



WHERE CHANGE HAPPENS

LOCAL GOVERNANCE
TO TACKLE MULTIDIMENSIONAL
POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

POSITION PAPER



OXFAM

arco

ACTION RESEARCH
FOR CO-DEVELOPMENT



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB - Asian Development Bank
AfDB - African Development Bank
AU - African Union
CSOs - Civil Society Organizations
EC - European Commission
EU - European Union
FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization
ICT - Information and Communication
Technology
IFAD - International Fund for Agricultural
Development
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-
operation and Development
LA - Local Authority
LED - Local Economic Development
PPP - Public-Private Partnership

PPPP - Public Private People Partnership
MDGs - Millennium Development Goals
M&E - Monitoring & Evaluation
MSMBs - Micro, Small and Medium
Businesses
NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations
SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals
SHD - Sustainable Human Development
SMEs - Small and Medium Enterprises
STEHD - Sustainable Territorial Evolution for
Human Development framework
UN - United Nations
UNASUR - Unión de Naciones Suramericanas
UNDP - United Nations Development
Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** has now been set and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ agreed by the United Nations represent the framework for the vast majority of development initiatives and actions that will be implemented over the next 15 years. In contrast to the Millennium Development Goals that preceded them, the SDGs apply not only to developing and emerging countries, but to each and every country in the world. The United Nations and several international organizations have worked hard to create space for broad international consultations on both the objectives themselves and the implementation of the Agenda.² Nonetheless, broad discussion continues to characterise the operational strategies for making the new Agenda effective in different arenas of action. The following key questions are central to current debates: How can the coherence of growth and development strategies be ensured in order to achieve the SDGs? At what level – global, national, sub-national or local – should strategic plans and partnerships take place? How can the 2030 Agenda be implemented and monitored across different and distinct contexts?

The lesson learned from the MDGs and SDGs are twofold. First, these global agendas have fostered renewed and continuous international consensus and effort to tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality. Second, the effectiveness of these agendas is not exclusively linked to “aid” or “international cooperation” effectiveness as defined by the Paris Principles (OECD, 2005, 2008 and 2011). Instead, **attention needs to focus on the effectiveness of development strategies at all levels in all countries**. Indeed, criticism of the overall performance of the MDGs highlights the unequal distribution of achievements amongst and within countries and social groups. Critics also point to the weak commitment and poor attention to policy coherence by developed and developing countries alike (Easterly, 2006; Fukuda-Parr, 2012, 2014; Burchi and Rippin, 2015). For instance, the quality of growth matters (UNDP, 1996), and different forms of unsustainable growth – including jobless, ruthless, voiceless, rootless, futureless (Fukuda-Parr, 2007) and peace-less growth (Biggeri and Mauro, 2010) – can seriously undermine Sustainable Human Development (SHD) processes. Finally, **the effectiveness of actions and strategies to tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality** has been recognised as not simply a matter of resources. Rather, **it is shaped by governance processes and mechanisms**, defined as: ‘the rules, processes, and behaviour by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in society’ (EC, 2003, p. 3).

In this regard, it is clear today that development effectiveness is determined both at the international and national levels. In terms of the former, global campaigns and advocacy against poverty and inequalities, global public goods and collective action, the international alignment of objectives and policy coherence are central. In terms of the latter, national recognition and protection of human rights, macro-economic policies, fiscal regulation, national cohesion and access to basic social services play key roles. What is often overlooked and lost within contemporary debates, however, is the **role of agents in ‘local spaces’ and territories** in tackling multidimensional forms of poverty and inequality.

It is important to clarify that reference is made here to local space as ‘a concept of intermediate scale, above household and community scale and below regional and national scale’ (Helling et al., 2005, p. 11). Local space is conceived as a distinctive eco-system with a complex array of history, culture, geography, resources, knowledge and institutions (Storper, 1997; Biggeri and

¹ For the full description of the 17 SDGs and their corresponding targets, please refer to sustainabledevelopment.un.org.

² For further information on the global consultation and dialogues on the implementation of the post-2015 Development Agenda, please refer to www.worldwewant2015.org.

Ferrannini, 2014).³ Once poverty and inequality are approached from a multifaceted and multidimensional perspective, it becomes natural to look beyond their characterisation as largely global or national phenomena by focusing also on their local features and distinctiveness in the primary context where people live and interact.

In a multilevel perspective, governance mechanisms at the local level matter, because this is where **interactions among authorities, institutions and citizens – and thus the society as a whole – is most immediate and strongest⁴, as well as where inequalities, forms of exclusions, power imbalances and vulnerabilities are most immediately experienced by people.**

The **general objective of this paper** is to describe the position of Oxfam and ARCO on how local governance processes play a crucial role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that **a common understanding and framework for local governance is urgently required to build more consistent and effective development strategies and initiatives.**

In particular, we aim to emphasise the importance of enabling local actors to lead and influence policy action and practices within a system of multilevel relations, in order to tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality. To achieve this end, we embrace the Sustainable Human Development approach in order to analyse local governance and policy issues in relation to the SDGs and the localization of these goals. In this respect, this paper contributes to Oxfam's Theory of Change – based on the combination of active citizens and effective states (Green, 2012) – by integrating in both conceptual and operational terms the synergies between local action and national policies leading to social change for human “flourishing”.

This paper is structured as follows.

Following this introduction, the second chapter discusses the extent to which local governance issues are gaining attention within the development debate and within strategic and operational initiatives pursued by the main international organizations. The third chapter focuses on the importance of a consistent and coherent development perspective supported by a solid theoretical basis. This involves the integration of notions of *capabilities* and *human rights* within a perspective of Sustainable Human Development at the local level. The fourth chapter presents our theory of change⁵, which connects local governance to the elimination of multidimensional forms of poverty and inequality, and draws inspiration from – and expands upon – Oxfam's existing Theory of Change by emphasising interactions between active citizens and effective authorities within local societies. Here, relevant examples for different illustrative policy fields are also provided. Such a Theory of Change introduces substantial elements of complexity in terms of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), which are discussed in the fifth chapter of this paper and lead to the proposal for an expanded arena of M&E for local governance towards Sustainable Human Development. The final chapter concludes by summarizing the main arguments of the Position Paper and identifies future prospects for analysis and policy action.

³ According to MacKinnon et al. (2009, p. 140), ‘territorial entities are constructed and reproduced through a range of socio-spatial relations, connections, practices, and discourses, rather than as administrative or economic units’.

⁴ For instance, the Final Declaration of the third World Forum on Local Economic Development (13th – 16th October 2015, Turin – Italy) states that ‘Local and regional governments (LRGs) can play a crucial catalytic role as initiators and drivers of effective LED processes, building ownership and consensus on the development potential of the territory, promoting wide partnership arrangements and facilitating coordinated action and synergies.’ (p. 2).

⁵ A Theory of Change is defined as ‘a description of how an intervention is supposed to deliver the desired results. It describes the causal logic of how and why a particular project, program, or policy will reach its intended outcomes. [...] Theories of change depict a sequence of events leading to outcomes; they explore the conditions and assumptions needed for the change to take place, make explicit the causal logic behind the program, and map the program interventions along logical causal pathways’ (Gertler et al., 2011, p. 22).

2. LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

Governance is a key concept in the development debate.⁶

Widening the **focus from “government” processes⁷ to “governance” processes⁸** is due to recognition that the continuous interaction among authorities, institutions and citizens shapes modern societies. In addition, the relevance of focusing on the ways societies engage in collective action (Ostrom, 1990) – which is not exclusively led by public authorities – is valid for governance and action at the local level as well as at the national level.

Both discussions within the development debate and the **empirical evidence** from various countries and within the field of international cooperation **stress the importance of looking at social change and economic development from a territorial perspective**. For instance, the experience of a range of countries contrasts sharply with the notion that globalization processes have “flattened” the world (Friedman, 2005), as discussed in debates on the concentration of economic activity and wealth (McCann, 2008; Rodríguez-Pose and Crescenzi, 2008), not to mention politics and power (Harvey, 2005).

In this respect, relevant facts and figures on the heterogeneity of territorial development paths for a diverse set of 13 purposefully selected countries can be found in the Appendix. These countries are drawn from different regions of the world and include emerging and developing countries as well as advanced economies. In particular, demographic, employment, income and poverty indicators show clear sub-national disparities that cannot be overlooked in designing and implementing development initiatives. In practice, key issues such as unemployment and poverty do not affect heterogeneous sub-national areas of countries in the same way, and thus cannot be effectively tackled by applying place-neutral forms of intervention. For instance, fighting poverty in Elias Piña Province in the Dominican Republic requires quite different strategies compared to La Vega Province, as does tackling unemployment in Nagaland State in India compared to Punjab State. Therefore, a **strong call for both place-based and people-centred policies** is required for regional development interventions (Barca et al., 2012).

Following on from this discussion, it is possible to assess how **several key actors in international development are increasingly devoting attention – and resources – to local governance processes**, as shown in Table 1.

⁶ The debate has focused on the quality of governance for aid allocation (i.e. conditionality) and development effectiveness (among other things) with particular reference to ‘good’ or ‘democratic’ governance (see for example World Bank, 1992; Collier and Dollar, 2001; Cogneau and Naudet, 2007).

⁷ That is, government related to direct policies by public governing authorities.

⁸ That is, governance related to the articulation of interests, behaviours, resources and power among a wider group of public, private and social stakeholders for the management of economic and social resources, as defined in the Introduction.

Table 1. Trends in the focus on local governance by selected international actors

ORGANIZATION / CATEGORY	FOCUS ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE
United Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel for Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development states in its report that 'Local authorities form a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens and will have a critical role in a new global partnership'. • An extensive debate on "Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda" has been promoted, along with the organisation of the three editions of World Forum on Local Economic Development. • Many global, national and sub-national Human Development Reports published by UNDP have increasingly devoted attention to local governance as well as the territorial specificity of human development processes (see the Appendix in Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014). • The FAO and IFAD have increasingly released reports and implemented projects focusing on good governance principles, which are applied to rural communities, and natural resources management within territories, as well as the right to adequate food.
World Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The World Development Report 2009 ("Reshaping Economic Geography") focuses on local development processes, and discusses institutions, infrastructure, and incentives to tackle spatial and regional disparities within countries.
OECD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It promotes integrated regional policies based on the locational specificity of each region (OECD 2009a and 2009b). • It periodically releases Territorial Reviews, along with the innovative OECD Regional Well-being dataset, based on nine topics central to the quality of our lives.
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cohesion Policy is the main investment pillar of the EU budget, with a total of €351.8 billion for the period 2014-2020 dedicated to the reduction of economic, social and territorial disparities within the EU via local authorities and governance processes. • The European Consensus on Development and several official <i>Conclusions</i>, <i>Resolutions</i> and <i>Opinions</i> recognise 'the importance of local authorities in achieving development objectives and proposes a more strategic engagement for their empowerment' (EC, 2013, p. 2) not only in terms of service delivery but also as catalysts for change, conflict prevention, decentralization and confidence-building in the development process. • Increasing attention has been devoted on the role of civil society organisations in emerging countries, often supported by grants for Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities (CSO/LA), in order to strengthen the local governance of development processes.
African Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AU recognises that the effective implementation of development policies and programmes requires good local governance in order to contribute to the improvement of the continent and the well-being of its citizens. • The All Africa Ministerial Conference on Decentralisation and Local Development (AMCOD) takes place from 2000. • The approval of the AU Charter on Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development in 2014, as well as the subsequent establishment of the High Council of Local Authorities, clearly link the AU's objectives of good governance, popular participation, the rule of law and human rights with action at the local level (including, for example, the improvement of popular access to public services such as health and education).
ASEAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments supporting local community participation and decentralisation have been raised within ASEAN's framework action plan on rural development and poverty eradication (2004-2010). • A regional workshop was organized in 2012 by DELGOSEA and UCLG with ASEAN and the UE stressing the need to expand collaboration with local authorities, local government associations and civil society, within a multi-stakeholder approach.
UNASUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its long list of specific goals, which refer to several areas of intervention, requires strong attention with respect to local governance issues (such as social and human development with equity and inclusion, access to quality education, protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, disaster prevention, access to health services, attention to SMEs and cooperative companies, and participation of citizens).

ORGANIZATION / CATEGORY	FOCUS ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE
African Development Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new geocoding tool “MapAfrica” consists of an interactive platform that maps the geographic locations of AfDB’s investments in Africa. It displays the local dimensions of most projects and investments and relates them to a specific territory of intervention.
Asian Development Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Governance Thematic Group initiated a partnership with Decentralization and Local Governance (DeLoG) to provide a platform for exchanging experiences and learning about the implementation of successful decentralization reforms. It has been fostering academic debate on fiscal systems and fiscal policies to identify effective ways to strengthen the financing capacity of local authorities while preserving financial stability at both the national and local levels. It gathered a critical mass of experience in community-driven development initiatives from different countries and contexts, which represent a new approach toward poverty reduction, social development, and good governance at the local level (ADB, 2006).
Inter-American Development Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The goals of poverty and inequality reduction, private sector development, and addressing climate change, renewable energy and sustainable development have clear strategic and operational importance at the sub-national level, as shown by over 1,000 projects dealing with local development issues. One area of intervention is dedicated to “Urban Development” with particularly reference to the coverage and quality of infrastructure and services, which involves governance issues. In this regard, strong attention is placed on the improvement of local institutions’ governance capacity for urban planning and citizen service responsibilities.
Corporación Andina de Fomento	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It places increasing emphasis on the potential of local governance and “soft” institutions to promote sustainable development through integrated policies for each territory.
Trans-national organizations of local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the United Regions Organization (ORU Fogar) and Decentralization and Local Governance (DeLoG) are acquiring a central role within global governance and policy debates. This is because of their dedicated efforts to: increase the role, influence and voice of local and regional authorities; encourage national institutions to incorporate local and regional issues in their development agenda by recognizing cultural and lifestyle diversity; and provide support for democratic, effective, and innovative local authorities close to ordinary citizens.
Philanthropic foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bill&Melinda Gates Foundation is pushing for a renewed design of health systems able to meet the effective needs of the population, including action on local provision at community level. The Rockefeller Foundation focuses on resilience through action for <i>secure livelihoods</i>, the <i>transformation of cities</i>, and the <i>revaluing ecosystems</i>, which are shaped by local people, communities and institutions (i.e. by local governance processes).
International NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevance of the local dimension and local actions in communities and territories to ensure rights and access to services is increasingly recognised within the global advocacy campaigns conducted by Oxfam International (e.g. on inequality), Action Aid (e.g. on food and land rights) and World Vision (e.g. on child health). At least five of the six goals of Oxfam’s Strategic Plan for 2013–2019 are relevant for local human development: 1) <i>The right to be heard</i>, 2) <i>Advancing gender justice</i>, 3) <i>Saving lives, now and in the future</i>, 4) <i>Sustainable food</i>, and 5) <i>Fair sharing of natural resources</i> (a crucially embed action at the local level, i.e. the primary context where people live and interact).

Note: These actors have been selected according to their relevance within contemporary development debates; the list of actors is not exhaustive. Relevant information and data are taken from the corresponding organizations’ website and publications.

Source: Authors

Having recognised the increasing relevance of local governance, it is important to emphasise the following. **Concern for the local level does not imply – in any way – a lessening the fundamental role of national governance.** Nor does it involve conceiving territories or local communities as self-sufficient or isolated from the national and international system. Instead, **we stress the importance of building on complementarities across mechanisms at different levels of governance**, and recognise that territorial development processes depend on policies, norms and coordination rules at both national and international levels. In other words, the role of national-level actors is not downgraded, especially when it comes to ensuring human rights and equity as well as a broadly favourable environment for the flourishing of people. This happens, for instance, through sound macroeconomic policies and effective decentralization, coherent institutional and regulative frameworks and the harmonized provision (in terms of quality and accessibility) of basic social services (among other things).

Four broad arguments call for renewed attention to local governance in complementarity with national processes. First, the existence of wide **spaces of influence and action at local level** will help enable governments and other development actors (such as the private sector and civil society organizations) to be more effective in tackling poverty and inequality. Second, there are several **policy areas at local level** that have been shown to be directly relevant for citizens and their well-being, where central governments may have only limited (and indirect) impacts on people's life (Mehrotra, 2016 forthcoming). Third, it is clear the variation in the **impact of national policies** (e.g. macroeconomic policies) across territories due to their different endowments and features. Forth, there is a strong need for **tailored implementation of development strategies** according to local contexts and for institutional coherence, which depends on synergies amongst governance levels.

For instance, the objective of “building resilience” (one of the most central topics in the development debate today) requires a complementary perspective based on the role of local and territorial communities. It extends the ecological conceptualisation of resilience (Holling, 1973) to socio-ecological systems (Folke, 2006; Walker et al., 2004), helping us to recognise the evolving interaction between human kind and their environment in each setting as central concerns for tackling multidimensional vulnerabilities and economic, social and environmental shocks. Resilience is therefore increasingly conceived in terms of local or regional development systems, and is regarded as the main driver of their evolution.

Moreover, the expansion of human well-being in terms of capabilities and rights is inexorably linked to multilevel governance mechanisms, which reach beyond the domain of the nation-state. It includes **vertical articulation** (along local, national and international lines) and **horizontal articulation** (with reference to public authorities, entrepreneurs, associations and NGOs, etc.) with respect to the aim of fostering sustainable development and social empowerment in their collective best interests.

Therefore, the traditional dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up arguments is nowadays questioned by the continuous and inexorable interplay of resources, capacities, systemic positions and knowledge endowments at each level (Crescenzi and Rodríguez-Pose, 2011; Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014). Wider spaces of reconciliation are available for policy-makers and stakeholders between i) the design of national plans and sectorial priorities to be contextualized within local systems; and ii) deliberative processes at the territorial level, building on embedded local knowledge, values and sense of community, which feedback into national policies. As argued by Barca et al. (2012, p. 147), ‘place-based strategies recognize the need for intervention based on partnerships between different levels of governance, both as a means of institution building and also of identifying and building on local knowledge.’

Finally, such arguments apply not only to a place-based territorial perspective for Sustainable Human Development, but to the Sustainable Development Goals themselves.

3. CAPABILITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN A SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Positioning local governance at centre stage with regard to the development effectiveness of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda requires going beyond the analysis of its empirical evidence (see Facts&Figures in Appendix) and its widespread operationalization amongst development actors (see Table 1). It also needs to be embedded in a **solid and coherent theoretical approach to international development**. In this regard, we take the perspective of Sustainable Human Development as our starting point, which clearly underlies many UN and UNDP programs. It also constitutes one of the guiding conceptual frameworks behind the Sustainable Development Goals and has important complementarities with the human rights based approach.

Human development recognises that people's real freedoms in daily life are central to the development process (UNDP, 1990; Sen, 1999). Indeed, human development, as a people-centred perspective derived from an agency-based and opportunity-oriented theory (i.e. Amartya Sen's capability approach) contributes to the multidimensional conceptualization of well-being and development. According to Sen (2009, p. 17), 'the capability approach proposes a change – a serious departure – from concentrating on the means of living to the actual opportunities of living in itself', that is, human flourishing in terms of *functionings* and *capabilities*. Human development is therefore conceived as a process of expanding capabilities – the abilities and opportunities of people to lead the kind of life they have reason to value (Sen, 1999 and 2009). This notion of development is based on the 'Aristotelian/ Marxian conception of the human being as a social and political being, who finds fulfilment in relations with others' (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 85).

As stated by Alkire and Deneulin (2009), key pillars of a human development perspective can be found in the principles of i) *equity*, in terms of political, economic, social and cultural opportunities, as well as distribution and cohesion, which relate to social justice; ii) *efficiency*, concerning the optimal use of human, material, environmental and institutional resources to expand capabilities for individuals and communities; iii) *participation and empowerment*, regarding individual and collective capability to be active agents of the own future; and iv) *sustainability*, concerning the maximization of intergenerational utility in terms of environmental, social and economic opportunities in view of ethical rules and moral obligations (Costantini and Monni, 2005). In this paper, the notion of sustainability is conceived as a broad concept within a progressive view of development that stresses the importance of long-term thinking not just in environmental terms but also in terms of economic and social equity. In addition, human development is conceived as a participatory and dynamic process. Thus the concept of *agency* plays a central role, particularly when connected to local governance processes that are discussed presently. Put simply, agency can be defined as 'a person's ability to pursue and realize [the] goals she has reason to value' (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009, p. 22), in particular those connected with 'the capacity to affect the processes at work in people's own territory or as general rules in the national and international arena, through people's transformative participation' (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014, p. 30). Thus, empowerment is conceived as the improvement of agency (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007), in both individual and collective terms. Such individual and collective capacity is also related to the recognition that sustainable development processes are underpinned by public scrutiny and deliberation, where

open discussion, debate, criticism and dissent are the fundamental political and civil rights that can sustain informed choices (Sen, 1999) in order to challenge social injustice, disparities and instability (Anand and Sen, 2000; Harvey, 2000; Pike et al., 2007; Pelenc et al., 2015).

As anticipated, the capability approach, as well as the Sustainable Human Development perspective, is closely related to the **human-rights based approach**, because of their common fundamental concern with the freedom and dignity of all individuals (Sen, 2005; Griffin, 2008; Nussbaum, 2011), as well as social justice (Nussbaum, 2000; Fukuda Parr, 2011). Notice that both approaches are concerned with the quality of human life in multidimensional terms, emphasising priority for dealing with inequality, poverty, basic needs, participation and accountability. This is in stark contrast to mainstream utilitarian and reductionist policies for economic growth (Fukuda Parr, 2011). In this respect, we fully embrace the call for an alliance between the capability approach and the human-rights based approach (Sen, 2005; Balakrishnan et al., 2009; Elson, 2010; Nussbaum, 2011; Vizard et al., 2011; Stoecklin and Bonvin, 2014; Biggeri and Karkara, 2014; Biggeri, 2015): it requires integrating the focus on the concept of “development” entrenched in the analytical framework of the capability approach with the ethical claim of the human-rights approach via its legal and institutional framework which places positive obligations on the state to guarantee certain freedoms. In short, the direct link between these two theoretical approaches is succinctly summarised by Sakiko Fukuda Parr (2011, p. 75): ‘human rights, as entitlements a person has by virtue of being human, could be thought of as claims to essential capabilities’.⁹

However, the capability approach (like the human rights-approach) is not simply an opportunity-based framework; it is also an agency-oriented approach, which takes into account the values and aspirations of people and their communities in a bottom-up manner and allows for flexibility in terms of exercising different personal capacities (talent, skills and personal characteristics) in different cultural and societal contexts (Biggeri et al., 2011). People with different capabilities may differ in their capacity to enjoy similar rights. In other words, according to Stoecklin and Bonvin (2014, p. 66), ‘the gap between formal liberties (rights) and real freedoms (capabilities) can be more precisely highlighted and explained by emphasizing the individual and social conversion factors that allow transforming rights into capabilities’. In addition, it is crucial to recognise that, although human rights are – or should be – legally institutionalised (i.e. *de jure* at the national and international level), they are then primarily exercised in *de facto* terms within the most immediate social context of each person’s life, i.e. her local community. It follows that if we embrace a SHD perspective (with strong linkages with the human-rights approach) as our development framework, a central place for local governance to foster the expansion of people’s entitlements and opportunities to lead the kind of life they have reason to value will emerge.

Our starting point is based on the assumptions that: (1) **individuals are social creatures** (Sen, 2000); and (2) their **well-being is influenced by the territorial society**¹⁰ they are embedded in, i.e. by the local combination of resources, institutions and capacities that create the enabling and disabling factors that shape their capabilities in individual and collective terms. This perspective helps overcome the criticism of ethical individualism that suggests that the capability approach focuses exclusively on the quality of individuals’ lives (Robeyns, 2005; Deneulin, 2008). Our approach does this by recognising that ‘the use and exercise of human capabilities usually takes place in collective settings’ (Ibrahim, 2006, p. 397), and thus social structures shape preferences, entitlements and political power, and consequently agency and choices (Sen, 1993; Stewart, 2005 and 2013; Deneulin, 2006; Comim et al., 2008).

⁹ As raised by Stoecklin and Bonvin (2014, p. 65), whereas the subject has rights, the actor is developing capabilities. Therefore, it would be important to distinguish between a “subject of rights” and a “social actor”, in order to embrace the complexity of interactions between individual competences and social opportunities.

¹⁰ Recall that the territorial context is conceived as an economic, social, political, ecological and cultural construct that evolves over time (Storper, 1997; Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Taylor and Flint, 2000).

In particular, the following three rationales identified by Biggeri and Ferrannini (2014) underlie the perspective of Sustainable Human Development at the local level:

1) ***Human development is implicitly a place-based process.***

The capabilities people have reason to value are place-dependent, and are influenced by a collective framework (Deneulin, 2008) of traditions, social norms and cultural traits – among other things – that are often substantially different within countries. Moreover, the kind of local development pursued by people is shaped by principles and values that reflect formal and informal institutional architecture as well as power relations and imbalances, which are socially and politically determined within localities (Pike et al. 2007; Amin, 1999; Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014).

2) ***Participation and agency freedom is typically experienced at the local level.***

Sen (2002, p. 79) clearly states that individuals ‘cannot fully flourish without participating in political and social affairs, and without being effectively involved in joint decision-making’. It is evident that the arena for action and influence where public discussion and critical scrutiny take place is primarily the territorial society, where stronger commitment and opportunities to influence policy decisions exist (Crocker, 2007; Clark et al., 2016 forthcoming). Indeed, according to Mehrotra (2008, p. 389), the complex functioning of participation needs to be contextualised not at an individual level but at the community level (in terms of collective voice and collective action) to have operational use.

3) ***The process of capability and agency expansion as well as individuals themselves are territorially embedded.***

In this perspective the “working” performances expressed by a territorial system (i.e. the characteristics and functionings) where individuals live and interact provide key resources and shape conversion factors that enable economic agents to achieve their objectives and individual people to flourish (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014, p. 20). Indeed, the changing properties of the immediate settings in which people live and in which their personal and societal development interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; IFDA, 1980) shape both the capability space and the potential to exercise human rights. For instance, the decentralization of service delivery is regarded as a prerequisite for capability expansion (Osmani, 2001), especially if decentralization is effective,¹¹ opens up real space for local action, and is accompanied by collective empowerment.

To summarise, on the one hand, the local socio-institutional context, characterised by institutional structure, power struggles, territorial inputs and conversion factors, shapes the well-being of people (Amin, 1999). On the other hand, spaces of participation and individual and collective agency freedom have the potential to boost and transform local society – for instance through the protection of local public goods or the renewal of social norms.

In other words, the processes that expand or restrict the real freedoms and rights that people enjoy and exercise are shaped by local governance and in turn affect the evolutionary trajectories of development processes.

In this regard, Figure 1 depicts the **Sustainable Territorial Evolution for Human Development (STEHD) framework** developed by Biggeri and Ferrannini (2014). The objective of this framework is to ‘disentangle the combination of different elements (stakeholders and agents, resources, barriers, institutions, capacities, participation spaces and political willingness) that shape the evolutionary processes of, and territorial patterns for, SHD’ (p. 40). This framework builds on Robeyns’ (2005) stylised non-dynamic representation of a person’s capability set, which depicts the transformation of bundle of goods and services (the means to achieve) that each person is entitled to into capabilities (according to individual, social and environmental conversion

¹¹ According to Boex and Yilmaz (2010, p. 2), ‘decentralization should be considered unsuccessful unless local officials translate their enhanced mandate and greater financial resources into more efficient, responsive, and accountable public services’.

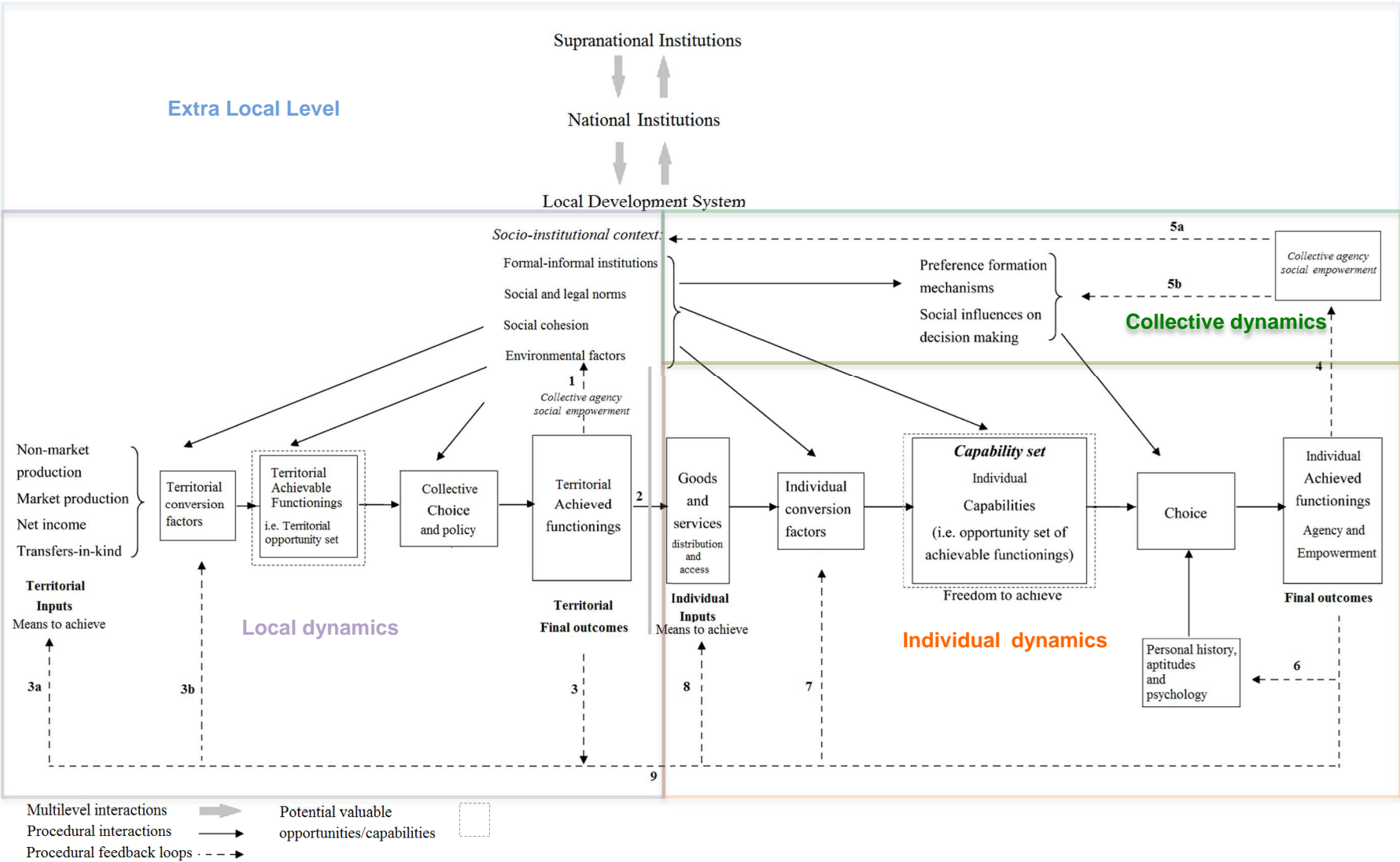
factors) and finally outcomes or achieved functionings (which reflect personal preferences that are subject to social influences).

Figure 1 combines this representation of well-being and agency at the individual level (lower right-hand side) with a collective dimension (upper right-hand side) as well as with the territorial dynamics of SHD (on the left-hand side) and multilevel governance relations (vertically sketched at the top of the figure). In addition, non-linear feedback loops and interactions feature within and between each analytical category (the arrows numbered 1–9) as drivers of the structural transformation of social, economic, ecological and institutional systems of local societies. It is therefore clear that processes of local governance involving institutional structure, power struggles, and the conversion of territorial inputs into development opportunities at the local level, shape the well-being of people, whose individual and collective agency freedom can themselves drive the transformation of the local society (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014).

The proposed framework can therefore explain social and economic change processes, pointing out how the increase or reduction of multidimensional poverty and inequality is linked to territorial development and local governance. The central issue – both in analytical and operational terms – is the extent to which a territorial society combines stakeholders, resources, capacities, institutions, participation spaces and political willingness into effective governance mechanisms directed toward SHD and the implementation of the SDGs.

To conclude, in our framework the main processes directly enabling or disabling Sustainable Human Development (in terms of the expansion of human capabilities and rights) relate to the quality and role of local governance within distinct territories in shaping social change. This perspective requires the construction of a new Theory of Change to depict the local processes that can act as effective mechanisms for tackling multidimensional poverty and inequality and fostering the achievement of the SDGs.

Figure 1. The Sustainable Territorial Evolution for Human Development (STEHD) framework



Source: Adapted from Biggeri and Ferrannini (2014, p. 50)

4. A THEORY OF CHANGE: LOCAL GOVERNANCE TO TACKLE MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

In the previous chapters, we have considered the main debates on the centrality of local governance within the Sustainable Human Development perspective and the human-rights based approach. At this point, different questions emerge: How can we make our perspective operational in different contexts? How can we promote and influence policy changes that tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality by engaging with local communities?

In this respect, Oxfam's Theory of Change (which underpins all Oxfam projects around the world) argues:

(...) the interaction between active citizens and accountable states is fundamental to human development. Oxfam mainly focuses on the first of these, helping to build the organizational capacity of the organizations of poor people, with a particular focus on women's leadership and attitudes and beliefs concerning gender roles. But it also engages directly with state institutions, for example helping with training of local government officials. Often, its main contribution is in the space between the two, brokering contacts between people's organizations and state bodies (as well as with the private sector), and creating "safe zones" in which they can discuss problems and solutions. Development is about power and its progressive redistribution from the haves to the have-nots. This touches on the deepest structures that underlie society, politics and the economy.

Oxfam Strategic Plan, 2013-2019 (p. 10-11)

As mentioned, it follows that efforts to tackle poverty and inequality are best capitalised through a **combination of active citizens and effective states** (Green, 2012). As right-holder's, citizens are critical to holding states accountable; as duty bearer's and legitimate policy-makers, states can guarantee the fair respect of citizens' rights and the rule of law. In order to increase the sustainability and effectiveness of social change for SHD, active citizens and effective states at the local level can play a critical role within Oxfam's Theory of Change, as shown by the examples discussed in this chapter.¹²

In the last 20 years, many central governments have devolved relevant responsibilities to **Local Authorities**¹³ in order to facilitate national development processes and to **promote local ownership of policies**. As highlighted by the European Commission, 'being closer to citizens than other public institutions, Local Authorities hold responsibility in mobilising local societies' opinions while acting as catalysts for change. This is particularly true in terms of more efficient public administration, more inclusive development processes, in cooperation with Civil Society Organisations, and solutions to urgent challenges faced by local communities' (EC, 2013, p. 3). In order to fight poverty and inequality, it is necessary pay attention to all levels of the state – from national government to local authorities. The State is not a monolith and different competences are assigned to different levels according to the **principle of subsidiarity**.

¹² Many of this experience have been developed and implemented in partnership with local authorities, such as Regional Government of Tuscany.

¹³ In this paper, we rely on the definition of "Local Authorities" provided by the European Commission: 'the large variety of subnational levels and branches of government i.e. municipalities, communities, districts, counties, provinces, regions etc.' (EC, 2008, p. 3).

For instance, services provided by local health units in promoting prevention measures and public hygiene are fundamental for a proper functioning of the health system as a whole. In rural areas of **Tanzania, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo**, Oxfam has facilitated the provision of innovative services on the prevention of the mother-to-child transmission of HIV. This project was based on a multilevel and integrated approach fostering the capacities of local authorities in planning and monitoring local health services and properly managing rural clinics. The intervention resulted in direct advantages for beneficiaries and in the improvement of mothers' and children's healthcare, as well as care follow-up systems.¹ For instance, in South Africa Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) coverage for pregnant mothers increased from 34.2% in 2011 to 90.4% in 2014, representing an outstanding result, considering the high number of pregnant mothers in rural target clinics. In addition, the ART coverage for HIV-positive children grew from 36% in 2011 to 100% in 2014, reflecting the strong improvements in ART enrolment reached by clinics in the target area.

In considering **power dynamics**, we should remember that **the local and national levels are inextricably interconnected and they influence each other**. For instance, national directives, even if progressive and inclusive, risk being ineffective if local authorities do not take ownership of them or seek to actively bring them into practice. Similarly, pilot initiatives at local level risk remaining isolated and becoming unsustainable (even if they are firmly based on citizens' needs), if they do not succeed in becoming part of a national system that validates and promotes them. The coordinated action of national and Local Authorities can have a long-lasting impact and benefit a larger number of citizens in producing effective social change for SHD. While the national dimension has been explored in Oxfam's current approach (Oxfam Strategic Plan, 2013-2019), in this paper here we seek to emphasize the engagement of Local Authorities and other territorial actors for three main reasons:

- First, this approach can **reconcile bottom-up and top-down policy approaches** (Crescenzi and Rodríguez-Pose, 2011) and contextualize national plans and sectorial priorities within local systems.
- Second, it can help establish a **development planning process** that reflects effective territorial opportunities and needs, in order to improve public services and reduce socio-economic disparities.
- Third, issues of **environmental, social and economic sustainability** can be addressed more effectively by local actors, if they are enabled to play a constructive role in policy and are committed to the protection and long-term sustainable use of local resources.

It follows that, if the quality of economic growth matters (as underlined by UNDP and many others), it can only be addressed by involving local people and communities at the grass roots level in the policy-making processes due to their experiential knowledge of the local polity, notwithstanding the influence of external (i.e. national, supranational) factors on the local politics (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014).

As the government level closest to citizens, **effective Local Authorities** play a crucial role in achieving the goal to tackle poverty and inequality and in particular to:

- 1) Provide an **immediate response to local communities' primary needs**, especially regarding the most vulnerable groups.

Prior to the Syrian crisis, Oxfam's priority in **Lebanon** was to root development activities within communities by fostering dialogue between citizens and local authorities. Oxfam used its influence to create a space for dialogue between citizens and local authorities, supporting local authorities in identifying and responding to the most urgent needs of their populations. This approach has enabled Oxfam to strengthen its position as a technical advisor and delivery partner, and to enhance relationships with national and local government departments. Since the Syrian crisis, Oxfam has applied the same approach to open opportunities to hear the voice of local communities and refugees. Considering their common needs, Oxfam engaged with local authorities as partners to

ensure that humanitarian initiatives benefit both refugees and their host communities (Ciacci, 2014)¹⁴. For instance, with Oxfam support local authorities in southern suburbs of Beirut ensured non-discriminatory access to quality primary healthcare for 15,000 vulnerable Lebanese and Syrians for a minimum fee of US\$ 5. This initiative was officially recognized as “best practice” by four Lebanese ministries in March 2015, and consequently it was decided to extend this model to six other regions of the country.

- 2) Set-up and maintain **permanent mechanisms of dialogue that promote citizens’ participation in decision and policy-making processes** on topics that affect their lives.

In the **Dominican Republic**, Oxfam is implementing a program to reinforce dialogue between local authorities and civil society in boundary regions with Haiti. In particular, this project seeks to improve the transparency and accountability of subnational authorities and improve their technical skills and attitudes towards dialogue and active engagement with citizens. During the program, dialogue mechanisms and spaces between citizens and authorities were established in order to discuss the main issues that affect local communities and to identify joint solutions that could be included in urban development planning. In this framework, local authorities launched a call for proposals from civil society organizations that incorporates specific conditions (e.g. the existence of a participative development plan, priority for sustainability goals, gender balanced and pro-poor initiatives)¹⁵ in order to secure co-financing. One of the initiatives proposed by civil society and funded was the construction of a public slaughterhouse in Cabral. In this small municipality people used to slaughter their animal around their house creating public hygiene problems (prevalence of flies and other insects, proliferation of potential diseases) and affecting the quality of meat. After this initiative, the Municipality of Cabral promulgated a public health ordinance to prohibit the killing of animals in private house and to support the use of the new public slaughterhouse. This is a simple but relevant example of how active citizenship and small-scale economic initiatives can facilitate the design and implementation of a pro-poor public policy.

In **Laos**, Oxfam works with local authorities, CSOs and communities for the co-development of community projects. Central to this project is the capacity building efforts of Development Facilitators from the three stakeholder groups that facilitate constructive and inclusive dialogue at community level on the design and implementation of small projects. Capacity building and trust building are the pillars of the initiative, with strong support for an inclusive, fair and representative process over and above than the community project itself. The local organizations learn how to engage communities in assessing their needs and how to act as liaisons between communities and local authorities. Local Authorities in turn are brought in to understand how inclusive participation works and to see how the role of civil society can be beneficial in improving the delivery of poverty-reduction initiatives. Communities learn to formulate their needs and to manage small grants in a participative manner. Only project ideas that emerge from a strongly participative selection process that includes all stakeholders, supported by the development facilitator, are granted small funds for implementation. Project ideas that do not respect the participatory process are not selected irrespective of their quality or design. The project underlines the shift from inputs-outputs to the overall process, emphasizing the relevance of how outcomes are achieved, rather than whether they are achieved. The inclusiveness of the process, together with a hands-on learning trajectory for all local stakeholders, marks an increase in the sustainability of the actions and full ownership of the process itself as well as the consequent outcomes. These projects have benefited around 16,500 local people.

¹⁴ More information on Oxfam’s case study of Lebanon is available via the following links:

- Part 1: <http://www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Oxfam-Part-one.pdf>
- Part 2: <http://www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Oxfam-Part-two.pdf>

¹⁵ More information on Oxfam’s case study of the Dominican Republic is available via the following link: http://www.oxfamitalia.org/files/brochure_oxfam_toscana.pdf

- 3) **Initiate and coordinate the efforts of different actors whose activities have an impact on local development**, including, for example, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and universities / research centres, and to provide them with strong leadership towards joint goals.

In **Ecuador**, Oxfam supported the promotion of food sovereignty and local development with identity, through the redemption of Andean grains. Local Authorities were empowered in i) defining a public, participatory and inclusive policy for the preservation and enhancement of local agro-biodiversity, which included the promotion of local identity as a driver for national and international tourism; and ii) bringing forward the necessary measures for the policy implementation. As a consequence of the defined policy, the income of 800 small-scale producers increased by 22% and their productivity increased by 30%, as amaranth crops were reintroduced and improved (which are now produced and consumed at the local and national level). Furthermore, traditional indigenous food was introduced into the tourist value chain (through restaurants and hotels) as part of a broader private and public engagement. Local agro-biodiversity also represents a driver for communitarian tourism, through initiatives that allow indigenous families to host tourists in small hotels in rural areas, which enhances the possibility of consuming local products and observing traditional production techniques, etc. The private sector is also involved in thrashing *quinua* and amaranth. Local businesses usually do not invest in small-scale technologies, so Oxfam made an agreement with a local handicraft business that developed an appropriate and innovative thrasher and a mechanical sower, which suit women's capacity and skills. Technology is not gender neutral, and this improvement allowed women dedicated to *quinua* and amaranth production to reduce their workload significantly. Other relevant elements of this inclusive public policy includes the creation of a free market for small-scale and indigenous producers, which on Sundays can sell their local products to the urban population. This started as a spontaneous and informal market, which was initially opposed by the local municipality. Nevertheless, thanks to a dialogue with local producers' association and the request from urban consumers (that find these products cheaper and of better quality than those found in the ordinary market), this market was legalized and institutionalized. This represents a huge improvement for thousands of producers that cannot afford the high costs selling in local markets¹⁶.

Participatory decision and policy-making mechanisms, and multi-stakeholders dialogue have many repercussions. In particular, these mechanisms **enhance local authorities' accountability toward citizens**: when citizens are informed about on-going processes and decisions, they can maintain their grip on local authorities. Moreover, the participation of several stakeholders in decision and policy-making processes allows different points of views and perspectives to be considered (Crocker, 2007). Fair democratic processes result in common understanding and ownership of decisions, as well as their potential sustainability over the time. In this perspective, **transparency and ownership** are both preconditions and drivers to enhance citizens' participation and good governance. The quality of local governance is linked 'to the way Local Authorities manage and implement public policies and services on the basis of local policy-making processes and interactions with other public institutions, citizens and private sector and through the allocation of available resources' (EC, 2013, p. 3). Finally, the setting up of participatory mechanisms and the development of territorial partnerships with local actors allows Local Authorities to engage in a dialogue with national governments based on clearly expressed needs and priorities, as raised and identified by citizens themselves. This bottom-up process allows **shaping also national policy** change building on territorial experiences.

¹⁶ More information on Oxfam's experience in Ecuador is available via the following links:
http://www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/BriefingPaper_ENGLISH.pdf
http://www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/GraniAndini_Mag16_@.pdf

In **Cambodia**, Oxfam worked simultaneously with Local Authorities and with CSOs to increase knowledge and understanding of rights and obligations relating to territorial development and people's rights. *Community forestry* laws and their related decrees were the focus. Oxfam also brokered dialogue between these actors and supported the application of four community forestry initiatives in Svay Leu District (Siem Reap Province). These initiatives were fully endorsed and implemented by Local Authorities. As a result of the commitment by provincial authorities and governors, applications were successfully accepted and completed in around three years (three times faster than usual) by the Department of Forestry and Wildlife. In the effort to complement natural resources protection measures with income generation activities, the breeding of indigenous Kandaw pigs has been re-introduced. Oxfam supported 400 beneficiaries who began breeding these pigs that currently face extinction and traditionally live in forests. Moreover, marketing activities in the main tourist locations and in the capital were a resounding success. The farmers' association invited commune councillors to participate in their meetings and successfully persuaded the Commune Council to preserve Kandaw pigs. The regulations became the basis for successfully governing the services of Kandaw pig breeders, including subsidised slaughter services and meat traceability. The engagement of local communities, farmer associations and Local Authorities in protecting natural resources is reflected in their commitment in opposing the construction of a tourist resort in the community forest that, following a petition and community mobilization, has been blocked. This initiative is an example of joint action between Local Authorities and community-based organizations that successfully affects a national issue – namely, land grabbing in Cambodia.

Including Local Authorities in initiatives for building effective states can help guarantee that local communities can influence – and leave a real footprint on – activities at the global and national level. It is important to be mindful of the need to shift leadership to Local Authorities (without simply pretending to substitute them) and provide appropriate responses to citizens' needs while paying particular attention to marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Based on previous experience, our working tools to reinforce effective local authorities are as follows: (1) territorial diagnostics and gap analysis (considering citizens' and Local Authorities' perception of their needs and their constraints in terms of community development); (2) institutional building for Local Authorities; (3) operational toolkits (that can be updated by LAs on the basis of their experience and evolving context); (4) pilot initiatives based on participatory planning, consultation mechanism, and private-public partnership to be scaled up; (5) lessons learnt analysis and dissemination, recommendations, and assistance to scale-up initiatives

At the same time, to achieve a real and tangible improvement in people's well-being, the role of **active citizens at the local level** is crucial. Women, men and youth can shape their own society if they are able to exercise the right to be informed and the right to be heard primarily in their territories. Indeed, active citizenship is something more than political participation at administrative and political elections; rather, it concerns decision-making processes relating to development objectives, strategies, resources and efforts.

The local dimension offers **a unique space to experience participation for poor and marginalized groups**, who may not have the necessary resources or the capabilities to reach higher government levels. The possibility to express rights at local level can become a learning experience for many individuals who, relying on successful experiences, are empowered to become active citizens in all aspect of their life and even in more complex contexts (as might be the case in the national context).

Mobilising around specific local issues, which are perceived as closer to everyday life, can become an opportunity for citizens to join efforts and work together in formal and informal groups. These groups represent an opportunity to experience direct democracy and acquire negotiation skills and capacities to **identify common problems and shared solutions**. Therefore,

we see a window of opportunity to support civil society organisations (such as associations, cooperatives, and NGOs strongly committed to their constituents' needs), which give voice to the most vulnerable and marginalized. In this regard, ICT is offering an important tool to facilitate communication and joint action among interest groups that share common development objectives for their community.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the development of micro, small and medium business (MSMB) has been pursued in an effort to reduce the high unemployment rate (44%, 2013). However, the start-up failure rate of MSMB is very high (7/10, compared to an EU average of 3/10). This is mostly due to the unclear distribution of responsibilities between different administrative bodies and uncoordinated policies between territories leading to low governments' transparency and accountability that hampers business development. In 2011, with Oxfam support five Local Economic Development agencies, which represent the interests of micro and small entrepreneurs whose voices were rarely heard by the government, created a nation-wide Local Economic Development network (LEDnet). The aim of LEDnet is to improve the business environment, increase the MSMB's voice and create a permanent dialogue among authorities, businesses and citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the first tasks of the network was to map problems faced by micro and small entrepreneurs in dealing with public bodies. An online register was established and more than 250 different issues were recorded. This online register is enabling entrepreneurs to discuss and recognize common issues and identify competent institutions to tackle them. Based on the most relevant issues, advocacy activities were defined. Thanks to joint advocacy efforts, Local Authorities started simplifying procedures for allocation of funds to MSMB, and, amongst other things, LEDnet successfully advocated the reduction of electricity prices for the MSMB.

In addition, active citizens not only enhance local authorities' accountability, but also simultaneously strengthen the **accountability of citizens themselves and all other local actors towards their own community**.

For instance, the private sector, being embedded in a territory (Becattini, 2004) and relying on its (human, natural, financial, social) resources, can play a key role in tackling poverty and inequality. Notice that public private partnerships (PPPs), especially if complemented by proactive engagement of citizens and civil society (i.e. **public private people partnerships – P4 or PPPPs**), can effectively contribute to SHD strategies only when a spirit of mutual trust, openness, accountability, transparency and commitment exists. Within the private sector, corporate actors can also play an important role in social and environmental terms when they embrace **Corporate Social Responsibility** principles or when the multinational corporations decide to adopt virtuous behaviour and strategies to improve the life conditions of communities. The combination of effective Local Authorities and active citizens can increase the likelihood that international companies implement strategies that contribute to local sustainable development.

Similarly, **social entrepreneurship**, seeking to achieve a positive impact on society through non-profit business activities and economic sustainability, can significantly contribute to SHD at the local level, especially when providing services and jobs for the most vulnerable people and marginalized groups (Biggeri et al., 2016).

The **Social Business City (SBC) Program** is pursued by cities that want to create an enabling eco-system for social business and social innovation. The aim of this program is to support aspiring social entrepreneurs, as well as existing social businesses, in the process of transforming a good idea for addressing a local social and/or environmental issue into a sustainable social business. Program activities are planned by each city together with the Yunus Social Business Centre University of Florence, which also evaluates the program. Activities are personalized for each city and may range from training programs, workshops and events, mentoring, and research, to setting up incubators, financial institutions or providing funding opportunities. As a whole, the SBC Program involves

different categories of stakeholders including young people, social entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, policy-makers, foundations, etc.¹⁷ The SBC Program has been running in Pistoia (**Italy**) since 2012 with the following results: approximately 1,000 high school students have been involved in classes for social business and microcredit; more than 100 citizens and university students have been involved in social business workshops; an annual city event exposes more than 400 people on social business practices; and 40 social enterprises active in the city are supported and monitored every year (amongst other things). Thanks to good results achieved in Pistoia, Barcelona (**Spain**) has decided to follow suit and began a similar program in January 2015. Other cities in different countries are now considering initiating their own programs.

The local dimension is also a setting in which **innovative ideas emerge and become adopted by individuals and groups** who intend to solve specific issues. Very often, these ideas spread and settle in other localities.

The **IDEASS program** (Innovation for Development and South-South Cooperation)¹⁸ is an international cooperation programme facilitating the identification, promotion, and transfer of those innovations that have demonstrated their contribution to human development, the enhancement of environmental resources and the reduction of poverty and social exclusion. In terms of south-south cooperation, it acts as a catalyst for the spread of social, economic and technological innovations that favour economic and social development at the local level. Such innovations may be products, technologies, or social, economic or cultural practices, which are identified by many different global partners based on: the contribution to human development; transfer potential; relevance at national and international level; cost-benefit advantage; availability of technical assistance. Innovations are identified mainly in the following fields: governance (e.g. improving the functioning of local institutions, promoting rights and active citizenship); sustainable management of environmental and territorial resources (e.g. managing historical heritage, recycling waste); developing sustainable health and social services (e.g. decentralizing services, appropriate use of technologies); developing sustainable educational services (e.g. widening access to education and professional training opportunities); and local economic development (e.g. integrated services for local businesses, promotion of decent work). The IDEASS website gets around 15,000 hits every month from around 188 countries. In addition, the countries involved in IDEASS provide support for national institutions responsible for promoting science and technology, elaborate strategies, and carrying out activities to enhance the access of territorial development actors to innovations used elsewhere in the country or available internationally.

Finally, **citizens' participation can guarantee continuity instead of high political turn over**, as community's interests over an issue are typically long lasting. It is worth keeping in mind that **"active citizenship" is an attitude to be experienced and not simply learnt**; it is therefore crucial to promote spaces of engagement where citizens are empowered in claiming their rights and proposing actions for change. In our experience, work with young people is particularly fruitful in informing a new generation of active citizens (Biggeri et al., 2011). Active citizenship programs can provide grounds for a more aware and engaged global citizenship that deal with development issues.

In Tuscany (**Italy**), Oxfam is historically committed to raising awareness and understanding among students aged between 11-18 years on how to use their views, voice and actions to promote human rights on a local and global level. Working with participatory and interactive informal methodologies, Oxfam stimulates youth willingness to engage in society as active citizens following a learning process summarized as: learn-think-act. One example is a Human Rights project called '**Do the**

¹⁷ More information and results are available at <http://sbflorence.org>.

¹⁸ The catalogues and more information about the IDEASS Programme are available at www.ideassonline.org

Right(s) Thing! This educational initiative (which has been organized since 20 years) became a European experience with the involvement of France and Croatia. There are a number of different phases in this project starting with trainings of teachers to carry out educational courses with their pupils. For instance, around 4,500 students in Tuscany participate each year. These students are guided by their teachers through a course that stimulates their understanding and reflection on a given human rights issue. The course is made up of many activities that examine various aspects of a human right such as its social, legal, historic, and geographical complexities and implications. On 10th December each year, the UN's anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration, 10,000 students participate in Florence (Italy) in the Human Rights Meeting, a large-scale event held to celebrate the human right in focus. In 2014, this experience was replicated in France (Lower Normandie Region) and Croatia (Region of Istria) with the following results: 500 students participated in France and 3,500 children took part in Croatia. For a restricted number of students (approximately 375) an additional final activity was offered: a series of workshops¹⁹ that allow students to stimulate their active citizenship regarding the human rights in question. Here, students freely criticize the difficulties they have identified and then discuss how to tackle them, experimenting on the founding concepts of democracy by voting for the critiques and proposals that they think are most important. They subsequently develop the three or four most endorsed proposals in groups, following a common framework. In the last phase of these workshops, students present their proposals, first in school and then to Local Authorities' representatives during a final event. Schools and decision-makers have the responsibility to carry out a feasibility analysis and, in particular, Local Authorities' representatives commit themselves to implementing at least one of the proposals presented. The entire project is supported by an educational social network called Oxfam Edu²⁰, which hosts the 'Do the Right(s) Thing' portal. Here both teachers and students in Italy, France and Croatia are able to work online together, exchanging their ideas and discussing ways to become more responsible and active as global citizens.

To recap, in many contexts, and especially in low and middle-income countries, the emphasis on the local dimension represents an effective way to tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality, and ensure policy coherence between local and national levels. As the development process counts primarily at local level by expanding the capabilities and rights of women and men, we argue it is fundamental to foster simultaneously the role of Local Authorities and citizens in order to improve the well-being of people. **Women and men can require transparency, accountability and dialogue spaces to underpin policy change in their territory and local authorities should use their resources to respond to citizens' demands for effective and accountable access to services.**

Based on previous experience, our working tools for reinforcing active citizenship are: (1) Capacity building of CSOs working with marginalized groups, along with exchange of experiences among them; (2) Setting up of inductive environment for CSOs and citizens participation, to take decisions that affect their lives; (3) Creation of long-lasting dialogue spaces, that adopt a win-win approach; (4) Brokering relationships between citizens and their groups on one side and LAs and higher level of government on the other side; (5) Promotion and enhancement of social entrepreneurship both through capacity building programs to improve social business capacities and access to market and through the creation of a legislative and financial conducive environment.

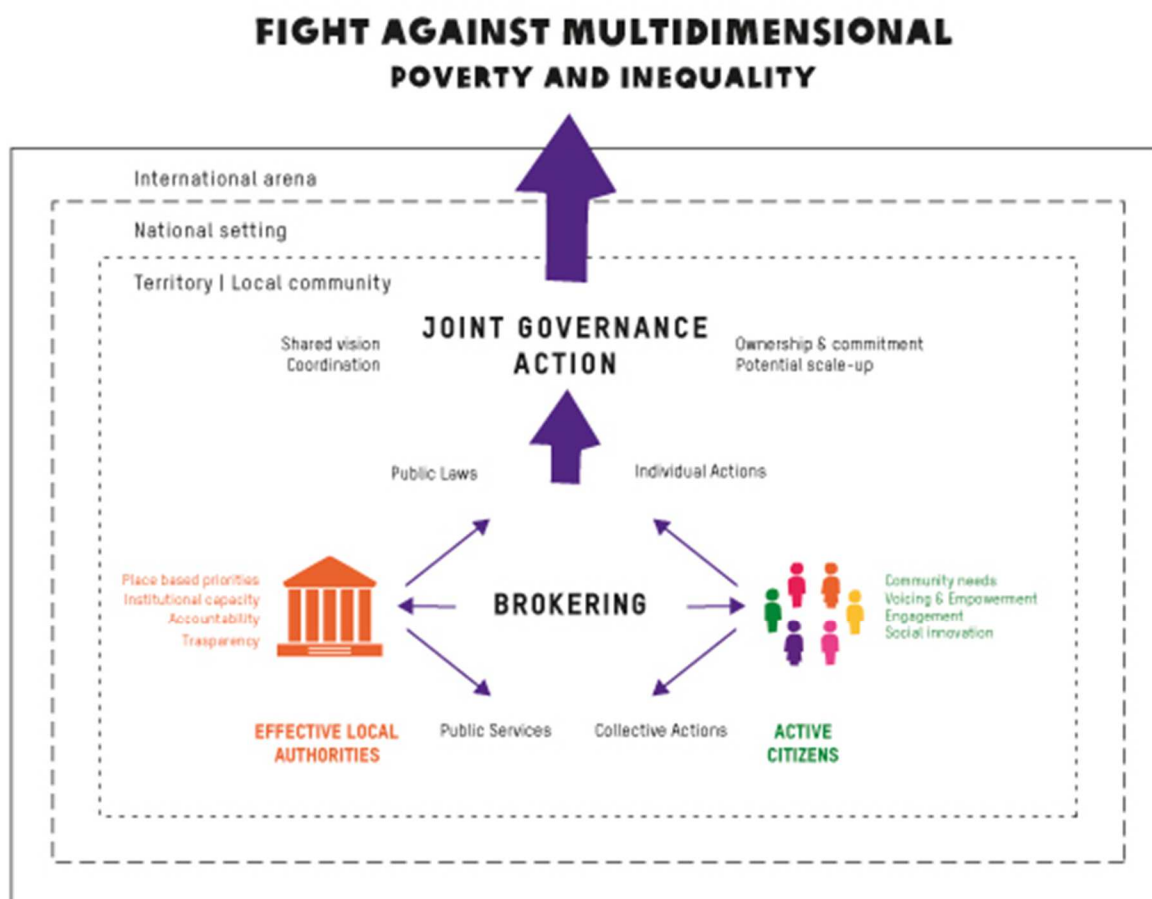
Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between effective Local Authorities and active citizens within a territory, which shapes the contribution of local governance to Sustainable Human Development. Both engage with social and economic goals: Local Authorities implement laws

¹⁹ They use the Future Workshop methodology created by Robert Jungk and Norbert Muller (1987) that it used in particular in North Europe by citizen groups to be part of the decision-making process.

²⁰ More information are available at <http://edu.oxfam.it/en>

and provide public services, whereas citizens pursue individual and collective actions. In addition, dialogue and interaction between Local Authorities, citizens and other stakeholders within a community paves the way for: (i) the **identification of strategic solutions for Sustainable Human Development at the local level** and (ii) the **design of innovative policies that feed into national and international policy change**. The key “levers” of our Theory of Change are (1) strong brokering and (2) joint governance action. Together they increase ownership, commitment, shared visions and partnerships to fight multidimensional poverty and inequality, and also open up potential processes for scaling up from the territory to the international arena.

Figure 2. The contribution from local governance to Oxfam’s Theory of Change



Source: Authors

We should emphasise that discussions concerning local governance mechanisms and processes do not involve a technical or politically neutral fix, as these processes do not take place in a political vacuum. Social change for SHD happens as a result of decisions that inevitably have a political dimension, as emphasised by the “Thinking and Working Politically” (TWP) community within the international development debate. Similarly, **the kind of local development pursued by agents is shaped by principles and values reflecting power relations and (im)balances, which are socially and politically determined within localities.**

Local governance processes thus take place within a political arena, where the mobilisation of collective action is characterised within any territory by a multitude of economic and social interests (often potentially contradictory), and by extension through ‘emerging coalitions, political mediation, negotiation and compromise, and innumerable calculations of political risk and opportunity’ (TWP, 2015, p. 1).

Building on these arguments and moving away from ‘idealised models of development change’ (TWP, 2015, p. 2), we have to **understand the institutional dynamics at work and deal with formal and informal power structures within a given context**. In particular, this involves:

- Asking ‘whose principles and values are being pursued in local and regional development’ (Pike et al., 2007, pp. 1260);
- Assessing how local power is exercised and whether it is oriented towards SHD or not, thus considering whether any individual and institution with social power has been seeking to impose their specific interests and visions, and how these may be contested (Klandermans, 1997; Harvey, 2000; Deneulin and McGregor, 2010);
- Digging deeper to understand the extent to which power structures and struggles reinforce horizontal inequalities among social groups, classes and communities (Anand and Sen, 2000; Harvey, 2000), and reflecting on why certain groups are deliberately excluded.

Inequalities, for example, are fundamentally shaped by the polity and contextual politics in terms of state structures, power relations, access to resources among stakeholders, institutional architecture, development visions, and those territorial “permanencies” (Harvey, 1996) constructed out of social and political processes. Similarly, participation spaces are socially constructed and not neutral in terms of visible or invisible power relations (Frediani, 2010), leading to deliberate or structural exclusion of certain groups (e.g. women, children and youth, ethnic or religious minorities).

In sum, appealing to local governance to tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality necessitates dealing with a ‘never-ending interplay of conflicting values, interests, ideas and discourses among social groups (*politics*), which reproduce, perpetuate or transform the socio-institutional context (*polity*) and lead to development strategies, practices and trajectories (*policy*)’ (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014, p. 132).

Moreover, the mechanisms and processes of local governance derived from effective authorities and active citizens cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, we believe the following **enabling conditions**, among others, should be promoted, if not already in place, in order to foster policy change for Sustainable Human Development:

- 1) A willingness to adopt a people-centred vision that considers the engagement of all relevant stakeholders at national, sub-national and local level;
- 2) The actual practice of human rights within and between territories, as the state is effective if each right sanctioned by law can be exercised in daily life by all people in all places;
- 3) The effective application of the national rules, laws and policies at the local level, going beyond their enforcement and monitoring at central government level. Among other things, these should include the recognition and protection of human rights, fiscal regulation, and the provision of basic social services (most notably a clear framework and budget allocation to ensure the local implementation of health and waste management services);
- 4) The willingness to apply “open government” principles at any level of government. This can be relevant for, and can facilitate, citizen engagement (e.g. budget monitoring, pro-poor targeting, etc.);
- 5) The existence of stable, safe and effective spaces of dialogue between citizens and their organizations (e.g. civil society organizations, entrepreneurial associations, research institutes, cooperatives, etc.) and authorities on all matters that affect communities’ life, especially concerning the inclusion of vulnerable individuals and groups in decision-making and policy processes;
- 6) The willingness and capacity of citizens to be informed, articulate their common needs (vs. individualist attitudes), keep duty-bearers accountable and engage in social change (thus being accountable themselves towards their own community);
- 7) An effective and clear distribution of responsibilities and public functions among different government and administrative levels. This also relates to a tailored degree of

decentralization, which shapes the powers local authorities can exercise over their territorial community as well as their accountability toward the citizens.

Examples of areas in which local authorities and citizens can significantly contribute to tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The potential role of local governance in illustrative policy areas

Rights	Policy areas
Social justice	Provision of basic social services, such as health, education, housing, social protection, etc., all of which should be broken down by social groups, i.e. according to age, gender, disability and race, etc.
	Social protection measures, especially for vulnerable groups.
Economic justice	Pursuit of local economic development, e.g. services for SMES, the promotion and empowerment of SMEs, infrastructural investment, the upgrading of informal economic activities, value chain development, Research and Development, etc. Special emphasis should be placed on vulnerable groups and in particular youth, migrants, women and people with disabilities who generally have more difficulties in setting-up business activities and accessing labour markets.
	Capacity building (e.g. for workers and producer organizations), vocational educational and training, promotion of entrepreneurship and social business.
Environmental justice	Management of local natural resources (e.g. land, water) and work with the community (awareness and lobbying).
	Environmental regulations and their implementation on issues such as waste management, adoption of renewable energies technologies, etc.
	Protection of biodiversity, which is also an enabling factor for sustainable agro-food and water systems.
Livelihood security	Support for the social and economic integration of migrants and refugees in local communities.
	Disaster risk reduction and ecosystem resilience.
	Personal safety, protection of vulnerable groups, tackling criminal organizations, etc.
Active citizenship	Right to be informed (e.g. education policies, open access to information and data).
	Right to be heard and participate in public spaces. Amongst other things, this also involves the strengthening of CSOs, women empowerment, youth engagement, public deliberation.
	Accountability and transparency (e.g. budget monitoring).

Source: Authors

Nonetheless, it is important to reemphasize that the contribution of local governance to effective policy change for Sustainable Human Development at the local level has **strong multilevel synergies with influencing and advocacy initiatives** on national and international actors. For instance, access to quality services for social, economic and environmental justice, as well as for livelihood security and active citizenship, should be characterized by strong territorial cohesion. This should be ensured by central government through standards, funding and redistribution that let local actors tailor service provision according to territorial features. In other words, **local governance is a crucial part of the more complex picture concerning the fight against multidimensional forms of poverty and inequality.**

5. THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Building on the arguments presented so far, we recognise the effectiveness of local governance processes in tackling multidimensional poverty and inequality, and in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, cannot be taken for granted. Instead we believe it is crucial to develop models and approaches to **systematically monitor and evaluate (M&E)** those initiatives that rely on interactions among authorities, institutions and citizens at the local level. Today, the importance of M&E is widespread among an increasing number of governments, international agencies and organizations. M&E is regularly used for: i) impact achievement; ii) learning for the sake of improvement; iii) accountability; and iv) scaling-up or replication. M&E has the potential to provide stakeholders and policy-makers with deeper understandings of territorial processes and more appropriate assessments of implemented actions, especially for future evidence-based decision-making.

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that any process aimed at linking the analysis of reality with decision-making cannot be politically neutral (Harriss, 2007). In other words, evaluation has a clear normative dimension.

Our Theory of Change, which combines the governance actions of active citizens and local authorities, introduces **substantial elements of complexity in terms of M&E**. In particular, it becomes necessary to deal with multidimensional and place-based processes rather than standard linear relation input-actions-outputs-outcomes (Duflo, 2004). First, a gradual shift of attention from input-outputs to outcomes and processes is necessary. This involves considering the co-development and leading role of local actors in participatory processes as strategic conditions for development effectiveness. These procedural aspects are as important as the outcomes at individual and community level. Second, the complexity of local governance mechanisms (characterised by multidimensional, multilevel and dynamic processes within long-term evolutionary trajectories and involving multi-stakeholders and multiple local and extra-local relations) challenge “straight-jacketed” evaluation procedures, and require more complex evaluation strategies (Verweil and Gerrits, 2013; Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014). Third, the shift from “aid” or “international cooperation” effectiveness to a broader conception of “development effectiveness”, together with increasing attention to soft and relational factors (institutions, social capital, knowledge flows, etc.) contributes to overcoming project-based approaches by linking governance mechanisms to medium and long-term territorial and national development processes, and affects the appropriate and relevant time frame for evaluations. Fourth, multidimensionality shifts the analytical metric of well-being from a mono-dimensional informational base focused on income or utility to the multifaceted space of real freedoms (including intangible elements), human rights and community life. Finally, initiatives based on and supporting local governance processes are inevitably adapted and linked to varied characteristics of the physical, economic, social, institutional and cultural context, and thus to the long term development dynamics and evolutionary trajectories of the local society (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014). This argument includes the multiplicity of policy-makers and stakeholders that sustain, lead, and affect these processes with different political agendas, timeframes and modalities within a multilevel system of dialogue, coordination, learning and governance (Stern et al., 2012).

These elements affect M&E systems and procedures: the relation input-actions-output-outcomes is often not clearly ordered, and feedback loops among them can generate vicious or virtuous circles within dynamic processes of multi-causality. Thus, our model aims at proposing an **expanded arena for monitoring and evaluation of local governance**.

The starting point here is the importance of relying on a **sound theoretical approach**. In line with the discussion in chapter 2, Amartya Sen's capability approach can provide the basis to advance an enhanced conceptual framework for M&E (Alkire, 2002 and 2008; Burchi et al. 2015; Ferrero Y de Loma-Osorio and Zepeda, 2014 and 2016 forthcoming; Frediani, 2010; Frediani et al., 2014; Muñoz Castillo, 2011), especially in terms of local governance mechanisms (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2015). Within this perspective, the focus in evaluation should be on what people are able to do or be according to their values and preferences, which includes immaterial aspects of life (Clark, 2005). This involves assessing the extent to which local governance initiatives have removed obstacles so that people have more freedom to live the kind of life that, upon reflection, they find valuable (Sen, 1993; Robeyns, 2005). In other words, the extent to which an enabling environment for human flourishing has been created.

Nonetheless, standard evaluation indicators for each policy area (e.g. health, education, infrastructure, credit access, etc.) are not neglected. Achieved functionings at the individual and collective level concerning key aspects of human well-being remain essential for monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies, initiatives and actions on people's daily lives, especially for the sake of internal and external accountability. However, it is equally relevant to take into account, in evaluative terms, the **multidimensional space of capabilities that people enjoy**, as well as to avoid neglecting complexity by evaluating one single short term objective with a linear causal framework that involves one question-one single outcome, one policy actor, and one policy programs (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2015).

In order to expand the coverage of M&E, we propose complementing standard M&E indicators for each policy area with a set of transversal dimensions that directly relate to the key pillars of local governance processes. It is worth emphasising the central argument of our paper: if local governance mechanisms functions adequately by creating an enabling environment for Sustainable Human Development, they will increase people's and community's well-being through the expansion of their capabilities (opportunities and capacities), reducing barriers to participation and facilitating access to services and resources (Biggeri and Ferrannini 2014). Thus, according to our approach, **monitoring and evaluating a broad range of local governance dimensions is mandatory for the scope of impact assessment, learning, accountability and potential scaling-up**.

As shown in Table 3, the governance dimensions that need to be monitored and evaluated vary over different time horizons. This is because the dynamic nature of development processes that affect local societies and people's well-being extends well beyond the time frame of a specific project or program (see the STEHD framework in chapter 2).

Table 3. An expanded arena for M&E of local governance towards SHD

Time horizon	Dimension	Description	Target
Monitoring + Short-run / Medium-run	Ownership	Ownership of SHD strategies based on stakeholders' involvement in decision-making and policy actions.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
	Commitment	Political and civil support for SHD strategies through dedicated budgets and efforts according to responsibilities.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
	Human rights	Real (<i>de facto</i>) entitlement to human rights, according to the complex interaction between the legal and institutional framework (<i>de jure</i> entitlement) that take into account individual characteristics and social opportunities.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
	Inclusiveness of dialogue spaces	Real opportunities for citizens (especially those belonging to marginalized and vulnerable groups), to be involved in dialogue processes for consultation and/or collective deliberation.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
	Accountability	Transparent mechanisms regarding the use of funds/resources and information flows.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
Medium-run / Long-run	Place-based policy design	Design of policies tailored to the local context (in geographical, social, cultural and institutional terms) and based on the interaction of multi-stakeholder in the construction of knowledge.	Local Authorities
	<i>Conscious</i> governance	Capacity to imagine a new feasible path of local development and the ability to organise a consensus between the various local actors.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
	Pro-poor targeting	Targeting poor people in local society as primary beneficiaries of implemented policies and initiatives.	Local Authorities
	Formalization of dialogue spaces	Policies and formal acts by local authorities to establish long-term spaces of dialogue, consultation, and/or joint deliberation with the civil society.	Local Authorities
	Multilevel governance alignment	Develop endogenous resources by linking them with resources, competences and initiatives coming from other territories and higher levels of governance.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
	Community resilience	Collective capacity to respond to, and influence, the course of social, economic and environmental change.	Local Authorities CSOs and citizens
	Scale-up	Scale-up of local good practices and experimental initiatives to upper levels.	National Authorities

Source: Authors

Apart from the identification of specific dimensions of M&E with relevant targets and evaluation questions, another clear departure from standard M&E systems lies in the **different time horizons**, which help provide a more holistic account of the development process. However, we recognise this argument demands stronger investment and effort in terms of: i) continuous monitoring; ii) adaptation to evolving contexts; iii) collecting complex data and information; and last, but not least, iv) cultivating willingness and capacity to conduct evaluations also long time after the implementation of specific local governance projects.

In methodological terms, it is clear that it is not possible to identify and fix the appropriate *ex-ante* methods for each evaluation question, governance dimension and policy area (such as health, education, or local economic development, etc.). Instead, the most appropriate method is likely to take different shapes and forms depending on the context.

Nonetheless, taken together these elements are clearly quite challenging for the M&E of local governance processes. These challenges can be tackled by relying on the following principles:

- i) **Consistent integration of qualitative and quantitative methods** that draw on the strength of both approaches (Rao and Woolcock, 2004; White, 2008);
- ii) **Flexible application and adaptation of methods in different contexts and policy areas**, that is pragmatic and avoids a “one size fits all” approach;
- iii) **Combining methodological rigour with reliance on the experiences, values and participation of individuals and communities** in order to increase the informational space, as well as to foster public deliberation, democratic assessments and collective empowerment.

To conclude, we believe that mixed methods can capture the complexity of both outcomes and processes, including local governance mechanisms (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2015). Indeed, the consistent combination of mixed methods can represent a crucial value-added for comprehensive M&E systems (Stern et al., 2012; Rao and Woolcock, 2004).

6. CONCLUSIONS: THE WAY FORWARD

Throughout this paper, theoretical and empirical arguments have been advanced that point to the central role of local governance and communities within territories in pursuing the fight against multidimensional poverty and inequality. In the nutshell, **interaction between authorities, institutions, citizens and enterprises within local societies can shape strategic planning and resource management for social change towards Sustainable Human Development.**

Recent demographic, employment, income and poverty trends show clear sub-national disparities that require moving beyond place-neutral and spatially-blind approaches to intervention. The traditional **dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up approaches must be overcome.** Several key actors in international development are pushing for devoting increasing attention and resources to local governance processes. Such arguments do not deny the extent to which local development processes depend on policies, norms and coordination rules at the national and international levels. Rather, they call for (and reinforce) a multilevel governance perspective, based on the continuous and inexorable articulation of resources, capacities, systemic positions and knowledge endowments at each and every level of governance. Moreover, several theoretical arguments in the development literature seem to support our position. Our framework underlines the importance of Sustainable Human Development at the local level focusing on the permanent expansion of human capabilities and human rights within the community in which people live and interact. These arguments emphasise the extent to which human development is a place-based process, participation is locally experienced, capabilities and agency are territorially embedded, and policy changes affect local people and their communities.

Such theoretical and empirical discussion has paved the way for a detailed discussion of the **local dimension of active citizens and effective states** – the two pillars of Oxfam's Theory of Change that play a key role in enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of social change for SHD. The proposed framework is clearly aligned with Oxfam's Strategic Plan 2013-2019 itself (with the vision to set 'local communities and the voices of women, men and young people at the centre of change', p. 5). It is also relevant within the international debate on localising the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The central role of local governance for effective structural change relates to improving equality and inclusion, reducing poverty, advancing gender justice, providing universal services, ensuring sustainable management of food and natural resources, expanding people's right to be heard, and strengthening accountability (amongst other things). Moreover, this perspective is not likely to just be of interest to local inhabitants within each specific community, but can also be aligned (in terms of strategy, influence and advocacy) with broader national and international goals of social and territorial cohesion.

However, mechanisms and processes of local governance based on effective local authorities and active citizenship cannot be taken for granted. Rather, they require the promotion of relevant and flexible **enabling conditions.** These range from the effective guarantee of human rights and application of national rules, laws and policies at local level, to a clear distribution of responsibilities and public functions among different government and administrative levels; from the diffusion of open government principles for transparency and accountability, to the willingness and capacity of citizens to be informed, to articulate their common needs and engage in social change; and from the creation of stable, safe and effective spaces of dialogue among citizens (including both community groups and authorities where dissent and alternative views can be expressed), to the wider diffusion of a people-centred, instead of a business-centred, vision on development.

Building on our common understanding and framework on local governance, these arguments represent a starting point for the urgent search of more powerful and practical responses to multidimensional poverty and inequality. It is possible to identify several questions and issues for **further research and future debate amongst practitioners and scholars**.

Firstly, the development of **operational toolkits that can flexibly guide policy-makers, practitioners and activists** in order to strengthen local governance mechanisms is a clear priority for further work. These toolkits should cover, among other things, the following elements, to be adapted depending on the contexts and issues of intervention: institutional capacity building actions, enhancement of civil society awareness, continuous involvement of stakeholders and project partners, promotion of information and good practice exchanges, and constant actions of brokering and networking.

Second, the advancement of **Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks and tools on local governance**, which combines multi-faced informational spaces and time horizons and can adapt to evolving contexts is another priority area for research and development. This is necessary in order to encourage evidence-based learning and accountability, and translate this into more innovative strategies and initiatives for reaching the SDGs.

Of course, such toolkits and frameworks undoubtedly require increasing efforts from international organizations, national governments and local stakeholders to improve continuous data collection and ensure the systematic and transparent diffusion of different sources of information, including administrative data. This is essential in order to overcome critical bottlenecks that constrain the opportunity to obtain detailed accounts of territorial human development processes, as well as to improve the design of tailored strategies for SHD at the local level.

Thirdly, further **theoretical and empirical work to advance the role of local governance and territorial approaches** to development is required. This involves cultivating a stronger dialogue amongst scholars and practitioners from different disciplines and perspectives. This will not only contribute to ensuring that new development initiatives are grounded on the most recent and innovative scientific research available, but will also inspire new scientific thinking, methods and tools that can be applied to SHD processes through the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of development strategies. In addition, stronger systematization and analytical efforts are required to consolidate global understandings of local governance mechanisms, and to facilitate the sharing and diffusion of knowledge and evidence-based learning.

To conclude, the approach developed in this paper provides many reasons for believing that success in terms of equality, freedom from the injustice of poverty and the sustainability of development will emerge from stronger place-based and people-based governance processes, linked with national actions and global challenges.

Despite the magnitude and complexity of the challenges an unstable world faces today, and the volatile and complex dynamics of social change and development, we have tried to show that **the combination of effective and accountable Local Authorities together with the mobilisation of skills and resources of active citizens, civil society organisations and enterprises can play a central role in triggering a more sustainable expansion of people's capabilities and human rights in an effort to tackle multidimensional poverty and inequality**.

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Cover:

South Sudan. Voluntary members of the Oxfam water and sanitation committee head into Jamam refugee camp to speak to young women about the vital importance of good hygiene practices.

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