

Side Events

Localizing the SDGs to accelerate effective implementation of Agenda 2030

1 December 2016, 07:30-08:30

Objective:

- To provide a learning space on development effectiveness at the local level.*

The side event will showcase approaches and mechanisms that have been successful in maximizing the impact of development cooperation at the local level. It will look at what localizing a development agenda means and how it could be done in practice. The event will promote commitment to and partnership on localizing global agendas to ensure that “no one is left behind”.
- To link the Global Partnership to the Localizing SDGs process*

To effectively contribute to the implementation of the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The SDG 17 calls for governments and stakeholders to revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development, to maximise its impact. The event will highlight the critical points of the localizing process for a successful implementation and attainment of the 2030 Agenda.
- To contribute to the “Toolbox for localizing the SDGs” and the Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs*

The approaches featured and discussions at the session will feed into the Toolbox, an open initiative of the co-organizers (see introductory video <https://goo.gl/j5L9Fx>). The toolbox describes mechanisms to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level, advocacy arguments and key features of the enabling environment required for stakeholders to help deliver this agenda. A Roadmap on Localizing the SDGs will be presented, constituting one of the elements of the Toolbox.

Participants:

Moderator: Simona Marinescu (UNDP)

Panellists:

- **Ms. Nonceba Agnes Molwele** - City Councillor of Johannesburg, South Africa, and Vice-President of the Network for Locally Elected Women of Africa (REFELA),
- **Mr. Boubacar Bah** – Mayor of the 5th district of Bamako and President of the Association of Municipalities of Mali
- **Mr. Antonio Tujan** – IBON International/CPDE, Philippines
- **Ms. Diana Lopez Caramazana** - Head of Local Government Unit, UN Habitat
- **Ms. Leslie Norton** – Global Affairs Canada

- **Ms Simona Marinescu** - Chief Development Impact Group, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP

Key issues discussed:

The moderator (Simona Marinescu, UNDP) stressed that the achievement of the SDGs will need a strong involvement of local stakeholders to transform the global goals into local actions. The local level plays a critical role in giving choices to the people, creating ownership and building stronger localized partnerships. After adoption of Agenda 2030, UNDP, in partnership with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF), which gathers all the major networks of subnational governments, and UN Habitat created a toolbox to localize the SDGs with the objective of knowledge sharing and informing. Please refer to <http://localizingthesdgs.org/> for more information.

The representatives of local governments present in the side event (also) highlighted that a strong involvement of local governments and communities is crucial to support a multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance approach for the implementation of the SDGs. Access to water, education and health is all facilitated/concretized at local level. It is at local level that you can measure the impact; and local democracy is critical to ensure direct accountability to our citizens. However, the localization cannot be understood as a mere translation of the national agendas to the local level. One of the weaknesses of the MDGs was the issue of accountability. The aim of the toolbox, developed by the UNDP, UN Habitat and GTF, is to explain what localization means: strengthened national and local ownership, creating an institutional enabling environment to support local action, facilitating knowledge sharing and exchanging between local stakeholders. Peer-to-peer learning and direct exchange between local authorities and their organizations is instrumental to strengthen local capacities.

The representative of Global Affairs of Canada, Leslie Norton, reminded the participants that Canada is a global champion for local government. Global Affairs Canada works closely with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in helping to support capacity of local governments in partner countries. For partnerships to be effective, local actors, and women and youth in particular, need to be heard. The toolbox can help us in this challenge

The speaker of UN Habitat explained that the localization debate is a key political issue. Localizing is the way for us of leaving no one behind. We should reinforce the public sector to have the capacity to act and address the needs of the citizens. Mayors are elected by citizens and need to respond to citizens. They need support to own the SDGs and to do their job. The UN should bring national and local leaders together. No one can implement the SDGs alone.

Civil society representatives mentioned that the focus of NGOs is not only on the national level but also on subnational level. The subnational level provides a direct link with the people and services and CSOs cannot work at the local level without local authorities. CSO needs to go through an internal process of making development more effective. Local government and CSOs should work together to discuss the protection of environment, for example. In the Philippines, CSOs can participate in city councils and registration of CSOs is done at village level. Therefore the role of local governments is important to create an enabling environment for CSOs (registration instead of regulation). The IBON-programme offers training to LGUs to work with civil society.

During the open debate, the participants addressed the question of financing local development. The AFD, French development agency, mentioned that one of the challenges for banks is to learn

a new way of working to finance local development– to make sure that finance is locally received and used. Another representative from the business sector explained how their company is adapting their business strategy to the SDGs. The Syria Centre for Policy Research asked how we can apply the localization of the SDGs in conflict countries. Finally, a participant stressed that women play a critical role in realizing and implementing the SDGs, in service delivery, peace building and many other areas where women have been crucial actors.

Main conclusions and next steps:

As experience shows, the effective achievement of many of the SDGs will depend on local governments and local stakeholders. Local governments play a crucial role in linking key local stakeholders. They are part of the state and draw their unique legitimacy from their local democratic accountability and from working on the front line, close to citizens and communities. Local capacities should be recognized and harnessed to implement the global agenda at the local level. Women's political and social leadership is key for territorial development and the implementation of SDGs. The localization process is of particular importance to meet the principle of "leaving no one behind" and "to reinforce municipal finance" that both the Agenda 2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (paragraph 34) are built on. The toolbox could act as a lever to facilitate knowledge sharing and support the involvement of local governments and actors to put the SDGs at the centre for territorial and local planning, develop inclusive and sustainable local policies. Partners should encourage and use the toolbox to achieve all of the above.