

# Sustainable Development: A Local Government Opportunity?

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this paper is to account for how local governments and international cooperation between municipalities can help achieve sustainable development. A combination of document analysis and information gained through interviews shows that local governments are in a unique position to respond to and address today's development challenges. Local governments play a vital role in educating, mobilising, and responding to the public to promote sustainable development. After studying the different models for international cooperation, we can observe that municipal cooperation in Europe and the MIC programme outside Europe take place on unequal grounds. The existing partnerships in Europe are strongly embedded in the political and economic European processes while North-South municipal cooperation does not yet have a common international framework. This has an impact on the scale, strength and elaboration of programmes, as well as on resources used for the management and implementation of North-South cooperation. Participating in municipal international cooperation programmes can offer many benefits like cultural awareness, reduced prejudices and stereotypes, increased understanding of global inequality, and knowledge of the partner community and country. This knowledge can be used to regard its own work and community in a new light. However, there are several issues that limit the effects of the projects for the Norwegian municipalities, like the size and needs of the cooperating municipalities. The lack of knowledge and competence can also hinder the cooperation from having a larger impact.*

## **PREFACE**

Today's development challenges require the participation of all stakeholders in order to achieve sustainability. Despite several recommendations from the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), local governments no longer play a significant part of Norwegian development cooperation. With this in mind, the purpose of this paper is to outline how local governments and international cooperation between municipalities can play a role in sustainable development.

First and foremost we would like to thank our informants for providing us with solid information on rather complex issues. Our informants have been enthusiastic in relation to the overall project, and have contributed substantially to our results and findings. Moreover, we would like to thank KS' International Projects and our contact person Bjørn Rongevær for giving us this task, as well as for providing us with relevant documents, and thoughts for reflection and ideas. The four months we have spent working on this project have been intellectually stimulating and interesting. We would also like to thank Einar Braathen for his excellent guidance throughout this process. Finally, we would like to thank Tian Sørhaug, Eric Breit and Runar Forsetløyken for making Prosjektforum an exciting and meaningful experience.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ALAT - Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania

ALGAK - Association of Local Governments of Kenya

EEA - European Economic Area

EU - European Union

KS - The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities

LGAs - Local Government Authorities

LPS - Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments

LSA - Association of Local Authorities of Lithuania

MDGs - Millennium Development Goals

MIC - Municipal International Cooperation

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

NIBR - Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research

ODA - Official Development Aid

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments

UN - United Nations

UNDG - United Nations Development Group

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Background: KS' International Projects and the MIC programme**

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) has been involved in international activities for almost two decades, and coordinated projects in over 20 countries. In international cooperation, governance reform and decentralisation programme support are generally channelled through the central government. However, it is often at the local level that the services and programmes to tackle poverty related issues are delivered, as the municipalities themselves create a direct link to the population. The very concept of the Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) programme is based on the idea of sharing information and mutual learning (KS 2009). MIC's main aim was to support democratic institutions of local government. The strategic goal for good governance processes is to be included in municipal governance and services. Both parties are to play an equal and inclusive role when it comes to the overall aim of capacity building. As stated in the 2013 edition of the KS' MIC guidelines:

*“Capacitated local governments can contribute substantially to achieving development goals through service delivery, yet they are largely ignored by development actors. NGO activities are often directed towards providing services locally, such as in education and health, but this can create an accountability vacuum and weaken the relationship between people and local government. Instead, Municipal International Cooperation (MIC) encourages capacity building, which enables local authorities to fully deliver on their mandate and provide appropriate, relevant and sustainable services to their citizens” (MIC 2013: 1).*

The main goal of the MIC programme is to be a help to partners outside Europe, though benefit to the Norwegian partner municipality is also a concern. The objective has been to contribute to the decentralisation of public responsibilities, resources and power to local-level authorities. KS is a local government association, which role is to guide, manage, monitor and evaluate the different projects. It is up to each municipality to go through with the actual cooperation process (Norad, 2014: 1). In 2014 the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) decided to discontinue the funding on the grounds that the MIC programme had been showing poor results (Holm-Hansen, 2015: 14). The department *KS' International Projects* will be referred to as KS in this report.

## 1.2 Object of Study

Our aim is to account for how local governments and international cooperation between municipalities can help achieve sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are important for this achievement, and will therefore be described and discussed in reference to local governments. We have chosen four main countries of reference; Kenya, Tanzania, Latvia and Lithuania. Furthermore, we discuss how Norwegian authorities view municipalities as a potential actor in development practices both within and outside Europe. Finally, we choose to account for the benefits the MIC programme can have for Norwegian municipalities. The original mandate asked us to identify how local governments condition and affect achievement of SDGs 3 and 6:

*Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.*

*Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.*

However, we chose not to focus on health (SDG 3), water and sanitation (SDG 6) but on SDGs in general, due to the lack of relevant data. We have therefore used SDG 3 and 6 as implicit reference for our discussion, rather than measuring whether or not policies could be effective in the long term. With better time and resources in disposition, an exhaustive study could be done on municipal cooperation and its role in attainment of SDGs 3 and 6.

## 1.3 Research Questions

- ❖ *How can local governments play a role in achieving sustainable development?*
- ❖ *What role does municipal international cooperation play within and outside Europe?*
- ❖ *What are the benefits of engaging in municipal international cooperation for Norwegian municipalities?*
- ❖ *What hinder cooperation from having a larger impact in Norwegian municipalities?*

In the report we want to discuss the role local governments can play in sustainable development, account for the differences between Norway's international cooperation with the European Union (EU) and non-European countries, outline the benefits of the MIC programme and the limits that prevent cooperation from having a larger impact locally. Further, we hope to create attention to the general debate around effective development practices.



## **2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION**

### **2.1 The Qualitative Approach**

Due to the fact that we were faced with a vast amount of documents and had modest knowledge of the topic in question, we chose an explorative and qualitative approach. Our goal was to combine document analysis and semi-structured interviews to provide us with a more complex understanding of the importance of municipal cooperation, and thereby help us to answer our research questions. The analysis of reports and documents demands a conscious approach, and a theoretical basis is both useful and necessary. We chose the theories of *good governance*; *political spaces*; and *local governments as service delivery agencies*. The theories are described and discussed in this report as our initial backdrop for reading and analysing.

### **2.2 Data Collection – Semi-structured Interviews**

Flexibility is one of the strengths of semi-structured interviews. It can provide the researcher with new information and key issues he or she might not have considered. This new information might change the theoretical focus, or raise issues that need to be further analysed and/or discussed (Album et al. 2010: ch. 13). Our intention was to let the theoretical perspectives and the issues brought forward by the informants challenge and strengthen each other. To fully understand what the informants can tell us about municipal cooperation, we had to analyse each interview in light of theory and concepts, and compare them with the interviews of the other informants. After reading through each interview, we interpreted the statements in light of the overall picture, trying to understand the tension between discourse and action. The whole purpose of the process was to add new perspectives to the debate on the role of local governments in sustainable development.

We have stressed the importance of open-ended questions in our interviews and tried to keep the dialogue as open as possible, and were therefore conscious on how we formulated our questions.

### **2.3 Choosing Informants**

We have chosen informants based on their relation to municipal cooperation and local authorities. KS has provided most of our informants, while the rest have been chosen based

on personal relations and/or experts in the field of international development. We do believe our scope of informants give us an insight to the complexities of the research questions as a whole. The topography of interviewees is rather scattered, not only in terms of geography but also in terms of experiences or the relation the informants have to municipal cooperation. We have undertaken 11 interviews and consulted with KS on three occasions. All the foreign informants have been involved in municipal cooperation projects through programmes coordinated by KS: three Latvian representatives (members of district council, city council and officer at LPS); one Lithuanian representative (LSA); and one Kenyan representative (ALGAK). Norwegian informants: one municipality mayor (no engagement in the MIC programme); three municipality officers (experience with international municipal cooperation and KS' projects); and two experts on international development.

## **2.4 Challenges**

Even though some of our group members have a background in development studies, it was still a large, complex and unexplored area for us. It was difficult to narrow down the subject of research while knowing that there were several aspects to focus on. As KS and Norad have different views on the role of municipal cooperation in Norwegian international development, we had to maintain impartiality throughout the process. We managed this by doing our own research, in addition to examining the important documents provided by KS, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), and Norad.

As mentioned before in part 1.2 we refer to four countries when we discuss cooperation within and outside Europe. As none of us have degrees in political science, and we only conducted five interviews with persons from the previously mentioned countries, we have not been able to fully grasp the context of the countries we are referring to. Nevertheless, our level of knowledge has been increased through contact with Norwegians who have worked in these areas earlier.

### **3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The local state has been a focus of decentralisation, especially in the South, where transferring state activity to its local entities has been seen as a way of making it more accountable and democratic (Johnson and Wilson 2007: 253). Rather than viewing local politics as a separate matter whose significance rises and falls in response to external trends, many theorists point out that local politics are critical arenas for learning the civic skills necessary for democratic practice as a whole. For many citizens, the most critical issues demanding political responses are everyday concerns that are the responsibility of local officials. Looking at it from this perspective local politics is necessary and independent of the larger context (Clarke 2006: 323). It can therefore be argued that local governance is and will be an important factor for democratic processes in the years to come.

#### **3.1 Local Governments as Agency of Service Delivery**

Local governments are often seen as the most responsive form of government because they are the closest and most accessible to the citizens (Reilly 2007: 50). They are responsible for ensuring equitable delivery of essential services, which include social services around health, welfare and housing (UCLG 2009: 10). What kind of tools do local municipalities have for an effective and quality assured service delivery? A well-known critique to local service delivery is that it focuses on budgets and numbers rather than on for example increasing the quality of local education, or better health in the population, or alternative tasks that are more difficult and demanding to measure (Hagen et al. 2006: 177). This is why good governance practices are important also in more general service delivery measures.

Good local management implies high performance not only in managing local services in order to satisfy customers and taxpayers, but also in enabling local communities to solve their own problems and to create better futures for the stakeholders (Bovaird et al. 2002: 9). There is a link between good governance and service delivery. One needs to know what the population demands in order to carry out these tasks.

#### **3.2 Good Governance**

“Good governance” has been a buzzword in international development since the 1990s. This concept refers to governance which “is consensus oriented, accountable, transparent,

responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law” (UNESCAP: 1). Good governance “also tries to ensure that corruption is minimised, and that the views of minorities are taken into account in decision-making processes. It is further responsive to both the present and future needs of a society.” (UNESCAP: 1) In other words, good governance is a framework for successful government in societies today. However, it is usually perceived as an aim and a framework for policies rather than a strategic goal in itself. Participation is the key word here, and this should be a central agenda in pro-poor policies. There is a space for citizens to interact with local authorities as long as those authorities are there to serve the people, and not the wealthy on top of the administrative structures (Braathen 2001: 293). If municipalities are to cooperate with each other, the municipalities have to be democratic in the sense that people’s participation is the most important factor.

### **3.3 Political Spaces**

It is further argued in the literature that good governance strategies can have many benefits for marginalised people by creating a space in which they can participate in matters relating to themselves. This is usually referred to in literature as political space. There is a tendency on the part of both donors and governments to regard marginalised people participation in projects and policy-making as essential in poverty reduction. “An understanding of local politics is accordingly necessary in getting to grips with national politics, which cannot be analysed solely in terms of national class struggles or state-society interactions” (Webster and Pedersen 2009: 21). Simply put, the challenge of political space consists of a transfer from political exclusion to political inclusion. It is therefore rarely created by the government as a centralised form of policy, but has to originate from bottom-up processes. Some initials can be done centrally, however without local participation of these excluded there are rarely any inclusion.

### **3.4 Benefits of Good Governance**

Ultimately, what benefits do good governance strategies have? First and foremost it is argued that people are more likely to have confidence in their local government if decisions are made in a transparent and accountable way, as they are systematically more involved in the process. This helps people feel that local government will act in the community’s overall interest. It also encourages elected members and council officers to be confident with each other, and they are more likely to feel better about their involvement in local government

when good governance is practiced. It further leads to better decisions that are informed by good information and data, and by open and honest debate, which will generally reflect the broad interests of the community. This does not assume that everyone will agree with each decision, but members of the community are more likely to accept the outcomes if the process has been democratic (Mav et al. 2012: 9). Finally, good governance also supports ethical decision-making when faced with the question “what is the right thing to do?” Making choices and having to account for them in an open and transparent way encourages honest consideration of the choices facing those in the governance process (Mav et al. 2012: 9).

## **4. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

### **4.1 Introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals**

#### **4.1.1 Brief Description of the SDGs**

Since Sustainable Development Goals constitute a part of the backdrop for the discussion around international municipal cooperation in this report, it is important to present briefly how this world-spanning United Nations (UN) initiative for sustainable development is being shaped. A set of Sustainable Development Goals is being composed on the basis of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The UN Millennium Declaration was adopted at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. The essence of the declaration, which became known as the Millennium Development Goals, was a “new global partnership for reducing extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015” (Millennium Project 2006). MDGs comprise targets for addressing various dimensions of extreme poverty (income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion), as well as for promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability and ensuring basic human rights (rights to health, education, shelter and security) (ibid.). As the end of the period for achieving the 8 MDGs was approaching, the UN engaged Member States and the international community into a process of developing a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals. At the moment of writing, the Post-2015 Development Agenda is still being elaborated and is to be adopted by the UN Member States at the Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 (UNDP 2015). Revisions and discussions on targets under certain SDGs are also still in process (IISD 2015). In the framework of Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, sustainable development was defined as the “guiding principle for long-term global development consisting of three pillars: economic development, social development and environmental protection” (UNCSD 2011). In the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, it was agreed that sustainable development goals must, *inter alia*, “be global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities” (UNDESA). Furthermore, it was important that the SDGs would converge with the Post-2015 Development Agenda (ibid.).

#### **4.1.2 Lessons from the MDGs on the Importance of Local Governance**

As stated in the Open Working Group’s proposal, SDGs should “build on the foundation laid by the MDGs” and “seek to complete the unfinished objectives of [these goals]” (OWG

2014). There is a general agreement that MDGs have been an important and influential undertaking that should be replaced by another agenda post 2015 (UCLG 2012: 12). However, many challenges have been identified in the evaluation and summarising of the process (UCLG 2012 *ibid*). In its draft of position paper on *The Role of Local Government Authorities in the UN Development Agenda Post-2015*, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) states that “most of the MDGs depend directly or indirectly on the provision of infrastructure and services” (UCLG 2012: 20). These in their turn “depend on a greater or lesser degree on local governments doing their job” (*ibid.*). UCLG, which is an umbrella organisation that represents and defends the interests of local governments, argues that the Post-2015 Development Agenda can only be successful if it “develops a sense of ownership and accountability at all levels”, not neglecting the sub-national level, and if “the local and regional authorities are recognised as critical agents in the achievement of most of the MDGs and SDGs” (UCLG 2012: 23). Thus, one of the most important lessons learned from summarising experiences from MDGs and elaborating on SDGs, is that national and local contexts are highly important (UNDG 2014: v). The critical role of local governments, the diversity of local stakeholders and how they relate to each other are emphasised, as well as the need to invest in capacities and resources at the local level (*ibid.*).

## **4.2 Local Governments and Development Cooperation**

### **4.2.1 Increasing Awareness of the Role of the LGAs in Development Cooperation**

Internationally, local authorities have been promoted as an important actor in development practices for over two decades (Johnson and Wilson 2007: 253). The establishment of North-South partnerships between municipalities was influenced by the Agenda 21 focus on local action (Johnson and Wilson 2006: 74). The World Summit of 1992, the UN conference on Environment and Development, introduced Agenda 21, where Chapter 28 discusses local authorities’ initiatives. It states that “because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives” (UN 1992: 28.1). The chapter underlines the importance of local authorities, stating that “as the level of governance closest to the people, they [local authorities] play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development” (UN 1992: 28.1). The OECD recommended to include local governments as stakeholders in international development. In 2005, *The Paris Declaration for Effective Development Aid* was approved by the OECD DAC countries to ensure effective achievement of the MDGs. When the Accra

Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation followed in 2008 and 2011, local governments were perceived as important actors to ensure effective development. Through the frameworks development actors:

*“committed to work more closely [...] with local authorities [...] in preparing, implementing and monitoring national development policies and plans” (Accra Agenda for Action), because “[...] local governments play critical roles in linking citizens with governments and in ensuring broad-based and democratic ownership of countries’ development agendas (Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation)” (Platforma 2013: 11)*

*Delivering the Post-2015 Development Agenda* highlights the importance of local governments playing an active role in international development cooperation, stating that it is “crucial to achieving development results” (UNDG 2014: 12). The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) emphasises that local governments are closest to the people, and thus in “a unique position to identify and respond to development needs and gaps”, and that “local governments can address development challenges through planned public policies defined, executed and monitored with the participation of citizens and relevant local stakeholders” (UNDG 2014: 13). Local governments can thus have an important position in development cooperation. However, it is important to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of such cooperation to ensure effective implementation. An overview of the strengths and weaknesses of local development cooperation can be found in Appendix I. The UNDG is asking national governments and international partners to acknowledge the role of local government in international development cooperation, and highlights access to basic services for all, including water and sanitation, as priority areas for local governments (UNDG 2014: 14).

There have been several changes in Norway’s development politics during the last 20 years. Until the beginning of the 2000s, Norad and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs used KS as a professional institution on capacity building (Norway, 27 April 2015). Since then Norway has turned from being an operator to mainly becoming a financier in development projects. This means that Norway is involved as little as possible on the project level. In addition to this, Norwegian development has become evidence based, which means that programmes that cannot demonstrate results will lose their funding (Norway, 18 May 2015).



These are reasons for why local governments no longer play a significant part in Norwegian development cooperation, despite several recommendations from the UN. Norwegian development cooperation with countries outside Europe is on two levels; either on state level or on grassroots level (Norway, 30 January 2015). Civil society is an important channel for Norwegian aid, and Norad cooperates with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) whose sole role is to strengthen civil society in the South (Norad 2011). One of the principals to support civil society is to strengthen local partner organisations, to secure sustainability and help promote the development of civil society (Norad 2011). Unlike in Norway, there generally seems to be a greater focus on the role of local governments in international development cooperation in Europe. However, this has not always been the case. In fact “until the last decade, neither national governments [...] nor the European institutions really understood the value and potential of local and regional governments’ contribution to international development” (Platforma 2011: 6). However, the framework of the European Union’s present development policy, the *European Consensus on Development* from 2006, states in article 16 that “the EU [...] encourages an increased involvement of national assemblies, parliaments and local authorities” (European Parliament Council Commission 2006/Platforma 2011: 6). The European Parliament contributed in changing the view on local governments. In 2007, it adopted “a resolution on local authorities as actors for development”, and this favoured the role and actions of local governments in the field of development (Platforma 2011: 7). Although local governments are now being recognised as a distinct actor in development, important challenges still remain to be addressed. There is a need to link local governments to the overall EU development cooperation processes; to develop more strategic approaches to supporting decentralisation and local governance in partner countries; and to provide new opportunities for local authorities to access relevant funding (Platforma 2013: 28).

#### 4.2.2 Localising the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Local governments can play a vital role in the implementation of SDGs, which will only be implemented effectively if embedded into both national *and* local processes. This is because local governments form a bridge between national governments, communities and citizens, as a result of their “critical role in setting priorities, executing plans, monitoring results and engaging with local businesses and communities” (ECOSOC 2014: 2). It is important that the SDGs are monitored through a bottom-up approach, as this will ensure sustainability and

local ownership (ECOSOC 2014: 1-2). This is a lesson learned from the MDGs, as these were elaborated in a top-down approach. In order for SDGs to be successful there is a need for “localising” the agenda. In other words, the strategies must be defined, implemented and monitored at a local level to ensure that the sustainable development targets are achieved at a global, national and subnational level (VNG 2015: 2).

## **5. NORWAY'S MUNICIPAL INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

### **5.1 Brief Description of Municipal International Cooperation**

#### **5.1.1 Purpose of MIC**

Traditionally, the partnerships were called “twinning”; today they are also called municipal international cooperation, local government development cooperation, decentralised or sub-national cooperation (Platforma 2013: 14). The main focus of a number of the partnerships is on exchanging knowledge between institutional partners, contributing to local development and capacity building, and improving the living conditions of the citizens (Platforma 2013: 14). The most successful municipal international cooperation “aim to address a need that is perceived to be a priority by the partner” (Platforma 2013: 19). Unlike other types of development programmes, the MIC programmes have no costs of expatriate staff or programme management units, and the overhead costs are less in these types of collaborative programmes. MIC programmes also achieve important results on relatively small budgets (Platforma 2013: 20). Mutuality is the whole idea behind the MIC programme. The cooperation should therefore not be seen as a relationship of donor and aid recipient, but as a partnership between peers who face similar problems and challenges, and who cooperate to solve them (Platforma 2011: 12).

#### **5.1.2 Outcomes of MIC**

While initiating the MIC programme, there seems to be a belief that there is a potential to build capacities and capabilities, and that both partners will benefit from the cooperation, through learning and equal knowledge transfer (Johnson and Wilson 2006: 74, 2007: 254). Although expecting an equal cooperation, Johnson and Wilson found that knowledge was valued differently. The northern partners' knowledge was often more valued than the southern partners' knowledge, even though the southern knowledge on the local situation would be essential for carrying out projects (Johnson and Wilson 2009: 212). Another challenge is that municipal international cooperation leads to inequalities, as the Southern partners' capabilities to make changes in practice are reduced by material and financial resources (Johnson and Wilson 2007: 267). In 2012 Platforma conducted an evaluation on several MIC programmes, and found that most of them were too ambitious on what they hoped to achieve. Some of the projects were also quite fragile. However, the evaluation also found that the programmes are relevant and have a high level of sustainability compared to other development cooperation programmes (2013: 20-21). The evaluation Platforma

conducted showed that the four most highlighted outcomes of MIC programmes were “improved public service delivery; a strengthened role of local authorities in ongoing decentralisation processes, allowing them to manage local development in a better, more effective way; accomplishment of principles of transparency, effective citizen participation and accountability; and a boost for local authorities credibility and recognition for their role as driving force behind local development” (Platforma 2013: 21).

## **5.2 Norway’s International Cooperation with local governments**

Norway’s international cooperation with local governments, associations for local and regional authorities as well as with ministries and institutions responsible for local and regional affairs can be divided in three categories: 1) cooperation with member states of the European Union, 2) cooperation with other member states of the Council of Europe and 3) cooperation with the rest of the world.

KS runs its own programmes or is a programme partner within all three categories (respectively): 1) KS operates as donor programme partner for cooperation with EU member states in European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway Grants financial mechanism, 2) KS has several cooperation projects with member states of the Council of Europe, which are not members of the EU. These partnerships are financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and are designed to build “strong and stable local democracies in other regions” (KS 2015: 3); 3) KS had a MIC programme for cooperation with countries in Eastern Africa, Guatemala and Western Balkan region. The discussion in this report revolves around cooperation with two EU-member countries (further in this chapter often referred as *European* partnerships, cooperation etc.) and two countries that were partners in KS’ MIC programme. For general information on these four countries see Appendix II. For specific information on projects, partners and how these are funded in the four countries, see Appendix III.

### **5.2.1 Europe: Framework of EEA and Norway Grants and Projects**

Cooperation with local governments and related stakeholders within EU-countries are funded through the European Economic Area and Norway Grants financial mechanisms (KS 2015: 3, 13). EEA and Norway Grants are mechanisms dedicated to “help to reduce economic and social disparities and strengthen cooperation with 16 countries in Central and Southern

Europe” (EEA Grants-Norway Grants 2014: 4). Since 2011, KS has had a role of a donor programme partner in five countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania (EEA Grants 2014 a). In several programme areas, Norwegian municipalities and regional authorities are project partners with municipalities within beneficiary partners (EEA Grants - Norway Grants 2010). Municipal partnerships under EEA and Norway Grants mechanisms cannot be defined as pure MIC models due to a more complex programme approach and several stakeholders involved.

#### *Cooperation projects with Local Government Authorities in Latvia and Lithuania*

In the programme period 2009-2014, both Latvia and Lithuania were beneficiaries in the Norway Grants programme for Capacity-building and Institutional Cooperation between Beneficiary State and Norwegian Public Institutions, Local and Regional Authorities (EEA Grants 2014 b, c). Sharing experiences between municipalities and study visits can be activities implemented in other programme areas. In Latvia, four pre-defined projects have been implemented within the framework of this programme. Two of the latter projects involve regional Latvian and Norwegian authorities. Objectives for the projects are 1) entrepreneurship and innovation in local municipalities in Latvia and 2) increased territorial development planning capacities of planning regions and local governments (EEA Grants 2014 d). In Lithuania, no project results are yet reported under this programme as call for project applications were due at the end of March 2015 (EEA Grants 2014 e).

#### 5.2.2 Cooperation with Non-European Countries: Framework of KS’ MIC programme

KS’ involvement in municipal cooperation with countries outside both the EU and the Council of Europe was formed as a separate programme - MIC. The programme was financed the by Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and functioned in the period 1997 - 2014. The programme supported small-scale cooperation on specific topics between Norwegian municipalities and local authorities in several African countries, Guatemala, and the Western Balkan Region (KS 2013: 24-25, Holm-Hansen 2015: 13). The MIC programme in the Western Balkan region is not an object of this report. The programme has differed in terms of more advantageous funding, activities and possibilities for supervision (Norway, 20 May 2015). The MIC programme was evaluated and adjusted for improvements during its existence. As a result, the final version of the guidelines (2013) recommended cooperation in the field of

competence of the municipalities both in Norway and in the Southern countries involved (KS 2013: 25, Holm-Hansen 2015: 18). In the adjusted guidelines certain principles for partnerships were outlined. These were formed in accordance with principles in the *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation*: ownership of development priorities by developing countries; focus on results; inclusive development partnerships; and transparency and accountability. MIC's principles were: programme sustainability, coherence with the plans of partner countries, recipient responsibility, support from other actors, national mobilisation and utilisation of own competence (MIC 2013: 5-6).

#### *Cooperation with Kenya and Tanzania*

During the last period of the MIC programme (2011-2014), several partnerships were established between Norwegian municipalities and municipalities in countries referred to in this report.

#### **Partnerships with Kenya:**

- *Melhus – Taveta partnership*: The aim was to build capacities in technical infrastructure planning, water and sewerage, waste management, climate change, energy, environmental protection, agriculture and health. Methods included exchange visits, training, and material support. As Holm-Hansen reports, participation and commitment were created on both sides of the partnership that contributed to a waste disposal system in the municipality (2015: 30-1).
- *Skodje – Voi partnership*: The partnership focused on capacities related to waste management and recycling and was implemented through training, exchange visits and provision of waste disposal equipment. The system for garbage collection and several other spheres in municipal activities are reported to be improved, and greater transparency to be achieved. However, Holm-Hansen accounts neither for involvement, accordance to MIC guidelines nor for ongoing processes in Voi (2015: 31-2).
- *Porsgrunn – Kisumu partnership*: The partnership evolved from the Friendship City agreement. The project was implemented through training and exchange visits. The partnership focused on activities related to differences and similarities in legislation and planning processes in both countries. Due to implementation of the new Constitution (2010) and ongoing changes in local government, planning was among

current issues in Kisumu. Additionally, partnership focused on enhancing women's participation in economic development (Holm-Hansen 2015: 35-6).

#### **Partnership in Tanzania:**

- *Aust-Agder/Arendal – Mwanza partnership:* The project concerned waste management and raising awareness about the issue, and was implemented through trainings, exchange visits and working with universities. Further compliance to programme guidelines is not reported by Holm-Hansen (2015: 33-34).

#### 5.2.3 Differences between Cooperation within EEA and outside Europe

Contextual and structural differences have strong implications on why European and non-European cooperation programmes are operated in different manners. EEA and Norway Grants are professionalised, systematic large-scale approaches to Norwegian cooperation. Programmes where local authorities and local capacities are in focus are thus a part of a larger mechanism with accumulated experience and structured guidelines. KS' MIC was a small-scale programme administered by one single public actor and with no defined role in Norwegian international development. Many of the principles outlined in the final guidelines version are in line with requirements discussed in the framework for EEA mechanism (programme sustainability, coherence with plans of partner countries, recipient responsibilities, result based management etc.) (MIC 2013: 5-6). Ongoing regional processes and the EEA agreement dictate that cooperation in Europe are important in terms of strengthening bilateral relations and lowering inequalities in the region. European partnerships are an outcome of, *inter alia*, the Council of Europe's Charter of Local Self-Government and the EEA agreement. The existence of these partnerships is strongly interrelated with the political and economic European landscape. The partnerships are established and implicated in national and European legislations, whereas an international charter for local self-government and international mechanisms for LGAs cooperation does not yet exist. Thus, municipal cooperation in EEA and Norway Grant mechanisms within Europe and in the MIC programme outside Europe are operated on quite unequal grounds. This has an impact on the scale, strength and elaboration of programmes, as well as on resources used for management and implementation.

Furthermore, 16 EU beneficiary states are characterised as middle-income economies with expanded institutional capacities, as well as robust economic and social policies. EEA beneficiaries differ from countries that receive official development aid (ODA) (Norad 2008: 16). Given this, one may assume that partner selection in municipal cooperation in Latvia and Lithuania is less problematic than matchmaking in MIC partnerships with Kenya or Tanzania. As a matter of fact this aspect proved to be challenging as two basic preconditions for MIC to work was: 1) “functional equivalence between municipalities across state borders, also North-South” and 2) “that value is added as a result of bringing municipal equivalents together in specific activities” (Holm-Hansen 2015: 4).

In the interviews it came forth that Latvian and Lithuanian partners did not see any major differences between LGAs in Norway and their own countries. Even though the level of financing, development of infrastructure, and some differences of cultural background were mentioned, these did not provoke any considerable drawbacks in the partnerships (Latvia and Lithuania, May 2015). Cultural differences between Norway and Eastern African countries are more evident compared to Eastern European countries, which also made the cooperation with the South more complicated (Norway, 23 March 2015). A Kenyan respondent outlined that the lack of budgetary allocations by local authorities, and the lack of popularisation and ownership of projects within local authorities could be challenging and affect the outcome of the projects. Other aspects, such as the lack of staff commitment and politicisation of the development process by different stakeholders within the participating local authorities, were also mentioned (Kenya, 31 March 2015).

Informants from Latvia, Lithuania and Kenya agreed that the role of local governments should be strengthened. Their main argument was that local authorities are closer to the people than other tiers of public institutions, and have the most comprehensive knowledge of challenges, needs, and solutions suitable for the community (Latvia and Lithuania, May 2015). As one of the informants indicated, in many cases in Africa strengthening the role of LGAs is as important as effective provision of basic services (Kenya, 31 March 2015). LGAs should be strengthened through increasing awareness and information sharing as active participation in global processes like the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III are of high importance. People in local communities are in need of services related to health, education, logistics etc. as stated in the SDGs, independent of nationality. Even though there are differences in how well the local democracy and local services work, the principles are



the same. The subsidiarity principle is still “a foundation of local governance, and should secure the best possible services for the local population, regardless of structures, budgets and economy” (Norway, 06 May 2015). In the organisational review of KS, it is stated that despite the fact that decentralisation is gaining ground internationally, and Norwegian authorities are supportive to the idea of municipal international cooperation, “KS is left alone with the task of conceptual development” (Holm-Hansen 2009: 16). From the current KS perspective, no considerable changes have happened, and the debate on the topic is near to non-existent with exception of occasional statements on the topic from KS (Norway, 06 May 2015).

### **5.3 The View on Municipal International Cooperation: KS and Norad**

As explained in part 4.2.1 local governments no longer play a significant part of the Norwegian development bilateral cooperation programme channelled through Norwegian agencies such as KS. In a Decision Document from March 2014, as a reply to an application from KS, Norad decided not to continue funding the MIC programme. The Decision Document states that “even though KS and the municipalities are steady organisations, there is reason to question whether the municipalities have adequate competence on international development to carry out projects in a way that is sufficient with what Norad considers as positive development”, and that “it is unclear what the municipalities have contributed with” (Norad 2014: 3). The Decision Document emphasises that “there is a strong assumption in the municipal cooperation on that the experiences and competence Norwegian municipalities possess are relevant and can easily be transferred to the partner-municipality.” The Decision Document also states that there seems to be an assumption that because Norway has a strong municipal sector, competence can be transferred to municipalities in the South, and that this equates capacity building. KS is criticised for not defining what they mean with capacity building, and what kind of competence they mean to transfer, whether it is technical, democratic, economic etc. and who in the Norwegian municipality should contribute with the competence. It does not matter if the Norwegian municipalities have competence on certain areas if the employees in the programme do not have the necessary competence or ability to contribute in the short and long term (Norad 2014: 3). There seems to be an assumption among KS that Norwegian municipalities are relevant in development processes only by virtue of being municipalities themselves, and Norad is left with the impression that “the

programme consists of small, single, partly traditional aid projects, carried out by operators with limited expertise in aid and development” (Norad 2014: 9).

KS sees municipalities as important actors in development cooperation outside Europe, and finds it logical that municipalities can cooperate with each other, as they are “similar and have the same principles, [...] challenges and thoughts”. KS therefore believes a lot can be accomplished both within and outside Europe (Norway, 06 May 2015). An international development expert says that the municipalities “know Norway [...] and that plenty of what we do in Norway can be transferred, but we are not the ones to decide what others should do” (Norway, 05 May 2015). Another on international development expert states that there is no doubt that there are several countries with development needs and weak local management, but whether Norwegian municipalities can contribute with strengthening these countries is rather uncertain (Norway, 27 April 2015). KS states that they focus on local democratic processes and service delivery (Norway, 06 May 2015). The second international development expert says that development is very complex, that one can do great damage with small funds, and that this is something one needs to respect. The informant also states that “it is positive that Norwegian municipalities and the Norwegian people are engaged in what happens in the world, but it is more important that there are positive results” (Norway, 27 April 2015). The first international development expert asks what the Norwegian municipalities can contribute with, and says that some of the municipal representatives have been “completely ignorant on the level of own knowledge, [...] lacked competence, and should have stayed at home” (Norway, 05 May 2015).

KS suggests that they should be “better at operating the Norwegian municipalities, so they can deliver on something they have knowledge about, and do what they know best”. KS also finds it necessary to assist the municipal organisations in the countries they work, and provide background- and contextual information (Norway, 06 May 2015). The second international development expert believes that the Norwegian municipalities are the ones who have gained the most from the MIC programme, and that even though it is important that Norwegian citizens understand “what is going on in the world”, this does not justify an implementation of municipal cooperation. The expert therefore suggests that KS could be a “bank of knowledge” that gathers experiences and spreads this to other actors (Norway, 27 April 2015). This could be a good idea, as KS has worked in many countries outside Europe,

and has gathered plenty of knowledge throughout the years, which can be useful for its own members and other organisations.

According to KS the MIC programme has failed partly as a result of insufficient funding, resources and time. There are almost no resources given to the training of contextual understanding in project countries. KS states that they can only use “8% of what the municipalities spend on managing the MIC programme on administrative purposes”. In other words, there is almost no funding to spend on training people in contextual understanding (Norway, 06 May 2015). KS has therefore not been able to provide the municipalities with the necessary contextual understanding to conduct the cooperation, nor have they been able to follow up or help the partners maintain focus. The second international development expert finds it important to understand the culture, history and context in the country they cooperate with, and that Norwegian municipalities lack necessary knowledge; “one cannot show up with a Norwegian municipal model and say this is how it should be” (Norway, 27 April 2015). The first international development expert states that some of the partners have been distraught by Norwegian delegations “who came and did everything wrong. They did not understand the culture or the language, and this is necessary to be able to do the job”. The expert goes on to say that the municipal representatives must have sufficient competence before they are allowed to visit the programme areas, and that councillors are not the right people to go on such trips (Norway, 05 May 2015). The second international development expert says that “Norwegian municipalities are not experts on development. They travel out in the world and see a world characterised by poverty [...] and therefore it can be difficult to focus on municipal cooperation. [...] Suddenly the cooperation can turn into a focus on one particular school rather than municipal cooperation, and then one begins on something that is more about traditional cooperation on a civil society level; what NGOs traditionally have done”. In other words they “leave the role of municipality behind” (Norway, 27 April 2015).

KS believes that one of the reasons why the MIC programme failed was because it received funding from the wrong department in Norad - the Department for Civil Society. In their opinion it would be more suitable to fund the programme through the Department for Economic Development, Gender and Governance. The Department for Civil Society has a different focus than KS, and according to KS this department lacks understanding of the importance of local governments in international development (Norway, 20 May 2015). After a report on the MIC programme ordered by Norad in 2009 KS received feedback on how to

improve. “We tried to refine geographically and thematically, but we could not make the programme smaller” (Norway, 06 May 2015). As the Department for Civil Society has a civil society perspective, the representatives from KS and the Department for Civil Society are talking past each other. KS states that “if something were to happen in e.g. Uganda, civil society rather than local governments would deliver services, as a result of a poor understanding of what a municipality is and what it is capable of. Civil society cannot take the municipality’s place. They can help, but not take its place”. The representative from KS also states that they were unable to convince the Department for Civil Society and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the importance of municipalities, and that local governments are worth pursuing in international development (Norway, 06 May 2015). The first international development expert believes that KS still can play a part in international development, but that they have done a poor job as “they have undermined what they really can do when they have argued that they are so powerful etc., but have not distinguished themselves or taken any initiative” (Norway, 05 May 2015). To prevent failures in the future, KS prefers to receive funding from the Department for Economic Development, Gender and Governance, and succeed in convincing the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that municipalities can be actors in development cooperation outside Europe (Norway, 06 May 2015).

#### **5.4 Is There a Future for Municipal International Cooperation?**

In order to see if KS could start a new programme, NIBR published a report in 2015 with a purpose to sum up results from the last MIC programme period (2011-14) and identify lessons for the future. See Holm-Hansen (2015) for the conclusions and recommendations. If the MIC programme should have a future, there are some aspects that need to be taken in consideration. It is important to know the needs of the community one is cooperating with, and doing this requires competence. Gender equality, women rights and democratisation are themes that often are mentioned and highly valued in Norway, however as the first international development expert stated, “one cannot speak about gender equality to people who almost have no money to survive. Gender equality and women’s rights are important matters but one cannot start with that” (Norway, 05 May 2015). One informant suggested to focus on fewer areas, use sufficient time for training of participants, and to gain knowledge on the municipality or country one is cooperating with in order to improve the MIC programme (Norway, 09 April 2015). Another informant mentioned that KS should “ensure

that MIC projects are publicly recognised within local authorities as projects that are for the benefit of residents, and that they are included in the development plans of the participating local authorities” (Kenya, 31 March 2015).

Despite important arguments for why MIC has a future, there are also arguments against this. The second international development expert does not have faith in the concept, as KS has carried out the MIC programme for years, and tried to improve without really achieving sufficient success. Instead the informant highlights South-South cooperation, and says that this might be an alternative to today’s MIC programme (Norway, 27 April 2015). South-South cooperation would mean that KS either is not an actor in development at all, or that it works as an advisor, and facilitates the cooperation between the partners in South. The MIC programme has also been criticised for lack of competence and knowledge. The first international development expert states that one cannot pretend to be carrying out development if that is not what one does, that development is characterised by quality and competence, and that the MIC programme has neither (Norway, 05 May 2015). The second international development expert says that Norwegian municipalities lack knowledge, and that it is unrealistic “to believe that a Norwegian organisation can have in-depth knowledge on e.g. 35 countries and situations” (Norway, 27 April 2015). The recent report on *The Office of the Auditor General’s investigation of development aid to good governance and anticorruption in selected countries* by the Office of the Auditor General of Norway provides another argument against a future for MIC. The report shows that the sustainability of the municipal international programme is weakened as the employees are replaced frequently (Office of the Auditor General of Norway 2015: 67).

## **6. MIC: A LOOK AT NORWEGIAN MUNICIPALITIES**

### **6.1 Benefits from International Cooperation for the Norwegian Municipalities**

Contribution to a global citizenship is clearly one benefit of municipal international cooperation. Participating in the MIC programme has had positive effects, although it has been difficult to measure the impact of the intangible benefits for the North compared to the more tangible results in the South. In an earlier KS report about Gran municipality, it was mentioned that there was learning both on the personal and professional levels. Some benefits for those involved in the project were stronger cultural awareness, reduced prejudices and stereotypes, and an awareness of global inequity. In addition to that, they developed new friendships and an increased motivation for their work. They improved their language skills in English, which made several of them more comfortable with having international contacts through their work. In the same report it is stated that “going from individual learning to institutional learning is a huge step that is not easy to achieve” (Bjørndal et al. 2012: 12-24).

One positive aspect with working internationally is that it provides relevant information about the community and the country one is cooperating with. As mentioned in 5.2.3 of this paper, working with countries in Eastern Africa emphasised the cultural differences and was more complicated than cooperating with Eastern European countries. Since the Eastern European countries have a culture that is closely related to the Norwegian culture, the cooperation was less complicated. However, learning about cultures that are in contrast to what one is used to is also one of the reasons behind the initiation of the projects. The second international development expert states “it is so important that the Norwegians understand how things work in different contexts and experience things in a different way other than what is provided to us by the media” (Norway, 27 April 2015).

To know more about how things work in other contexts is positive, but an additional feature is knowing that one can use the experience back home, in a given community. Furthermore, learning by observing how others do things differently could “lead to better knowledge for local authority problem-solving” (Johnson and Wilson 2007: 255). The first international development expert states that “cultural understanding that comes by working with other countries helps to execute better tasks in its own context” (Norway, 5 May 2015). Another informant expressed that “Norway is too bureaucratic, which gives little room for manoeuvre. No matter if it is a mutuality project or a development project, there is always a possibility to

learn. We do not always have the best solutions. There are other and probably better ways of doing things” (Norway, 27 March 2015). The knowledge received by the municipalities can also be used to understand the inhabitants better, and facilitate communication between minority groups in the community. This type of knowledge, which is mainly tacit, gives information on “‘ways of doing’, how people live, travel and perceive issues that are important in understanding the background of citizens of migrant origin” (Van Ewijk and Baud 2009: 222). It promotes and increases tolerance among the population. “We have experienced that it gives important competence back to our community, which has many immigrants from Africa,” one informant stated (Norway, 20 February 2015). Several times during the interviews, the subject of immigration was mentioned. An informant stated that participating in a municipal international cooperation could be a “win-win situation”, where both the employees and the inhabitants of the municipality could increase their knowledge towards specific population groups in the community (Norway, 20 February 2015). This could be a way to break barriers and reduce the gap between the immigrants and the local population. The second international development expert pointed out that connecting immigration, and new population patterns with MIC projects could be a good idea, and is something that could be more emphasised through KS cooperation (Norway, 27 April 2015).

Participation of the local population in a municipality is essential and often a sign of good governance practices. Participation in elections for example, shows that mainly resourceful people are involved, while the young and marginalised groups are less represented and harder to reach. People engage easier in matters they feel affected by, and in cases that are related to their life (Klausen et al. 2013: 109). Evidence shows that specific projects that apply to target groups, like students and marginalised groups, can use municipal international cooperation to stimulate dialogue with minority groups, build bridges between different groups in society and lower the participation threshold in the community.

## **6.2 Hindrances for Cooperation from Having a Larger Impact Locally**

An important aspect for KS has been the concept of mutual benefits. The focus should not only be on contributing, but also on the idea that cooperation can impact Norway as well. However, there are several issues that limit the effects of the projects and benefits for the Norwegian municipalities.

### 6.2.1 Spreading Engagement and Knowledge

International projects create both knowledge and enthusiasm. However, some of the challenges with these projects are to spread the engagement and to disseminate knowledge among employees in the municipality. Some of the reasons for the lack of transfer of knowledge, also mentioned in a KS report from 2012, were the lack of time and resources given to the programme and the fact that international projects often were not prioritised compared to other administrative tasks (Bjørndal et al. 2012: 28). Johnson and Wilson mention that municipal cooperation is based on the idea that tacit and codified knowledge can be shared, but that the challenge concerns the potential to go beyond the individual to institutionalise experience within the organisation itself (2009: 211). Another aspect that they underline is to what extent these sorts of projects need to go beyond local governments to wider public engagement and what sort of public engagement is required (2007: 264). If it is desired, how can municipal employees involved in international projects spread their engagement and knowledge to the wider public?

### 6.2.2 Size of the Municipality

The size of the municipality one is cooperating with does not only play an important role for the participation and the information flow, but also for the effectiveness of the project in itself. Working abroad with a large municipality, and having to relate to thousands of municipal employees can make the cooperation more difficult and the measurement of the results more complicated. The cooperation between Melhus (15 000 inhabitants) and Taveta in Kenya (13 300 inhabitants) was a good example of a successful partnership (Norway, 23 March 2015). The NIBR report from 2015 states that “this partnership comes very close to the core intervention logic of MIC as conceived by KS and the MIC partners” (Holm-Hansen 2015: 30). There are several reasons for the success of the project, for example the size of the municipality and the amount of employees in the municipality; “we see that it is easier to have a breakthrough in a system when we collaborate with smaller municipalities like Taveta [...]. We experienced that the main challenge that we faced in Mwanza (700 000 inhabitants) was that we had to relate to two thousand employees”, indicated one informant (Norway, 23 March 2015). Another source mentioned that in the largest Norwegian municipalities, things are more institutionalised and bureaucratic than in smaller municipalities; “it is easier to connect with people in smaller municipalities because things are less professionalised”



(Norway, 27 March 2015). Participation in general is higher in municipalities with few inhabitants (Klausen et al. 2013: 102).

### 6.2.3 Needs of the Municipality

One of the reasons why local government units wanted to participate in EEA and Norway Grants projects was that the project would fit with a specific need in the municipality. It was indicated that “the local government units which gained the most benefit were those who found a project which best fit with their own needs and strategies” (KS 2015: 5). As previously mentioned in part 4, the most successful projects are those where the partner in South decide the priority of the project. The second international development expert stated that it has to be the needs of the beneficiaries that define the type of the projects for the cooperation. If not, the Norwegian municipalities could be more concerned on meeting their own needs, than the real needs in the country they are cooperating with the informant specified (Norway, 27 April 2015).

### 6.2.4 Lack of Knowledge and Competence

Working with international municipal cooperation requires time and resources, but also the right knowledge and competence. The MIC programme concentrated the projects on common issues, like waste management, gender equality, improvement of governance and service production. Some of the projects are more oriented towards development than others and require knowledge and competence in the area. A challenge that employees in a municipality often face is that they are not development experts, i.e. they might not have all the resources and competence needed to accomplish their tasks. Another important challenge is that these projects could be deprioritised compared to other tasks.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Should there be a future MIC-like scheme, several perspectives need to be considered. Seen from the international perspective on the role of LGAs, the debate on the MDGs have come to the conclusion that local governments should be involved in sustainable development process to a larger extent. When the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be adopted at the Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, it will be necessary to take the outcome of the summit into consideration. Furthermore, it is important to initiate a more consequent and vibrant debate on the issue with participation of all relevant stakeholders, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad and KS. Furthermore the Norwegian government should listen to the recommendation from the OECD and establish a clear and professional strategy for their bilateral development cooperation where local authorities' role and added value are discussed. A joint programme approach including development experts, public institutions (local and national authorities), academia and research institutions, NGOs, public and private enterprises (as in the EEA Grant mechanism) could be an emerging idea for further inclusion of municipal cooperation.

From the practical perspective for operation of the programme, it is recommendable to fund the programme through another department within Norad. As KS is an Association for Local Government Authorities and works for different prioritised areas than NGOs in general, the programme would benefit from funding from the Department for Economic Development, Gender and Governance.

From the perspective of programme implementation, a close focus on needs in the partner municipality in the South should be decisive for the nature and the scope of the project. Partner municipalities have the best expertise of the local situation, and greater degree of the ownership creates possibilities for sustainability. Thus, adhering to the principles stated in the programme guidelines is of great importance. Furthermore, sustainability can be increased by mapping out both the needs of Norwegian municipalities and potential municipalities in the South. Therefore it is recommended to obtain an overview of what the partner in the South needs and what the municipalities in Norway can offer to be able to match resembling municipalities to achieve a greater outcome. The projects have a greater chance of succeeding if the size of the municipalities is similar and if the needs are perceived as a priority.

This leads to a recommendation related to benefits for Norwegian municipalities. The knowledge received from municipal international cooperation can be used to understand inhabitants better, and facilitate communication between minority groups. It can be used to reduce the gap between local people and immigrant groups, by breaking barriers, stimulating dialogue, building bridges between different groups in society and lowering the participation threshold to the community life. For that matter, choosing partner municipalities from countries where Norwegian immigrant groups are originally from can be taken into consideration. For small municipalities within and outside Norway, inter-municipal cooperation could be positive in order to gather enough resources for projects that are too demanding for a single municipality and allow better service production and outcome.

The MIC programme that ended in 2014 was considered too ambitious on what it wanted to achieve. If a new programme is to be created in the future, it should to a greater extent than before focus on fewer countries, and narrow the scope of the projects. Comprehensive understanding of cultural context is essential, therefore spending time and resources on training the participants in these matters is important.

It is highly recommended that KS improves the communication strategy as there are mayors of Norwegian municipalities who have never heard of KS International Projects. Those who have heard of the international projects mention a necessity for clearer communication by narrowing the information that is sent out. In order to improve the effects of municipal international cooperation for Norwegian municipalities, employees involved in the projects should continue to work on strategies to disseminate information and knowledge through the municipalities and beyond.

Finally, some of the informants suggested that KS could be an advisor. As a knowledge-intensive organisation, it could contribute with relevant information and guidance to its own members and other organisations. If the MIC programme is re-established, KS could function as an advisor in addition to programme coordinating. Should the programme not be re-established, it would still be useful for other organisations to benefit from KS' experiences and knowledge. Regardless of the outcome it is recommended that KS operates as an advisor.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Local governments are in a unique position to identify and respond to development needs and gaps and can address development challenges. As the level of governance closest to the people, local governments play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development. SDGs will only be implemented effectively if the agenda is implemented both nationally and locally. The goals should be monitored through a bottom-up approach, as it will ensure sustainability and local ownership.

Municipal cooperation in EEA and Norway Grants mechanisms within Europe and in the MIC programme outside Europe takes place on quite unequal grounds. European partnerships are an outcome of, *inter alia*, the Council of Europe's Charter of Local Self-Government and the EEA agreement. Existence of these partnerships is strongly interrelated with the political and economic European processes. Certain areas are seen as the arena for prolific cooperation between local governments in Norway and beneficiary countries in terms of strengthening of bilateral relations, as well as to reducing economic and social disparities. Despite the fact that LGAs have been promoted as an important actor in development practice for over two decades, North-South municipal cooperation is not yet recognised in achievement of sustainable development.

In addition to a possible contribute to sustainable development, participation in municipal international cooperation offers many benefits. These include stronger cultural awareness, reduced prejudices and stereotypes, understanding of global inequity, and knowledge of partner community and country. This knowledge can be used to regard its own work in a new light, and to understand the inhabitants of the municipality better. Furthermore, it can reduce the gap between the local population and minority groups, by stimulating dialogue, building bridges between different groups in society. However, there are several issues that limit the effects of the projects for the Norwegian municipalities. It might be challenging to spread engagement and knowledge to the employees in the municipalities. The size of the partner municipalities influences the effectiveness of the cooperation; differences in size might make it less likely to succeed. The needs of the cooperating municipalities may vary. If the project is not defined by the needs of the municipality in the South, the employees in the partner municipality are less likely to take ownership of the project, and it is improbable that the project will be sustainable. Finally, carrying out cooperation while lacking knowledge and competence can do more damage than good.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix I: Strengths and Weaknesses of LGA Development Cooperation**

#### **Main strengths of LGA development cooperation**

- Local government development cooperation works through existing structures, as opposed to project offices: LGAs are legitimate, key public institutions for the long term;
- The partnerships make use of the unique in-depth knowledge that LGAs have of:
  - Responsibilities as providers of concrete basic services to enhance local communities' quality of life
  - Being accountable institutions towards citizens
  - Implementing and advocating for decentralisation and devolution policies;
- The ability of LGAs to build linkages between the partners' local civil societies; and
- The potential for peer learning.

#### **Main weaknesses for effective implementation of LGA development cooperation**

- Donor agency financing programmes are governed by regulations that are not always adapted to the reality of local governments, as they are conceived by donors rather than by LGAs. This makes partner ownership and accountability difficult;
- Lack of financial resources for LGA development cooperation; and
- Inadequate legal framework for cooperation at the national level.

Weaknesses that can be addressed by LGAs themselves include:

- Most of the partnerships between local governments don't use sufficient systematic approach. Therefore, a concentration of partners in some local government exists, whereas others lack of support or don't have partners that support them;
- The priorities of the "southern" partners are not always achieved. The ownership of programmes remains a point of discussion;
- Partners may suffer from a lack of continuity due to political changes;
- Many partnerships suffer from a lack of professionalism:
  - Too little focus on results
  - The work and results are not strategic or transferable enough
  - Monitoring and evaluation is insufficient;
- Many partnerships do not benefit from citizen support; and
- Partnerships between local governments lack coordination and remain fragmented.

Source: UCLG 2013: 18-19

## **Appendix II: Information about countries used as reference**

### *Latvia*

Latvia is a unitary state composed of 110 municipalities and 9 cities which have either autonomous, delegated by the state or voluntary competences. The autonomous competences include: water and heating supply, waste management, public services and infrastructure, public management of forests and water, primary and secondary education, culture, public health, social services, child welfare, social housing, licensing for commercial activities, public order and civil protection, urban development, collection of statistical information, public transport, on-going training for teachers (CEMR 2014 a). Latvian municipalities and cities are represented by the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LPS).

### *Lithuania*

Lithuania is a unitary state with 60 municipalities which enjoy a strong role and has autonomous or delegated competences. Competences comprise budget, pre-school, primary and secondary education, civil protection, culture, environment, sanitation, housing, transport, labour market measures and promotion of entrepreneurship, primary health care, public services and municipal property management, spatial planning, local development, sports and tourism (CEMR 2014 b). Local authorities of Lithuania are represented by Association of Local Authorities of Lithuania (LSA).

### *Kenya*

Kenya is unitary multiparty republic. In 2010, Kenya has adopted a new constitution, that introduced decentralised government structure of 47 counties. The county structure was phased in after general elections in 2013 (EB 2015). Country has 175 local authorities that are represented by Association of Local Governments of Kenya (ALGAK) which was established 50 years ago. ALGAK has a mandate “to lobby and advocate for devolved, sustainable and democratic local government system in Kenya, advocate for good governance in member local authorities, build capacities of members, network with partners” (UCLG Africa 2012). Kenya Vision 2030 states an objective of “transforming Kenya into new industrialising, middle income country providing high quality of life to all its citizens” (Hongo 2010). In the document, local authorities are envisaged to become “democratic and responsive institutions that deliver quality and affordable services to Kenyans” (ibid.).

## *Tanzania*

United Republic of Tanzania is a unitary republic based on multiparty parliamentary democracy. Tanzania Mainland is divided into 21 Regions and 114 Districts. The country has 161 LGAs, 132 old ones and 29 new ones (PMORALG 2014 a). Local Government Reform Process has dominated the period after 1998, while implementation of the reform had several phases (PMORALG 2014 a). Poverty reduction, improved quality, access and equitable delivery of public services, particularly to the poor was long-term goal with the Local Government Reform programme (PMORALG 2014 b). In 2000, Tanzania implemented one of its core reforms, which emphasised decentralisation-by-devolution (D-by-D), where LGAs are seen as the “main vehicles to deliver quality public services to Tanzanians, especially to the poor, and giving them more powers and responsibilities as well as resources” (PMORALG 2014 c). The Local Government Reform Program II was planned to be finished by 2014 (PMORALG 2012: vii). In the Regional Administration and Local Government Strategic Plan for current years, LGAs are defined as “key institutions in delivering social services especially education, health and water in both Urban and Rural areas” (PMORALG 2012: vi). Local government authorities in Tanzania are represented by the Association of Local Authorities (ALAT) which has 168 members - Urban (City, Municipality, Town) and District Councils (ALAT 2013).

### Appendix III: Projects 2011-2014

		<b>PROJECTS</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>	<b>FUNDINGS</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>				
	2012-2014	Donor Programme Partner for the programme Capacity- Building and Institutional Cooperation between Lithuanian and Norwegian Public Institutions, Local and Regional Authorities	Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania	€ 76,000 EEA for 2012  Norway Grants € 65,000 for 2013  Norway Grants € 38,000 for 2014
	2012-2014	Decent Work and Tripartite Dialogue	Lithuanian Trade Union of State, Budget and Public Services. Association of Local Authorities of Lithuania.	€ 74,917 for project period 2012-2014 Norway Grants  € 21,778 for project period 2013-2014
<b>Latvia</b>				
	2012-2013	Donor Programme Partner for the programme Capacity- Building and Institutional Cooperation between Latvian and Norwegian Public Institutions, Local and Regional Authorities	Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development in Latvia	€ 76,000 EEA for 2012  Norway Grants € 14,000 for 2013
	2014	Donor Programme Partner for the programme Capacity- Building and Institutional Cooperation between Latvian and Norwegian Public Institutions, Local and Regional Authorities	Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LPS) State Regional Development Agency in Latvia	Norway Grants € 285 650 for the entire project period 2014-2015

<b>Kenya</b>				
	2011-2014	MIC	Melhus – Taveta Porsgrunn – Kisumu Skodje – Voi	€ 50,000 per year per project Project period 2011 – 2013 Norad  € 21 500 (Melhus-Taveta) € 13 600 (Porsgrunn – Kisumu) € 12 600 (Skodje – Voi) Final year Norad
<b>Tanzania</b>				
	2011-2014	MIC	Aust-Agder/Arendal – Mwanza	€ 50,000 per year Project period 2011 – 2013 Norad  € 26 000 Final Year Norad

## Appendix IV: Revised mandate

### Bakgrunn

Kommunesektorens interesse- og arbeidsgiverorganisasjon (KS) har vært engasjert i internasjonale aktiviteter i nesten to tiår, og har koordinert prosjekter i over 20 land. KS er opptatt av kommune-til-kommune samarbeid, og i 1999 ble programmet MIC (Municipal International Cooperation) iverksatt. Programmet mottok økonomisk støtte fra Norad frem til utgangen av 2014.

Norske myndigheter anerkjenner kommunale myndigheters kompetanse og merverdi i utforming og gjennomføring av norskstøttede programmer for sosial utjevning mellom EUs medlemsland. Et spørsmål som har inspirert vår problemstilling er hvorfor kommune-til-kommune samarbeid som benyttes i Europa, ikke implementeres i særlig grad i land utenfor Europa. Norge stiller i sitt utviklingssamarbeid utenfor Europa opp på to arenaer for innsats - stat og sivilsamfunn.

Kommuner som myndighetsutøvere er i større grad enn tidligere anerkjent i forarbeider til Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Selv om lokale myndigheter ikke er spesifikt nevnt i «Open Working Group» sitt utkast til SDGs som skal vedtas under FN toppmøtet i september 2015, sier FNs generalsekretær i sin rapport «The Road to Dignity by 2030» (des. 2014 - punkt 128) at den nye bærekraftige utviklingsagendaen må implementeres lokalt med full involvering av lokale myndigheter.

### Oppdrag

Denne rapporten vil utformes på makronivå. Fokuset vil være på rollen kommunal myndighetsutøvelse må ha i arbeidet for å få til bærekraftig utvikling på et utvalg områder SDGs, spesielt SDGs 3 og 6 (innenfor sanitære forhold og helsesektoren) i Latvia, Litauen, Kenya og Tanzania.

*Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. (3.1, 3.2, 3.4 & 3.9)*

*Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. (6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 & 6.b)*

## **Problemstilling**

- *Hvordan kan lokale myndigheter spille en rolle i oppnåelsen av bærekraftig utvikling?*
- *Hvilken rolle kan kommune-til-kommune samarbeid spille i og utenom Europa?*
- *Hva kan norske kommuner få ut av et internasjonalt kommune-til-kommune samarbeid?*
- *Hva begrenser effekten av et sânt prosjekt i de norske kommunene?*

## **Mål for Prosjektet**

Målet for denne rapporten vil være å gjøre rede for om lokale myndigheter og samarbeid mellom kommuner internasjonalt kan bidra til måloppnåelse av SDGs. I tillegg vil vi diskutere hvordan norske myndigheter ser på kommunale myndigheter som en potensiell aktør i utviklingssamarbeid i og utenfor Europa. Dette vil belyses gjennom dokumentanalyse, og intervjuer.

Det overordnede målet for dette prosjektet er å rette oppmerksomhet og bidra til den generelle debatten rundt effektivt utviklingssamarbeid. Gjennom samtaler med interessetakere ønsker vi å rette søkelyset mot potensielle nye strategier og nytenkende metoder, men også belyse de strukturelle utfordringene for de enkelte kommunene.

## **Appendix V: Form of Consent**

Vi er fire studenter på masterprogrammet Organisasjon, Ledelse og Arbeid på Universitetet i Oslo. De neste månedene skal vi utarbeide en rapport om internasjonalt kommune-til-kommune samarbeid på vegne av oppdragsgiver KS Internasjonale Prosjekter.

Formålet med rapporten er å gjøre rede for om samarbeid mellom kommuner internasjonalt kan bidra til å bedre blant annet vann og sanitærforhold, vaksinasjonsprogram osv. for befolkningen i de ulike kommunene. I tillegg vil vi diskutere hvordan norske myndigheter ser på kommunale myndigheter som en potensiell aktør i utviklingssamarbeid i og utenfor Europa.

Problemstilling er som følger: Hvordan betinger lokal myndighetsutøvelse og kommune-til-kommune samarbeid måloppnåelse av Sustainable Development Goals 3 og 6? I hvilken grad fremmes desentralisering av kommune-til-kommune samarbeid? Hvordan ser norske myndigheter på betydningen av kommunal myndighetsutøvelse for måloppnåelsen i norskstøttede tiltak i Litauen, Tanzania og Kenya?

Vi ønsker å intervju et bredt utvalg av informanter, med ulike bakgrunner. Vi ser at du [knytte intervjuobjektets relevante bakgrunn til grunnen for ønsket om å intervju] og derfor forespørres du om å delta.

### **Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?**

I studien vil vi benytte datainnsamling, gjennom intervjuer og fokusgrupper, som krever aktiv deltakelse fra intervjuobjektene. Intervjulengden vil være ca. 30-45 minutter.

Spørsmålene vil omhandle erfaringer innen dette feltet, samt personlige meninger og synspunkt på kommune-til-kommune samarbeids begrensninger og muligheter innen utviklingssamarbeid.

Dataene vil registreres i lydopptak, og vil bli transkribert til tekst etter intervjuet.

### **Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?**



Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det er kun prosjektgruppen som vil ha tilgang til personopplysninger.

Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 31.05.15. Personopplysninger, opptak og notater vil bli lagret frem til 01.09.15, etter dette vil personopplysninger og opptak/notater bli slettet.

### **Frivillig deltakelse**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

## Appendix VI: Interview Guide

### Informantens posisjon og rolle

Hvilke erfaringer har du med kommune-til-kommune samarbeid? (Jobbet mest i Norge, eller fokusert på andre land? i EU eller utenfor EU?)

- Fortell litt om deg selv og ditt engasjement rundt dette tema.

### 1. [Hvilken rolle kan lokal myndighetsutøvelse og kommune-til-kommune samarbeid spille i måloppnåelse av SDG om primærhelse og vannforsyning i og utenfor Europa?]

Lokal myndighetsutøvelse:

- Hvilken betydning vil du si styrking av kommunale myndigheter har for lokalsamfunnet?
- I en god del rapporter står det at hvis man vil lykkes med SDG trenger man å bruke lokale myndigheter i en mye større grad enn før. Hva tenker du om det? Har du noen tanker om hvordan det kan blir gjort?
- På hvilken måte vil du si at kommunal myndighetsutøvelse har betydning for norske myndigheter?
- Er det behov for en sentral stat for å drive vannprosjekter og helseforetak, eller kan dette gjøres på kommunalt nivå?

Kommune-til-kommune samarbeid:

- Hvordan ser du for deg at kommune-til-kommune samarbeid kan fremme bærekraftighet?
- Hvordan vil du si at kommune til kommune samarbeid kan bedre forhold relatert til primærhelse og vannforsyning?
- Relatert til primærhelse og vannforsyning - hvilke uintenderte konsekvenser kan oppstå som følge av dette?

### 2. [Har kommunene i Europa samme funksjon utenfor Europa?]

- Kan det stemme at kommuner utenfor Europa ikke har samme funksjon som i Europa? Hvorfor det? Hva kan gi kommuner mer verdi? Hva kan styrke dem som aktør?

Tilleggsspørsmål:

- Tidligere har det blitt nevnt i rapporter utarbeidet av NORAD og andre at ”merverdien” av slike prosjekter er sett, men at det ikke kan foretas noe konkret for bedring av helse og sanitær. Det er derfor sett på som et ”mykt” form for prosjekt. Hva tenker du rundt dette? Er det muligheter å effektivisere et slikt program?
- Hva gjorde at Norad i 2014 anbefalte å avslutte programmet for internasjonalt kommune-til-kommune samarbeid?

### **3. [Merverdi av internasjonalt kommune-til-kommune samarbeid (for Norske kommuner)]**

- Det er en stor debatt rundt merverdi. Hvordan definerer du “merverdi”?
- Har du noen tanker om hva som kan endres for at det skal bli mer effektivt i fremtiden?
- Hvordan kan man synliggjøre effekten/verdien/e.l. av et slikt samarbeid?
- Er det viktig for norske kommuner å stille opp på slike prosjekter? Hvorfor?
- Tror du det hadde hatt noen innvirkning på din kommune som samfunn hvis man inngikk et slikt prosjekt, der befolkningen også kan bli involvert i prosessen? Hva da i så fall?
- Hva kan hindre at disse prosjektene kan ha mer effekt i egne kommuner?

**Ikke alle spørsmål har blitt stilt. Det har også vært oppfølgingsspørsmål vi ikke har gjort rede for her. Det har også vært alternative intervjuguider som er spisset mer til informanten sin bakgrunn.**

## **LIST OF REFERENCES FOR APPENDICES**

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