#).
- UCLG/PLATFORMA recently released a publication on EU innovative development funding, which can be found [here](#).
- The Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), together with PLATFORMA, published a New Handbook on Decentralised Cooperation, which can be found [here](#).



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- An interesting publication on ‘How to improve social services at local level and ensure participation of minorities in the Western Balkans’, based on an event hosted by NALAS in July this year, can be found [here](#).
- UCLG Africa will launch an online learning initiative soon and will invite all CIB members to join it. The next annual meeting of UCLG Africa will be mid-December. It will focus on digitalization and smart cities. Those who can come in real life are more than welcome, but online is also fine.
- VNG International will enter into a new contract with the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs. It will focus on 10 countries in the world, on the topics of security, rule of law, migration, local revenue mobilization, taxation, access to capital market and integrated water management.

After the Tour the Table, Sara Hoeflich, director UCLG Learning, introduced the new SDG Module 4. This learning module is created in collaboration with PLATFORMA. It focuses on localizing the SDG’s through decentralized collaboration and aims to enable participants to create better partnerships. The first roll-outs of the learning module will take place in October and November. Furthermore, UCLG is preparing a SDG training soon. This will be done via an online platform for everyone to join, which aims to create engagement amongst everyone.

As a last element during the meeting, Jaideep Gupte, sr. fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and Saba Aslam, Research Assistant at IDS, shared the key findings from their research on decentralized cooperation in the 21st century. During the event the chat was very lively and well-used, below you will find a selection of raised questions that were asked during the annual meeting, including Jaideep and Saba’s answers [can be found here](#).