

The Roles Of Local And Regional Governments In Achieving The Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstrak: This paper explores the critical roles of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) in the ‘localization’ of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that facilitates the smooth attainment of the global goals. The paper regard localization of the SDGs as a key and inclusive approach in enhancing the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the UN, Localization denotes the “process of defining; implementing; and monitoring strategies at the local level for the achievable global, national and sub-national sustainable goals and targets” (UNDP, 2014 a:3). This process would involve the utilization of distinct tools, mechanisms, strategies, platforms and innovations to ensure that the development agenda is effectively translated into firm action and concrete results at the local level to benefit communities. The Paper used documentary sources to gather information relevant to the thematic area. These included journal articles, books, Local and Regional Governments Reports. The researcher also examined best practices of Local and Regional Governments being the first level of public administration across the globe in the attainment of specific Sustainable Development Goals such as Quality education, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, climate action, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnerships for the locals. The Paper strongly recommends that localization of the SDGs should become essential part of national strategies of Governments in order to accelerate the implementation of the global goals.

Keywords: *local and regional governments; localization; sustainable development goals.*

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the need for an inclusive and localized approach to the SDGs. It states that ‘governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, sub-regional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others.’ Localization is described as ‘the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and sub-national sustainable development goals and targets.’ More specifically, it includes the ‘process of taking into account sub-national contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets, to determining the means of implementation and using indicators to measure and monitor progress’ [9].

Local and regional action is already in place to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Local and regional governments are already contributing to quality education through public service provision, creating a learning environment at local level to foster inclusion, human rights and peace values, and working to provide a long-life education cycle in cities. Cities and metropolitan areas are globally acknowledged as ‘engines of growth’ and thus the LRGs have a role to strengthen their local economy, invest in local economic development to foster technological innovation, support the green and circular economy, facilitate the sharing and social economy, promote local culture and products, as well as better integration of informal activities and urban-rural partnerships

In order to reduce inequalities, local and regional governments are bringing out the message of inclusion and solidarity to reduce inequalities and increase gender equality through different dimensions, namely through more inclusive urban designs, neighborhood regeneration, better access to basic services, improved mobility, gender integration, safer and greener public spaces. Within the context of combating climate change, Local and regional governments have been at the forefront of climate action and driving change in global negotiations for over two decades. In a bid to enhance the attainment of SDG goal 16, the fundamental contribution of local and regional governments lies in the daily task of ensuring access to quality public services for all, in building transparent and accountable local institutions. In addition, LRGs are making proactive measures to end violence and discriminatory policies, and to recover trust in public institutions.

The involvement of local and regional governments in the monitoring and reporting processes of the global agendas' progress are ongoing agendas is increasing, but it is still widely insufficient.. LRGs have key responsibilities in policy areas that do affect the achievement of all SDGs. Being at the first level of public administration. The LRGs associations, as leverages institutions, are crucial to achieve the SDGs. This is because LRGs involvement in these processes is essential to create synergies, join forces and ensure that local stakeholders are mobilized, so as to avoid that no one and no place is 'left behind.

GOOD PRACTICES of LOCAL and REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS in ACHIEVING the SDGs

At the global scale, more than 9,000 cities from 129 countries made a commitment to take measurable action through the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (High Level Political Forum, 2019). Hundreds of LRGs, cities and regions of all sizes pledged to pursue ambitious targets. Being at the first level of public administration, LRGs have a privileged position to foster lifelong learning and education as a means to promote civic engagement (e.g., the Barcelona Provincial Council), gender equality (e.g., North Lombok District) and improve coexistence and social cohesion (e.g., Vienna). LRGs are also key actors when it comes to support and incubate micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (e.g., Ulaanbaatar), and promote green and circular economy.

LRGs play a role in building cohesive environments for social and shared economies (e.g., Seoul) and recognizing informal activities (e.g., Solo). An increasing number of LRGs are developing ambitious and responsive policies to foster inclusive local planning and social integration of marginalized neighborhoods (e.g., Sekondi-Takoradi), tackle discriminatory practices (e.g., Mexico City), mainstream human rights in local policies (e.g., Pichincha), and foster inter-municipal cooperation for social cohesion (e.g., several Tunisian municipalities). LRGs are building accountable and transparent institutions through participatory budgeting or Open Government policies (e.g., Tshwane), to improve satisfaction and trust in public administration. LRGs are also building up their capacities to prevent urban violence (e.g., Madrid) and promote peace (e.g., Kauswagan) [6].

KEY CHALLENGES

There are several challenges that limit the involvement of LRGs in the attainment of the SDGs. Some of the main challenges are highlighted below with possible solutions in terms of responding to them [4]; [9].

In spite of these positive trends, the involvement of LRGs is still insufficient to accelerate the pace of implementation and meet the global commitments. LRGs and LGAs from all regions of the world continue to face many difficulties and obstacles, including unclear localizing strategies at the national level, the lack of financial and human resources and limited coordination across different levels of government are among the main factors that hinder the localization of the SDGs. There is also ineffective coordination among levels of government which is fundamental for policy coherence and to create the necessary financial

stream for sustainable projects in cities and territories. Embedding local plans within national development strategies are not adequately supported by adequate financing to incentivize alignment efforts and ensure the transition to the implementation stage.

With insufficient autonomy to act on development-related issues, the efforts of the LRGs as potential game-changers in co-creating local innovative solutions and mobilizing resources among their communities and partners are severely derailed. The LRGs are inadequately empowered to access responsible borrowing and diverse funds (e.g., climate or green funds). The need for a better coordination that will also contribute to raise and combine different investment sources, making public financing more productive, effective and inclusive is non-existent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a critical need to revise the strategies of mobilization and the involvement of LRGs in the Voluntary National Review process. They should be part of national mechanisms for coordination in order to create more traction and ownership of the Goals. LRG participation in reporting and follow-up mechanisms is essential to expand their involvement in the localization process and accelerate implementation in line with agreed deadlines. Significant efforts to embed the SDGs in their policies and local and regional development plans should be supported with adequate coordination and collaborative mechanisms, in order to strengthen synergies between national and local plans. They should be backed by incentives and a clear distribution of institutional responsibilities, ensuring effective ‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-society’ approaches.

Localization requires that LRGs are provided with resources and capacities commensurate with their responsibilities in the implementation process. Consistent with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda’s recommendations 2015, LRGs need to be empowered with adequate legal frameworks, financing resources and operative skills. Municipal funds, banks and innovative financing mechanisms can contribute to diversify local sources of financing and upscale sustainability related projects. City-to-city exchanges as well as decentralized cooperation and the support of international institutions are essential to promote and improve local practices of localization and promote mutual learning among cities and territories. GTF initiatives and multi-stakeholder alliances, such as the UN Local 2030 Network, are powerful mechanisms that can ensure continued support to the implementation of SDGs at the local and regional level.

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