Implementing the SDGs by Subnational Governments: Urgent Need to Strengthen Administrative Capacities

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Abstract

The international agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals signed in 2015 specify that the SDGs will be implemented by national governments and that countries should also embark on SDG implementation at subnational level such as municipalities or provinces. This paper focuses on SDG implementation at local authority level of large cities and explores the needed competences and capacities in goal attainment. Within the time span 2015-2030, changes of political leadership will be inevitable and hence continuity and policy coherence will be essential to make SDG implementation successful by 2030. The 17 SDGs are interdependent goals requiring effective inter-ministerial policy coordination and equally effective consultation with the private sector and civil society stakeholders. Developing effective mechanisms of coordination and consultations takes time and can be easily overturned subsequent to a change of government and administrators putting the sustainability of the society and gains from SDG implementation at risk. The authors describe the main features of the SDGs and of urban development and suggest that an application of ISO 18091 could be a practical method to ensure continuity of administrative performance needed to sustain implementation of the SDGs at local authority level.

Keywords: SDGs at subnational level, local authorities and SDGs, ISO 18091 for SDG implementation at local government level, governance.

Introduction

On 25th September 2015, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets which set quantitative and qualitative policy objectives for the next 15 years. It also includes 230 indicators to measure the countries' progress in implementing the SDGs. The goals and objectives span across the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability and are supposed to be achieved by 2030. They are meant to provide a framework which can be implemented by "all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership."[1,2] This ambitious agenda aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Responsibility for the achievement of the SDGs lies with the national governments,

however local governments are at the centre of the SDG implementation. There is no doubt about the inherent need for a well-functioning and well-managed local government in order for the SDGs to become lived reality. This paper aims to contribute to the question of how SDGs can be successfully implemented at a local level particularly at the level of cities and larger municipalities. Specifically, the focus of this paper is on the SDGs 16 and two of its targets which provide the necessary instrumentality in carrying out the 2030 Agenda. As such, two of the 169 SDG targets are of particular importance namely, Target 16.6 and Target 16.7. They set the institutional preconditions for a successful implementation of the SDGs. These two targets are aligned with good governance principles often deficient or under-developed in many countries. The two targets are:

·   16.6 *Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels*
·   16.7 *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels*

The aim of this paper is to discuss the relevance of these two SDG targets for the SDG implementation by national and particularly by local authorities and to offer suggestions and tools on how local authorities could align their governance system to achieve the two targets.

The methodology used for this study is both normative and narrative. Normative in the sense that the authors consider effective functioning of local governments a very important and understudied factor of SDG implementation. Narrative in the sense that the authors will draw on existing documents from credible sources. An interdisciplinary perspective will be adopted in order to gain insights from these sources and in order to build adequate arguments why well-functioning local governments are needed for the objective stated above. Subsequently, a transfer of knowledge based on a quality management system is used to propose a toolbox to move the agenda forward. The methodology used for this study borrows from work done by Anne Sigismund Huff et al (2009).

Why improvement of local governments essential for SDG implementation?

It can be difficult for citizens to participate in the policy-making process at a national level, especially when there are few possibilities to participate and engage with governments, and when the governance and government infrastructures are too weak or simply too remote for civil society participation. On the other hand, it is relatively easier to participate at a village, town or city level for instance by participating in a local council or by communicating with the urban council or the city administration through personal networks. The close proximity between citizen and local government allows for direct communication which is an important aspect of the local administration. Besides providing effective and efficient service delivery, local government are obliged (in most cases) to provide a forum for citizen inputs regarding service delivery so as to enhance its service quality, service coverage and responsiveness to citizens' initiatives.

"Local governance ... includes the diverse objective of vibrant, living, working, and environmentally preserved self-governing communities. Good local governance is not just about providing a range of local services but also about preserving the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development, and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents. (De Vries, 2016, p.67)"

Faced with the complex tasks of managing the transition to sustainability, creation of viable local governance conditions based on transparency, participation and accountability, are crucial since an integrated and cross-sector approach to development is novel and little tested especially in the developing countries. Institutional learning is urgently needed in this context, which relies on a steady and reliable flow of feedback loops from government to civil society and business stakeholders, and vice-versa. Countries with limited capacity and limited public policy competence have already encountered difficulties in collecting census data from their citizens and business organizations. They will have even greater challenges to overcome when attempting to collect performance and impact related data or citizen feedback to improve their administrative processes and services. Such information gaps create barriers to understanding the needs and wishes of their citizens and difficulties to provide the social services expected of them. Referring to a publication by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the following citation is relevant for our study which states:

"Without a well-managed urban transition in developing countries, it is difficult to see how the SDGs could be achieved. Further, city governments are responsible for implementing many of these goals. A recent study suggests that up to 65% of the SDG targets are at risk should local urban stakeholders not be assigned a clear implementing role (Cities Alliance, 2015). Although decentralization levels vary by country, it is often within local governments' remit to deliver basic services - water, sanitation and land-use decisions leading to housing provision, amongst others - that are closely linked to many of the goals. In short, to achieve the SDGs, local governments need to be involved (Lucci and Lynch, 2016). Yet, with few exceptions (UNSDSN, 2016; Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments et al., 2016), little work has explored to date the implementation of the SDGs at city level." (ODI, 2016, P. 3)

One may also add, little work has been done on how governments learn and adapt in a structured coherent manner. Hence, it is not clear how local administrations could gear up their management capability and respond innovatively to the needs and expectations of their stakeholders. Without institutional adaptability to the rising performance demands and expectations, it is also difficulty to imagine that local administrations could leverage the multitude of opportunities that SDG implementation offers for smart and sustainable development.

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Efficient and effective government and respect of the law are the additional ingredients of good governance and are especially important at local level where governments interact with citizens and communities on a daily basis. Improving local governance can boost economic development, maximize administrative efficiency, and ensure social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Essentially, to strengthen the governance capability and government performance is a necessary precondition for effective implementations of the SDGs. The question is what tools are available to advance the quality of governance and the performance capacity of local authorities in a sustained manner through continual learning and improvement?

Urban context of SDG implementation

Urbanization is one of the most important drivers that will shape the global economy in the coming decades of the 21st century. For the first time in human history, over half the world's population (54%, according the UN DESA Report in 2014) now lives in urban areas. As a proportion of global population, the urban population is expected to reach 60% by 2030, with urban areas growing at a rate of 1.3 million people every week. Historically, high income countries have tended to go through rural to urban transitions, driven by dynamic cities that act as regional economic hubs and engines of growth. According to the World Bank, "72% outperformed their countries in terms of economic growth" (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 2). Consequently, the potential benefits of this urban growth are substantial. Urban growth is rapidly transforming the economic landscape of emerging markets, while the economic importance of cities in high income countries will continue to grow. Although the potential benefits of urban development are substantial, poorly managed urban growth is likely to occur economic costs as well.

The urban context is important for the implementation of the SDGs especially in the developing countries where urban populations are growing rapidly, particularly in Asia and Africa, the least urbanized regions to date (ODI, 2016). Several West African countries found their level of urbanization increased to almost 50% during the period from 1950 to 2010. For example, urbanization reached 48% in Côte d'Ivoire, 48% in The Gambia, 47% in Cape Verde, 46% in Nigeria, 46% in Togo, and 45% in Ghana (OECD, 2016). In India, "the urban population will increase from 28% in 2001 to nearly 50% by 2020" (Sridhar, Kashyap, 2014). This new trend is accompanied by sustainable development issues such "high population density, environmental pollution and deprivation" (Prono, 2017) not to mention housing shortage, traffic congestion, air and water pollution and crime.

The economic potential of urban growth is driven by increased productivity resulting from the concentration of people, talents and economic activities in cities. Concentrated economic and social interactions create a vibrant market and fertile environment for innovation in ideas, technologies, products, services and processes. However, poorly managed urban growth can reduce the economic benefits of urban concentrations and increase material and immaterial costs. Poorly managed growth is

defined here as urban development that results in substantial economic, social and environmental externalities. These externalities can arise from, among others, urban sprawl, inefficient public transport infrastructure, energy inefficient buildings, air pollution, social exclusion and a lack of basic services such as energy, water and waste. These characteristics can be seen in many cities worldwide, as part of a business as usual scenario. Poorly managed urban growth also leads to the inefficient use of energy, waste and excessive greenhouse gas emissions. Urban sprawl and high levels of motorization can increase urban carbon emissions substantially, both in terms of embedded emissions in the production of infrastructure and from transport operations, creating a vicious cycle of dense population, low efficiency and high negative spillover effect of production and daily activities.

The choices that countries and cities make today about managing urban growth will lock-in economic and climate benefits - or costs - for decades to come. The life span of capital intensive, largely irreversible urban infrastructure investments such as waste and water treatment, roads and buildings typically range from 30 to 100 years, and the path dependencies created by urban forms are sustained over centuries. Historical path dependencies can be seen in the widely varying rates of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions today among cities with similar per capita income and climate, due to past policy decisions that have shaped their urban centers, transport systems and energy efficiencies. Over the next decades, this will be particularly important for cities in emerging economies. For example, 70-80% of the urban infrastructure that will exist in India in 2050 has yet to be built (Floates, Rodehttps, 2014).

Local government can make a difference when designing the national and global development agenda. For instance, local actions can avoid mistakes made in the past prior to the current level of knowledge and scientific evidence regarding man-made climate warming. To illustrate this point, Colombia can be a good example of making inclusive investment at the local level in line with the good governance principles. Columbia is among the first countries to include 92 out of 169 of the SDGs targets[3] in its national development plan (Lucia et al, 2015). Bogota's mayor made efforts to significantly improve the sustainability and social equity of its transport systems[4].

The 2030 Agenda negotiation process and the participation of local authorities

Since the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 - known as the Earth Summit, it was recognized that achieving sustainable development would require the active participation of all sectors of society and all types of people. Agenda 21, adopted at the Earth Summit, drew upon this sentiment and formalized nine sectors of society as the main channels through which broad-based participation would be facilitated in UN activities related to sustainable development. These are officially called "Major Groups" and include the following sectors: Women,

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Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community, Farmers and other stakeholders like the Elderly and Disabled People.

Two decades after the Earth Summit, the importance of effectively engaging these sectors of society was reaffirmed by the Rio+20 Conference. Its outcome document "The Future We Want" highlights the role that Major Groups can play in pursuing sustainable societies for future generations. In addition, governments invited other stakeholders, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities, to participate in UN processes related to sustainable development, which can be done through close collaboration with the Major Groups.[5] Organizations which partake in the Major Group play an important role as they prepare negotiation positions during meetings at the United Nations pertaining to Sustainable Development agenda items. The negotiation process was analyzed by Yiu & Saner (2014).

'Local Authorities' are one of the major groups that has been designated by the Agenda 21 to represent all the local authorities of all of the UN member countries with the aim to contribute to the implementation of the SDG implementation process. An important sector specific organization, "United Cities and the Local Governments (UCLG)", is acting as one of the organizing partners of The Local Authorities Major Group (LAMG) and brings together international networks and organizations that represent local and subnational governments from all continents in the world.[6]

The representative organizations of LAMG consist of "ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability" based in Bonn, Germany; "United Cities and the Local Governments (UCLG)" based in Barcelona, Spain and the "nrg4SD Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development" based in Brussels, Belgium.

UCLG represents and defends the interests of local governments on the world stage, regardless of the size of the communities they serve.[7] In keeping with the goals of SDG 16.6 and 16.7, UCLG's work programme focuses on:

· Increasing the role and influence of local government and its representative organizations in global governance
· Becoming the main source of support for participatory, effective, innovative local government close to the citizen
· Ensuring an effective and participatory global organization.

As UCLG represents all forms of local governments, large or small three categories are used to create common and differentiated approaches:

1. regions, towns and small municipalities
2. intermediary cities
3. peripheral cities, metropolitan cities

Each category is distinct and faces different challenges. Not only do the cities between and within the categories differ in size, each city is a unique complex phenomenon with its own economic, environmental and social processes and structures, which are set in and build upon a particular cultural context and historical background. When approaching problems at a local level the contextual, structural, institutional and human resources conditions need to be evaluated and fully understood so that local authorities can be enabled to implement the SDGs successfully.

The interdependence of the SDGs and corresponding challenge to local government

The 2030 Agenda has been advocated as an "indivisible whole" due to the significant interactions of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions which exist between and within the goals. Although some of these goals and targets are mutually supportive, others are constraining. (Nilsson et al, 2017). The interlinkages and interdependencies amongst the 17 SDGs have been analyzed by David LeBlanc (2015) an example of his analysis is given in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 SDGs as networks of Targets (Le Blanc, David, 2015)
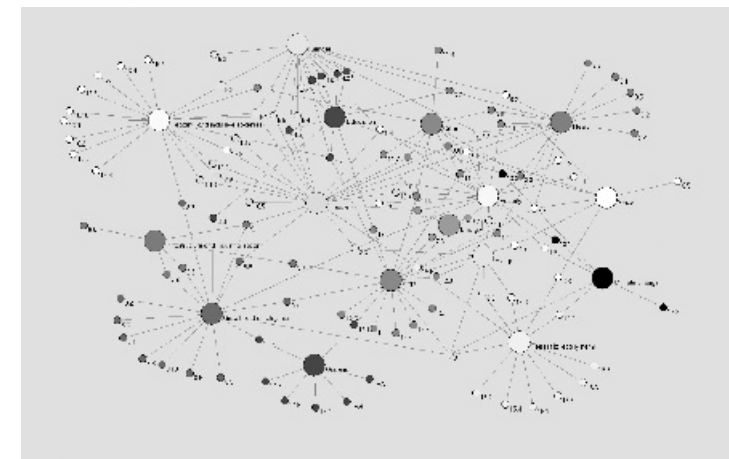
Source: UNDESA Working Paper No. 141, ST/ESA/2015/DWP/141; New York.

Hence, implementing the SDGs at national or subnational levels of government means knowing and working with policy trade-offs and seeking multiplier effects through bundling goals as much as this is possible. It is impossible to attempt implementation of all 17 goals the same time. Instead, the prioritization of development needs of a city or municipality is required which in turn requires a SDG implementation strategy that reaches towards 2030 (Boas et al, 2016), that can be financed, implemented by a sufficient number of able civil servants and negotiated with a city's main stakeholders (citizens, business, academics, NGOs). How to maintain timely information flows and how to keep track of the state of affairs of their citizens and business community, becomes a challenge in itself. Effective functioning of Information management as well as of knowledge management necessitates a systemic

approach consisting of centralization of key information in a transparent manner but at the same time ensuring inclusivity and participation of the respective stakeholders. Such an information management infrastructure could support a more integrated approach to sustainability and safeguard (hopefully) of coherence of the parts.

Policy coherence of SDG implementation requires that local government officials actively engage in inter-ministerial (cross-sector) policy coordination and at the same time conclude government to stakeholder policy consultations. Policy coordination and consultation (inter alia PCC) requires know-how and ability to design and manage governmental policy mechanisms (Saner, 2009a, 2009b). Without PCC mechanisms and practices, government officials will continue to work in silos and in a vertical manner at the expense of managing horizontal interfaces needed to achieve greater policy impact and desired outcome of enhanced sustainability.

According to the 2030 agreement, the SDGs should be implemented based on transparency, inclusiveness and participation. These important principles represent major challenges to national and local governments such as:

1. Citizen Participation

    According to the UN Public Administration Glossary, citizen participation:

    "...implies the involvement of citizens in a wide range of policymaking activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programs toward community needs, build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within neighbourhoods." (UN On-line Glossary)[8]

2. Accountability

    The UN General Assembly resolution 63/276 defines accountability as such:

    "*Accountability is the obligation of the Organization and its staff members to be answerable for delivering specific results that have been determined through a clear and transparent assignment of responsibility, subject to the availability of resources and the constraints posed by external factors. Accountability includes achieving objectives and results in response to mandates, fair and accurate reporting on performance results, stewardship of funds, and all aspects of performance in accordance with regulations, rules and standards, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions." (UN General Assembly, 2010, p.5)*

3. Transparency

    Denotes "unfettered access by the public to timely and reliable information on decisions and performance in the public sector" (Armstrong, 2005, p.1)

4. Inclusiveness

    According to the UN DESA strategy to promote social integration:

    "An inclusive society is a society that over-rides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography, and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction. (Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration, Helsinki, July 2008)" (UNDESA, 2009, p.8)

These new areas of work resulting from implementing the 2030 Agenda in order to "leave no one behind" could be daunting for public administrations that have been used to operate behind closed doors taking decision unilaterally without consulting either citizens or other administrative agencies. New competencies and capabilities need to be acquired in order to better manage the SDG's inherent inter-sectoral interfaces and partnership arrangements.

Importance of capacity building to achieve effective administrative functioning of local authorities (structures, processes and regulatory instruments)

Citizens expect all their needs to be satisfied in such a way that public programmers and services will express authentic public policies and values, taking into consideration ethical principles and basic human rights. Short of living up to these expectation, unintended consequences may result, such as apathy, a lack of development impetus, poverty trap and exodus.

It is possible to build stronger regional, national and even global government working from the local level, based on managing the quality of the public products/services and increasing the confidence of the citizens in their government at local, regional and national level. Citizens expect Local government to respond to for example calamities with resilience, in a timely and effective manner when natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes and tsunami occur. These disasters are increasing due to climate change and extracting disproportional costs in material, physical and human life terms.

These expectations have to be met with a well-functioning "machine" at the local level, which cannot be achieved without robust organizational and management tools, clear work procedures which define cross-sector roles and responsibilities and skilled civil servants. Unfortunately, these conditions are often missing at the local administrative level in the developing countries.

Public administrations in all parts of the world are also faced with multiple pressures to innovate and improve effectiveness and efficiency. Reforms range from New Public Administration (NPM) to other forms of reorganizations like "gestion

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publique par contrats" (France, Belgium) resulting in various variance of New Public Administrations (NPA). While many of these reforms may have proven successful, criticism vis-a-vis all forms of public administrative reforms have increased. Neither NPM nor NPA have a documented track record of success and debates abound about the democratic legitimacy of NPM or the economic effectiveness of NPA.

Concerned citizens and government officials alike are looking for methods to find a common ground to assess the quality of public administrations be they based on NPM or NPA. Quality assessment methods offer a transparent method of assessing the performance of public administrations and provide feedback for continual improvement (Saner, 2002).

Although levels of decentralization vary from one country to another, local governments are often responsible for delivering and maintaining basic services such as road, water, sanitation and land-use decisions leading to housing provision, amongst others. Basically, local governments are challenged to improve access, coverage and quality of services which are necessary for successful implementation of the SDGs without necessarily getting budget increase. For them to operate efficiently local governments need, among other things, competent personnel and good organizational structure. Local governments have to embark on an organizational learning journey on a continuous basis taking for example the case of Slovenia at the time of its nation building (Saner & Yiu, 1996). Government and administrative learning can be fostered through the capacity building enhancement of quality management systems.

Strengthening Institutions of Local Authorities of Municipalities

Strengthening institutions of local governments goes hand-in-hand with the consolidation of stable and well-functioning institutional and organizational arrangements. The achievement of sustainable urban development and ultimately the success of the New Urban Agenda (a more detailed definition of SDG 11 states "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable") and further "ensure peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all (SDG 16)" are intimately conditioned on the quality of human resources, the strength of institutions and the institutional and regulatory frameworks that they operate (Targets 16.6 & 16.7).

Often cities are confronted with three common issues which will become even more acute when more than 7 billion people will be living in urban areas by 2050. These should be the priority areas for capacity building and competence development:

1. Affordable housing: *uncontrolled urbanization, slum formation (due to scarcity of affordable housing), informal land development processes, lagging investments in infrastructure, lack of housing planning and zoning by city and local governments*

2. Sustained Financing: *weak capacity to levy and collect revenues, inability to apply land-based finance instruments, lack of application of modern tools regarding*

urban land management, and effective use of alternative financing instruments such as public-private partnerships for financing the SDGs.

3. Generation of decent jobs and employment*: the density of populations too often creates exploitation and precarious working conditions. Weak capacity in work force planning and skill development coupled with poor labour inspection and welfare administration have condemned many to the fate of working poor without minimum social protection.*

Understanding the underlining challenges of urbanizations and having tools and knowledge to solve them are key but not enough if the institutional and organizational environment as well as the urban governance systems are not developed along with the initiative to strengthen the capacity of individuals and cadres.

Capacity building should not be limited to the administration either. Other stakeholders need also to cooperate in order to create the systemic capacity needed by the local authorities which would in turn enable them to implement the SDGs, namely:

· Local governments**:** technical skills, ability to connect different areas of urban development and manage conflict resolution between interests and demands on location and land use

· Civil society organizations**:** technical skills, knowledge and the ability to meaningfully participate in decision making while exercising their rights and press for safeguarding the public goods

· Private sector**:** capacity to participate in urban development and to contribute where they are best in terms of innovations, technology, finance and management tools

· Universities**:** development of knowledge, practical skills and competencies required to understand and manage urbanization within a dynamic and volatile environment; ability to play an active role as a stakeholder in sustainable urban development

As with other aspects of SDG implementation, collaboration, partnerships and exchange of experiences will be crucial to advance the integration of SDG implementation at local, national and global levels (Chaitanya et al, 2016, Coopman et al., 2016).

Strengthening local authorities through application of ISO 18091

In an attempt to adopt the experiences gained by private sector companies, big or small, in applying a quality management approach to their strategic planning and operational management, a group of international experts within the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) has worked to develop a new quality management standard suitable of the local authority. In its Introduction Section, the following rationale was given:

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"One of the great challenges that societies are facing today is the need to develop and maintain citizens' confidence in their governments and their institutions. In this respect, local governments have a mission to make possible the development of sustainable local communities. Management of quality in local governments can result in sustainable economic prosperity and social development at local level, including deployment of, and interaction with, national and regional policies in a coherent and compatible way. Citizens expect to have a community providing all public products/services with quality, such as safety and security, roads in good conditions, availability of public transportation, ease and speed in processing of documents, transparency, availability of public information, availability of health and education systems, (and) infrastructure (ISO 18091, 2014, Introduction section)."

The purpose of ISO 18091 is to serve as a guideline for the implementation of a quality management system that will help local governments meet the needs and expectations of their citizens. Achieving high quality of local government enables the whole system of government to become stronger. Coherence of such approaches can help to create reliable and sustainable governments at local, regional and national level which in turn is needed for a successful implementation of the SDGs.

ISO 18091 titled "Quality management systems – Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2008 in local government" is an adapted form of the ISO 9001 - Quality Management Systems: Requirements - which has been modified to serve as specific guidelines for local governments. A quality management system is a framework to ensure that whenever a process is performed within an organization the same information, methods, skills and controls are used and applied consistently. By doing so it helps to establish clear requirements, communicate policies and procedures, monitor how work is performed and improve teamwork. ISO 9001 presents the quality management systems requirements, based on seven quality management principles (Dale et al, 2007):

· Customer (citizen) focus

· Leadership

· Engagement of people

· Process approach

· Improvement

· Evidence-based decision-making

· Relationship management

The two principles which particularly stand out in relation to SDG 16.6 and 16.7 are *customer focus* and *engagement of people*. In ISO 18091, the quality management system is applied to local government instead of to an organization, thus the term

"customer" used in ISO 9001 has been changed to "citizen". ISO 18091 calls on the responsibility of local governments to create sustainable local communities. It states that an environment should be created where citizens feel that their local government represents them.

A quality management system such as ISO 18091 will always be subjected to differences in local government in regards to policies, objectives, work methods, resource availability, administrative practices as well as terms and definitions. However, the importance lies not in creating a one-size fits all solution, but about establishing an easy to understand system within the local context that will yield consistent, effective and reliable results. ISO 18091 puts am emphasis on local government's *transparency and accountability* and views them as vital in gaining citizens' trust and confidence. This value orientation is in line with SDG 16.6 and 16.7.

Table 1 below illustrates how the ISO 18091 principles of quality management systems align with the good governance principles and the SDG 16.6 and 16.7 targets.

Table 1: Shared Elements of the Guiding Principles represented by Good Governance, ISO 18091 and SDG Targets 16.6 & 16.7

Good Governance Principles	ISO 18091 Principles	SDG 16.6 and 16.7 Targets
1. Fair Conduct of Elections, Representation and Participation	Engagement of people	-Representative decision-making -Participatory decision-making
2. Responsiveness	Customer Focus	Responsive decision-making
3. Efficiency and Effectiveness	(part of the QMS requirements)	Effective institutions
4. Openness and Transparency	Process approach	Transparent institutions
5. Rule of Law	Improvement	n.a.
6. Ethical Conduct	Relationship management	n.a.
7. Competence and Capacity	(part of the QMS requirements)	n.a.
8. Innovation and Openness to Change	Under discussion for the coming revision of the ISO 9001:2008	Innovative methods (OGC)
9. Sustainability and Long-term Orientation	n.a.	n.a.
10. Sound Financial Management	n.a.	n.a.
11. Human rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion	n.a.	Inclusive decision-making
12. Accountability	Evidence-based decision making	Accountable institutions
n.a.	Leadership	n.a.

Source: Saner, Yiu & Golub

ISO 18091 can be a valid tool for furthering SDG 16.6 and 16.7. SG 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable transparent institutions at all levels) and SDG 16.7 (ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making) as Table 1 illustrates. It therefore should be deployed by the local authorities especially for places suffering from weak institutions. This is of particular urgency since effective government, especially effective local government with citizen cooperation serves as the foundation of all SDG attainment. The 2016 Global Peace Index Report supports this by showing that the SDGs place an emphasis on high levels of human capital and well-functioning government (figure 2 below).

Figure 2 Positive Peace Factors and Violence by SDG Coverage
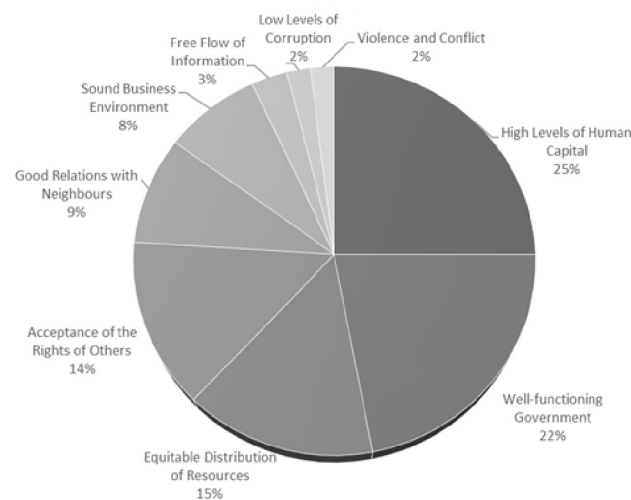
Source: Global Peace Index Report 2016, Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

ISO 18091 puts emphasis on the close proximity between local government and the population. In ISO 18091 every part of the process-based quality management system (management responsibility, resource management, service realization and measurement, analysis and improvement) stresses the principles of SDG 16.6 and 16.7 by repeatedly stating the need for local government to be transparent and accountable, as well as responsive, participatory and representative. Additionally, the 'measurement, analysis and improvement' process of ISO 18091 can be used as a tool for SDG 17.19 which aims to build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP, and support statistical capacity building in developing countries. Data on measuring citizens' satisfaction with the services that they have been provided by their local government would be useful and likely reliable, since transparency is one of ISO 18091 principles.

The process of continuous improvement set in place by quality management systems is the basis for innovation, as well as well-managed, effective and participatory local government.

Once effective policy coordination and consultation mechanisms for SDG implementation have been put in place and strengthened, they can subsequently be mapped and institutionalized and in order to safeguard implementation continuity despite the inevitable coming changes of political leadership, an application of ISO 18091 could help guarantee sustainability of SDG implementation and stop a potential sliding-back to a state of operations when domestic political elites turn policy space into rent seeking opportunities.

Future research needed

One of the largest looming challenges of SDG implementation is policy coherence

and effective policy management. Coupled with weak institution and executive capacities, reaching the 17 SDGs will not be possible in most countries if governments are too weak and unable to implement the SDGs. According to Mans Nilsson et al, 2014, the SDGs, albeit being presented as an indivisible whole, however not all goals are mutually supportive, in fact there are probably just as many goal conflicts and trade-offs as there are synergies. These trade- offs and synergies between sectors of the 2030 Agenda are of a concern to policy makers. However there is currently a lack of literature, scientific research or a framework to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of these interactions. Before polices can be formulated, empirical research into SGD interactions needs to be conducted and developed, so as to provide a useable knowledge base for both policy-level decision support and the design of implementation strategies.[9]

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that "[t]he challenges and commitments contained in these major conferences and summits are interrelated and call for integrated solutions." It also notes that "interlinkages and the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized. This section takes a look at some of the tools that are available (Saner, 2009a).

Future research will be needed to deepen the understanding on the relationship between SDGs and local authorities' ability to conduct policy coordination and policy consultation. Once effective policy coordination and consultation mechanisms for SDG implementation have been put in place and strengthened, they can subsequently be mapped and institutionalized and compared with other cities and municipalities who are also involved in SDG implementation but might have different coordination and consultation mechanisms. The objective of future research would be to analyze the links there might be between local government's competencies, institutional functioning, policy coherence and sustainable success of SDG implementation.

Achieving the SDGs requires data to support decision making and policy coordination and policy consultation to mitigate competing policy objectives. A deployment of ISO 18091 would provide a process framework that could guide the inner workings of a local administration and could enable more rational and transparent decision making processes with all its variants. Institutional learning and innovation cannot happen at the system wide level when actions taken and decision made are not monitored nor retrievable for review by the Programme administrators and citizens. They remain sporadic, ad-hoc and personal. Pilot projects are needed to test the applicability of ISO 18091 for SDG implementation.

Conclusion

Most demographic projections see 70% of the worlds estimated 9 billion people living in cities by 2050. Prior to that there will be an additional 1 billion people living in cities by 2030, this will put an enormous strain on cities. In order for cities to deal with this massive influx of people they need to begin planning now. With 1 billion new

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people living in cities by 2030 the challenge to provide affordable, responsive, effective and efficient public services for all residents will be even more difficult. If managed well, the potential benefits of this urban growth are substantial. The economic potential is driven by raised productivity resulting from the concentration of people and economic activities in cities that leads to a vibrant market and fertile environment for innovation in ideas, technologies and processes. Similarly, well-managed cities in high income countries could continue to concentrate national economic growth, through re-densification and the roll out of innovative infrastructure and technologies. However, poorly managed urban growth is likely to have substantial economic costs. Urban sprawl, poor public transport infrastructure and a lack of basic services such as energy, water and waste can hinder accessibility and mobility, increase air pollution and exacerbate urban poverty, reducing the economic benefits of urban concentrations and increasing costs. This growth pathway also tends to lead to unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions, social exclusion and a range of other environmental and social costs.[10]

In order for the SDGs to be implemented in an effective way, the authors propose that SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7 *be given priority attention. SDG goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.* As such it should be given priority and research should be focused on the institutional aspects of SDG 16 and its crosscutting implications should instead be highlighted, i.e., *"building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"* The Rio+20 follow-up document, Key Messages and Process on Localizing the SDG Agenda, notes that "many of the critical challenges of implementing the SDG Agenda will depend heavily on local planning and service delivery, community buy in and local leadership, well-coordinated with the work of other levels of governance.".[11] Establishing SDG 16 on a local level is crucial to ensuring a bottom-up approach, which could transform policies on a national level. Local and sub-national governments have a unique role and contribution to play in the advancement and implementation of global agreements and sustainable development laws, policies, strategies, standards, programs and actions.[12]

The authors have argued that in order for local government to become effective institutions that meet SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7 criteria, they should adopt 'ISO 18091: 2014 – Quality management systems – Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2008 in local government' as a management and governance tool. ISO 18091 provides guidelines for a holistic approach in line with the principles of SDG 16.6 and 16.7. It also contains 39 targets and 310 indicators in the areas of institutional development for good governance, sustainable economic development, inclusive social development and sustainable environmental development.

ISO 18091, similar to the ISO 9001 for the private sector, can be an effective tool in strengthening the functionality of local authority. When applied in urban areas that take priority in regard to local SDG implementation, a positive feedback could be established to monitor, track and promote performance and innovation. As a quality

management system, ISO 18091 also leverages its management review function and information management system for good governance and institutional learning.

ISO 18091 also addresses one of the principal issues for local governments with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals in designing coherent policies and practices. Both are part of successful strategies for implementation of the 17 SDGs given their scope and complexity. Adapting these global targets to national, regional and local contexts is a delicate process that requires careful planning and methodology to ensure that the process is inclusive and effective. In light of this realization the CSEND *Discussion Paper in support of the CALL FOR URGENT REMEDIAL ACTION of Major Shortcomings of the Secretary General's Report on "Critical Milestones toward Coherent, Efficient and Inclusive Follow-Up and Review at the Global Level"* highlights the importance of SDG 16 as a cross-sector foundation and a vertical integration for achieving the desired outcomes of all other SDGs.[13] ISO 18091 fills the operational gap and provides the institutional platform for consistency and coherence in practices.

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Notes

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