CONCEPT NOTE

SDG Local Solutions

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TOPIC

Across the world, local governments are at the frontline of crisis response. Whether the challenges stem from conflict, displacement, economic instability, pandemics, or climate-related disasters, municipalities are expected to ensure the continuity of essential services and uphold social cohesion under extreme pressure. In these circumstances, **local government associations (LGAs)** play a crucial role as enablers and multipliers of local action. By coordinating, representing, and building the capacity of their member municipalities, LGAs strengthen the collective voice and institutional resilience of local governments.

In fragile or post-crisis environments, LGAs can serve as key institutional bridges between national governments, local authorities, and development partners. They advocate for the inclusion of local perspectives in national recovery strategies, facilitate resource mobilization, and promote peer-to-peer learning among municipalities facing similar challenges. This coordination enables faster, more coherent, and context-sensitive responses, while ensuring that local needs are integrated into broader frameworks for peacebuilding, reconstruction, and resilience.

As crises become increasingly complex and interconnected—combining humanitarian, development, and climate dimensions—LGAs can help translate global agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda into tangible local action. They can also provide technical assistance and standardized tools to support municipalities in areas such as emergency management, social protection, and inclusive service delivery.

However, despite their strategic position, many LGAs face limitations in political recognition, financial autonomy, and institutional capacity. Strengthening their legitimacy and resources is essential for ensuring that local governments are not passive recipients of aid, but active agents in crisis response and long-term recovery.

This webinar aims to explore the role that LGAs play in contexts of fragility and crisis, focusing on three regions with distinct trajectories: **Rwanda**, **Somalia**, and **South-East Europe.** These examples show how LGAs and their networks can foster local leadership, institutional continuity, and collaboration across levels of government—even under the most challenging conditions.

CASE STUDIES

Rwanda: building institutional resilience through collective voice

Following the devastating events of the 1994 genocide, Rwanda placed decentralization at the heart of its national recovery and reconciliation process. The creation of the **Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA)** provided local governments with a unified platform to coordinate their efforts, share experiences, and engage with national institutions. Over time, RALGA has evolved into a cornerstone of Rwanda's governance system, representing all districts and promoting professionalization, transparency, and citizen participation at the local level.

Through continuous training, peer learning, and policy advocacy, RALGA has enhanced the capacity of local authorities to manage development planning, service delivery, and crisis response. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, RALGA facilitated information sharing and coordinated local measures on health, sanitation, and social assistance, ensuring that the needs of vulnerable groups were addressed. The association's role as an interlocutor between municipalities and the central government has been critical in maintaining policy coherence and trust across levels of administration.

Rwanda's experience demonstrates that strong LGAs can help institutionalize local response. By embedding decentralization within a framework of shared learning and mutual accountability, RALGA contributes not only to post-crisis recovery but also to long-term stability and inclusive governance.

Somalia: fostering local legitimacy in a fragile state

Somalia's decades-long conflict and institutional fragility have created a context in which local governance often emerges as the most legitimate form of public authority. In recent years, the rebuilding of municipal structures—supported by international partners like UNDP, UN-Habitat — has underscored the need for a collective mechanism to represent local voices and harmonize municipal practices across regions. Efforts to strengthen a national **association of local authorities** are part of this broader state-building process, aiming to reinforce dialogue between local governments, federal institutions, and the international community.

The municipal association in Somalia, under development, seeks to play an important role in promoting stabilization and local development. In regions affected by displacement and climate shocks such as droughts and floods, this association could help coordinate humanitarian assistance and promote local solutions for resource management and basic service provision.

South-Eastern Europe: regional collaboration for crisis response

In South-Eastern Europe, local governments have faced a range of crises—such as economic recessions, migration, refugee crises, and natural disasters. The **Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)** has become a leading regional platform for coordination, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. Representing over 9,000 local authorities across 14 countries, NALAS supports its members in addressing both acute emergencies and long-term development challenges.

During the 2008 global financial crisis, NALAS facilitated peer learning on fiscal management and service efficiency, helping local governments maintain essential services despite budget constraints. More recently, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the humanitarian crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine, NALAS and its member associations have coordinated responses to refugee reception, energy insecurity, and inflation impacts on local service provision.

NALAS's regional scope allows for the rapid dissemination of tools and good practices, including digital platforms for crisis management and guidance on social inclusion and gender equality. Its work demonstrates the value of cross-border cooperation among LGAs, showing how networks can pool expertise, advocate collectively at the European level, and strengthen the overall resilience of local governance systems.

SPEAKERS

Ladislas Ngendahimana

Ladislas Ngendahimana is the former Secretary General of the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities. Currently, he is engaged with UN-HABITAT in Somalia as a Local Governance Expert, leading and facilitating the establishment of the Somalia Local Government Association. He is an expert in local governance and decentralization, with extensive experience in policy design, implementation, analysis, monitoring, and evaluation. Mr. Ngendahimana holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the Maastricht School of Management, a Bachelor's degree in Administrative Sciences, and a Degree in Philosophy.

Boran Ivanovski

Boran Ivanoski joined NALAS in September 2013 as Project Officer, bringing expertise in public administration reform, inter-municipal cooperation, regional development, human resource management, and capacity building for local governments in SEE. With over 15 years of experience in training needs assessment, curricula development, training delivery, and evaluation for national and local authorities, he has worked with UNDP, CARE International, International Rescue Committee, and UNICEF. At NALAS, he focuses on territorial attractiveness, solid waste and water management, resilience, disaster risk management, and oversees the social inclusion, migration, and gender portfolio. He holds a master's in human resources management from the University of Skopje.

MODERATOR

Eric Rosand

He has over 20 years of experience working with governments, organizations, civil society, academics, and the private sector on international counterterrorism and P/CVE issues. He was a senior official at the US State Department for more than six years, serving as international policy director for the White House CVE Summit, and led efforts to develop the Global Counterterrorism Forum, its institutions, and the Strong Cities Network. He was a non-resident Senior Fellow at Brookings, co-director of the Global Center on Cooperative Security, and a lawyer at the U.S. State Department and U.N. Mission. His writings on cities and local actors in P/CVE have appeared in numerous publications. He holds a BA from Haverford College, a JD from Columbia, and an LLM (Hons) from Cambridge.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How can local government associations strengthen local capacities for crisis prevention, response, and recovery?
- What mechanisms can ensure that LGAs are systematically included in national and international crisis coordination frameworks?
- How can LGAs balance advocacy and service delivery roles in fragile or conflict-affected settings?
- What lessons can be drawn from Rwanda, Somalia, and South-Eastern Europe regarding institutionalization and sustainability of LGAs?
- What types of partnerships and financing mechanisms are needed to reinforce LGAs' long-term resilience functions?

AGENDA

5 min	Introduction by Diana Lopez Caramazana, Advisor, cities and local governments, UNDP.
10 min	Moderator's introduction to the session.
15 min	First experience, followed by a question from the second experience.
15 min	Second experience, followed by a question from first experience
12 min	Questions and answers from the audience.
3 min	Closing and conclusions by the moderator.

Organized by UNDP in the framework of its work with cities and local governments, this series of webinars generate a conversation between cities to highlight local solutions to implement Agenda 2030. The lessons learnt will be shared globally through UNDP's SDG Local Action networks, webpage https://sdglocalaction.org/ and YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/@sdglocalaction8192