

Narrative report January – December 2020

UCLG's Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) Working Group

By the CIB secretariat: Jessie Post and Stan Abma

Activities in 2020

2020 was a strange and difficult year for everyone, including practitioners working in the local government development cooperation sector, who are gathered in CIB. By adapting the initial work plan in an early stage, CIB was able to arrange for useful and relevant activities in the new context, as was expressed by CIB members at different occasions.

We also saw a change in the CIB leadership in 2020. Sebastien Hamel, co-chair of CIB and Executive Director of FCM Programs, left FCM, and therefore also CIB. A decision on Sebastien's replacement will be made in Spring 2021, and will be communicated to CIB members as soon as possible.

Please find an overview of this years' activities and results below, arranged in line with the work plan 2020.

A. Implementation

Facilitation of regular communication and knowledge exchange

After the global COVID-19 outbreak, the CIB Whatsapp group became a space for sharing of COVID-19 approaches among members. Soon after, the CIB secretariat opened a Google Drive in which members could upload documents which they wanted to make available to other CIB members, in order to be able to learn and innovate together. The CIB secretariat also sent out two-weekly CIB COVID-19 mailings in Spring 2020, in which documents and interesting articles and websites were shared, based on the input in the Google Drive and Whatsapp group and through other mailings. All in all, communication efforts were enhanced in the first half of 2020 – we spent more time on communication than anticipated.

Aside from the extra communication efforts, we continued with our bimonthly newsletters – we were able to publish 5 newsletters in 2020, which covered many updates from members and UCLG. Moreover, we informed the network through 19 CIB circulars, of which you will find a list below:

- Circular 92 - CIB activities at the UCLG retreat in Morocco next week
- Circular 93: Update from CIB - work plan 2020, planned activities and CIB annual meeting
- Circular 94 - Reminder: register for CIB webinar on Women Leadership in international programming
- Circular 95 - CIB enhances information exchange on COVID-19 measures and approaches
- Circular 96: Update on the exchange on COVID-19
- Circular 97: COVID-19 measures and approaches within the CIB network
- Circular 98: CIB annual meeting to take place online - please confirm availability
- Circular 99: Virtual CIB annual meeting 2020 to take place on 17 June
- Circular 100: Register for online CIB annual meeting 2020: 17 June
- Circular 101: COVID-19 measures and approaches within the CIB network

- Circular 102: Agenda and supporting documents for online CIB annual meeting 2020
- Circular 103: Updated agenda and supporting documents for online CIB annual meeting
- Circular 104: Thank you for your participation in the first online CIB annual meeting!
- Circular 105: Report of the online CIB annual meeting 2020 incl. follow-up actions
- Circular 106: COVID-19 update incl. call for feedback on draft COVID-19 position of CIB
- Circular 107: Register now! CIB Webinar on Using data to advance gender equality
- Circular 108 - Invitation to high-level conversation on COVID-19 & development cooperation on December 8th (15:00-17:00 CET)
- Circular 109 - Share your ideas for the CIB work plan 2021 on the 15th of December - 15:00 - 17:00 CET
- Circular 110: CIB wishes you a healthy and happy 2021! Thank you for your contributions and collaboration

Review of our communication materials and methodologies

In Fall, we took the time to review the CIB communication materials and hired a communication expert to revise them. We now have new templates of the following materials:

- PowerPoint template
- Letter head
- Outlook signature
- The CIB circulars
- CIB background for MS Teams and Zoom

All new materials include the logos of the current CIB partners, including the EU and Sida logos provided by UCLG.

We also worked on enhancing our online communication/promotion materials, which we used to promote the CIB activities of November and December. This included banners for the CIB website and social media, images of events for promotion through Whatsapp, lay-out of invitations in pdf for CIB network and a New Years' wish sent to members before the holiday season, among other materials.

Last but not least, we also bought a Zoom licence in Fall 2020, to be able to host our online meetings ourselves and not depend on UCLG or member organisations.

Organization of digital CIB annual meeting 2020

In Spring 2020, the CIB chairs and designated hosting organization VVSG (and the city of Sint-Niklaas, a member of CIB) decided to cancel the physical CIB annual meeting, in view of the COVID-19 situation. The meeting was replaced by a three-hour online CIB meeting, on 17 June 2020. The meeting saw the participation of more than 150 participants from all around the world¹. Practitioners working on international programmes at local government associations and individual cities gathered to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on local government development cooperation. CIB chairs Peter Knip (Director of VNG International) and Sebastien Hamel (Executive Director of FCM programs) underlined that the COVID-19 outbreak has large consequences for local governments all around the world. These consequences/challenges were discussed in six break-out sessions, co-organized with CIB members:

¹ Due to its online nature, the CIB meeting saw much higher participation of UCLG members from the Global South.

- Showcasing the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations (including women and girls) in local communities (led by: CILG & the city of eThekweni)
- Building a common narrative: dialoguing with the international donor community and national governments on role of local governments in the crisis response and aftermath (led by: VNG International, CUF)
- Adapting your ongoing international programmes between local governments: from international travel to distant technical assistance (led by: ALGA, ICLD)
- Stimulating local economies – how to enhance local economic development in the post-COVID-19 context (led by: FCM, SALGA, FAMSU, FCM Colombia, city of Xi’an)
- Building back better: how to build resilience, while safeguarding local democracy and inclusive public governance? (led by: UCLG, UMT, UCLG ASPAC, VNG International)
- Exploring new options for financing international cooperation between local governments and how to access those (led by: FCM, UCLG)

In the wrap-up of the meeting, CIB chairs emphasised that the CIB network should build a case for local government development cooperation, also in this context. In an earlier discussion with a group of directors of CIB member organizations, it was decided that we should build a new, common narrative as a sector, and make this available to national governments and the international donor organisations. Outputs from the annual meeting were assembled in a [joint position](#) (available in EN, FR and ES), aligned to the [UCLG Decalogue for the post-COVID era](#).

Country coordination calls, based on interest of members

Initially, we had planned to organize country coordination calls in 2021. The COVID-19 crisis called for alternative coordination calls: calls on how members are dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on their organisations and the work in the field. We organized three coordination calls with the following directors of CIB members organisations, in the period April – October 2021:

Sebastien Hamel	Executive director FCM programs (& Co-chair of CIB)
Carme Gual Via	Director Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation
Bert Janssens	Head of Unit of European and International Affairs VVSG
Jenny Jansson Pearce	VD/Managing Director SKL International
Peter Knip	Director of VNG International (& Chair of CIB)
Genevieve Sevrin	General Director of Cités Unies France
David Llistar	Director of Global Justice and International cooperation of City of Barcelona

The [first conversation](#) (16 April) discussed the following questions:

1. How is everyone doing? How is your organization coping with the COVID-19 crisis (security, finance, logistics etc.)
2. Possibilities for innovation
3. Medium-term impact on our work field/project management & developments within the donor community

A [second call](#) (26 May) provided more space to dive into the impact of COVID-19 on our sector, also on the mid- and longer-term, and discussed the set-up of the CIB annual meeting (17 June) and first ideas to work on a renewed narrative for our sector and channel this into a joint position on behalf of CIB. The directors decided that the online CIB annual meeting should provide for the first building blocks of this joint position on the need for local government development cooperation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

A third call took place on October 5th and discussed relations with the respective national governments, how members of our associations look at international work in the current context and what everyone's priority needs look like. The CIB secretariat presented the draft joint position on COVID-19 and upcoming CIB activities in Fall 2020. Directors agreed that a key challenge towards the future lies in the field of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning at distance – this led to the set-up of a dedicated M&E assignment in Fall/Winter 2020 (see below). They also underlined that it would be useful to use the narrative from the joint position as a starting point for a dialogue with the international donor community and national governments and embraced the idea of organizing a high-level dialogue event with UCLG on the impact of COVID-19 on development cooperation, in presence of these actors (see 'Cities are Listening event' below).

Organisation of thematic webinars

CIB organized two gender related webinars in 2020 and 3 webinars on SDG reporting. The first gender webinar (April 2nd) covered the topic of Women Leadership and welcomed 90 participants.

During this webinar different first-hand experiences from different contexts were shared, as well as interesting insights on how to effectively deal with the challenges regarding working on gender equality in international projects and programmes. Three speakers shared their insights with the participants: the first speaker was Ms. Anastasiia Zablotska (Ukraine), who served as acting Mayor of the Ukrainian city of Irpin and is the sitting President of the City Council Women's European Assembly. She shared her experiences related to women empowerment within local governance, and discussed how to set-up inclusive local policies. Ms. Racheal Atukwase (Uganda) shared her experiences as gender expert in the 5-year IDEAL-programme of VNG International in Uganda, which is about inclusive decision-making and citizen participation. The third expert Ms. Shannon Lövgren (Sweden), who is an experienced programme manager at the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) and is involved in their leadership programme aimed at women politicians at the sub-national level in Zimbabwe. She shared experiences on how to address (and built capacity on) this topic of women leadership in international donor programmes.

Please find the different materials used during the webinar below:

- [Please click here for the PowerPoint presentation of the webinar](#)
- [Paper on Domination techniques and how to combat them by the Center for Gender Equality in Norway](#)
- [Guidelines on how to be a gender champion \(ICLD\)](#)

On the 4th of November, a second gender webinar took place, focused on using data to advance gender equality in international programming. Experts from Bosnia, the UK and UCLG provided useful insights on how data and solid monitoring and evaluation can help improve gender equality at local level. Pascal Lavoie, director of programs at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, moderated the webinar.

Marija Risteska, an expert in the field of (disaggregated) data collection and gender, highlighted the difficulties of putting gender on the agenda of local governments, further reinforcing the necessity of webinars as such, to shed more light on this topic. She also showed how important interpretation of data is, based on an example from Macedonia. The data she presented showed how there are large disparities between different municipalities, in regard to male vs. female Covid-19 infection rates. She illustrated different explanations for why this is the case, as well as

possible ways of conducting qualitative analysis to further examine such gender-based disparities. Tom Aston, and independent consultant specialised in participatory methods for monitoring and evaluation, guided us through different methods to gather and analyse gender data, including outcome harvesting and Most Significant Change, with examples from Bangladesh and Tanzania. Find out more on outcome mapping [here](#). The PowerPoint presentation of the webinar and the full report can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Other materials mentioned in the webinar:

- CEMR Study (author: Sandra Ceciari) "Women in politics: Local and European Trends" [English](#) and [French](#).
- [Draft resolution](#) from the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe on fighting sexism in politics at local/regional level.
- [A guide](#) developed by the Congress of the Council of Europe on preventing and combatting sexism at local level.
- [Video](#) by the city of Rabat: a safe city free of violence for women and girls
- UCLG's YouTube channel with key speeches from the Live learning session on COVID-19 and gender: [video](#).
- Publication by Metropolis: "[Safety and Public Space : Mapping metropolitan gender policies](#)" on metropolitan best experiences and gender indicators to combat sexual violence against women and girls in public space.

Providing of support to LGAs reporting to HLPF 2020: co-organization of three dedicated webinars

As was the case in previous years, the CIB secretariat was in close contact with the GOLD team of UCLG about the entire SDG reporting process 2020. We reviewed the survey sent out to UCLG members and promoted it among our members in Spring 2020. We also co-organized a webinar series on local and regional governments in the SDG reporting process (webinars in FR, ES and EN) in April 2020. The three webinars gathered members and partners of the network to discuss successes and challenges regarding SDG reporting and how the local and regional level can be well-represented at this year's HLPF (has taken place July 2020). The meetings provided an opportunity to promote UCLG's learning tools for the SDG localization, in particular [Module 3](#), and to share more information on the reporting process to the HLPF facilitated by the UCLG research team (GOLD). Specific attention was paid to the Voluntary Subnational Reviewing processes in Benin, Kenya and Costa Rica.

The three webinars demonstrated a clear consensus among all participants that local government associations play not just a critical role in the facilitation of local reporting and data collection but also in the coordination of local and regional contributions to the VNRs . At the end of the webinars, participants and speakers articulated the demand for further cooperation and learning on SDG reporting within our network.

All webinars were recorded and are available on the [UCLG Learning YouTube channel](#).

Open conversation on SDG reporting with CIB members

Following the demand of UCLG/CIB members to provide more space for cooperation and learning on SDG reporting, CIB and the GOLD team took the initiative to organize an open conversation on the SDG reporting process of 2020 on October the 16th. A group of members discussed their experiences and lessons learnt, as well as possible ideas for improvement of the SDG reporting process. This brainstorm meeting was aimed at receiving inputs and reflections from a group of UCLG members on the SDG reporting process of previous years, before UCLG

launches the preparations for next year. Participants from FCM, VVSG, FEMP, KS, Deutscher Städtetag, UCLG ASPAC, CEMR and PLATFORMA, as well as the UCLG GOLD team and the CIB secretariat engaged in a fruitful exchange that will be followed up on and incorporated towards the HLFP 2021 report. Participants emphasised the need to do more impact analysis, in this phase of implementation of the SDG agenda. UCLG plans to continue with the recently introduced voluntary subnational reviews, which are set-up and coordinated by Local Government Associations. The associations from Germany, Norway, Guatemala and Pakistan, among others, are considering to work on such a review in the run-up to the HLPF 2021.

B. Advocacy

First steps towards a renewed policy paper on ‘Development Cooperation & Local Government’

In Summer, the CIB secretariat, together with financier Region of Catalonia, developed a Terms of Reference for an assignment which should prepare materials for a renewed version of the policy brief [‘Development Cooperation & Local Governments’](#), of 2013. The research should reflect on the current (international policy) context in which development cooperation between local and regional governments takes place and present updated key messages, to support advocacy towards local governments, national governments and the international community. When describing the developments in the (policy) context, the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath should also be taken into account. The paper will also include 8-10 case studies from the field.

After careful evaluation of the applicants, the Region of Catalonia is now in the middle of contract negotiations with the Institute for Development Studies. The research should take place in 2021, to be revised UCLG policy paper on Development Cooperation and Local Government at the UCLG Executive Bureau.

Continued attention to (inter)national advocacy work of members: Cities are listening event

Following the elaboration of a CIB joint position on the continued need for local government development cooperation in times of COVID-19 and beyond, CIB members decided that CIB should help facilitate a high-level dialogue with the international donor community and national governments on COVID-19 and development cooperation, to further discuss different elements from the position. UCLG, CIB and DeLoG decided to do this together and frame it as a CitiesArListening event: a high-level dialogue event in which local government exchange views and experiences with other stakeholders. This event took place on the 8th of December and saw more than 120 participants, from all around the world. 12 speakers representing local, regional governments and national governments (Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, The Netherlands), as well as international donor organizations, spoke about how COVID-19 is impacting their work, focus and priorities and reflected on how the development cooperation sector needs to evolve, in view of the changed context and needs of beneficiaries and partners.

The session ended with the commitment of all stakeholders to continue engaging in the structural dialogue provided by the CitiesAreListening Experiences and with the understanding that even if the priorities around development are not going to change, why we do cooperation and how we prioritize the key issues are going to be impacted by the pandemic. CIB will surely follow up on this conversation with different stakeholders and make sure that elements from the conversation enter into UCLG’s strategic priorities for 2022-2028.

Feeding into UCLG's (advocacy) work (gender, Agenda 2030, new urban agenda, climate & local financing)

Over the last months we have contributed to different UCLG publications and reports, following regular contact and exchanges with different colleagues of the UCLG World Secretariat, UCLG Learning, UCLG GOLD and others. Please find a selection of these reports and actions below:

- Contribution to side event at the HLPF
- SDG report 2020 (feedback to survey etc), presented at HLPF
- Feedback on SDG module 4 on decentralised cooperation
- First feedback on GOLD VI outline
- Feedback on and promotion of the Local4actionhubs

C. Monitoring & follow-up

Peer evaluations

Initially, we planned to conduct a peer review activity in Ecuador in March 2020, within the VVSG programme. This would have been the second peer review exercise by CIB members and help build our experience in this field, as well as our understanding of this type of evaluations. CIB sponsored the participation of Ms. Oneida Feliz Medina (from the association of local governments from the Dominican Republic) and of Mr. Marc Navarro (Region of Catalonia), by offering to pay for their flight tickets and accommodations. Unfortunately this activity had to be cancelled. We were able to arrange for reimbursement of the ticket of Ms. Oneida Feliz Medina in the second half of the year; we could not get any reimbursement for the ticket of Marc Navarro unfortunately. Please check the financial report for more information.

Members agree that we should boost this work in 2021, once the context allows for it again, to be able to build a case for the use of peer reviewing within the evaluation structures of our international programmes.

More exchange on M&E within CIB network

As mentioned above, a group of directors of CIB member organisations flagged that it has become increasingly difficult to carry out Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning with regard to our programmes in the field, at distance. They requested the CIB secretariat to use the remaining budget of 2020 to carry out an assignment on M&E in COVID-19 times. The aim of the assignment was to identify how CIB member organisations have adapted their monitoring, evaluation and learning techniques and practices in the past months, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and the ban on international travel, and enhance learning between members in this field.

At the end of the year, the CIB secretariat hired M&E expert Kaia Ambrose to work on the [first part of this assignment](#). She carried out desk research, exploring literature and other documentation with regard to the topic and worked on a survey and interview set-up. 2021 will see a follow-up assignment in which the expert will develop guidelines on how to do M&E at distance, based on the literature, other reading materials and input of members. CIB and the expert will organize a dedicated webinar on this topic in the first quarter of 2021.

D. Learning

Involvement in elaboration of SDG module 4 on decentralized cooperation

The CIB secretariat and some CIB members were closely involved in the elaboration of the SDG module 4 on decentralized cooperation, in Summer and Fall 2020. The CIB secretariat edited the document, to make sure it is as useful and relevant as possible for practitioners.

The [CIB study on decentralised cooperation and the SDGs](#) elaborated in Fall 2019-Spring 2020, carried out by La Mundial and financed by the Region of Catalonia, served as an important building block for SDG module 4.

Exchange among CEOs and Presidents of LGAs within the world organisation

The CIB working group's members are still primarily Local Government Associations (LGAs). therefore, CIB and the LGA Forum [co-organised a session on the role of associations of local governments within UCLG at the UCLG retreat](#) in February 2020. The discussion started with a presentation of the draft declaration on behalf of LGAs, which had been presented at the UCLG world congress in Durban last year. Members gave valuable feedback to the document and decided that the topic of the role of associations deserves a broader discussion within the world organisation.

We immediately continued this discussion, in a very different (COVID-19) context in April, during a [Live Learning event on the role of Local Government Associations during COVID-19/with regard to COVID-19 measures, co-organized with UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat](#). During this event, various local and regional government associations shared their experiences regarding service delivery towards members, liaising on behalf of members with other levels of governments, and the provision of learning and exchange possibilities.

During the roundtable discussion the CEOs of Frente Nacional de Prefeitos and the National Confederation of Municipalities from Brazil, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, the South African Local Governments' Association, and the League of Cities of the Philippines gathered to showcase what Local Governments Associations from all over the world were bringing to the table during the outbreak and beyond. opportunity for capacity building to better support their members. During the second round participants from the Consortium of Provincial Autonomous Governments of Ecuador CONGOPE, United Cities of France, the Association of Indonesian Municipalities, the Italian Association of Cities and Regions of Europe and the Turkish Association of Municipalities, shared their challenges and priorities that the associations were facing. A recurring theme was how the crises creates new opportunities for societies. They emphasized the need for solidarity between states and local and regional governments in the fight against the current pandemic. Furthermore, the financial feasibility of local governments was also considered an important issue by the LGAs. They are key players in the public service provision but do not have their usual income. This has to be addressed by national and regional governments

The various LGAs stressed the importance of information provision and coordination between different levels of government to guarantee that the needs of the citizens are efficiently met. Furthermore, they all mentioned the development of online platforms for the exchange of knowledge and the provision of answers to frequently asked questions to municipalities. As for the future, the LGA's agreed that we are facing difficult challenges right now, but that this is also an opportunity to build back better.

E. Strengthening the UCLG and CIB network

Presence of CIB at UCLG events

Throughout the year, the CIB secretariat made sure to be present at the different UCLG events to be able to inform the CIB members about the various UCLG (policy) developments and activities. We also contributed to different UCLG newsletters, to showcase CIB activities to the broader community.

A selection of UCLG events to which the CIB secretariat and CIB members attended:

- UCLG retreat in Tangiers, Morocco (February)
- Various live learning experiences (between March and July)
- UCLG Executive Bureau, online (May)
- HLPF 2020, online (July)
- SDG action day 25 September, online communication work (September)
- Cities are listening experiences brainstorm, online (October)
- UCLG World Council, online (November)

At the UCLG retreat, the only physical event, CIB co-organized a session on SDG reporting, together with the UCLG research team, aside from the LGA meeting mentioned under activity stream D in this report. The SDG reporting meeting served to inform the participants about some of the important developments within this field. During this meeting the annual survey on the SDGs, for the annual HLPF report was discussed; with specific attention on the set-up of a Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) community (with participation from large cities such as Buenos Aires, Barcelona and the New Taipei City government), in line with this trend in SDG reporting.

Keeping the CIB network together and engaged

In a year with practically no physical meetings, the CIB secretariat thought it to be especially important to gather with members once more at the end of the year, to discuss the plans for 2021 and stimulate member engagement in activities. The mere fact that 50 people took the time to join this work plan meeting on the 15th of December shows that the network stayed connected and engaged throughout 2020, despite the context.²

The meeting saw a plenary opening with inputs from Peter Knip (chair of CIB and director of VNG International), Emilia Saiz (Secretary General of UCLG) and from CIB members Elena Pierce (FCM), Bert Janssens (VMSG), Jordi Cortés (City of Barcelona) and Lance Joel (SALGA). Members then separated into three break-out sessions, to exchange ideas on and give suggestions to the CIB work plan 2021, around the following three topics:

- Gender in international programming – a conversation amongst CIB members on capacity development needs (moderated by: Stephanie Hoey, FCM)
- Working on the SDGs at local level – learning and reporting towards the HLPF 2021 and discussion on the role of the CIB Secretariat (moderated by Jessie Post, CIB secretariat)
- COVID-19 response in our international programmes and activities – and the effects on our own organisations in the past and coming year (moderated by Eline Vermeer, Project Manager, VNG International)

CIB member organisations validated the draft work plan and came up with great additional ideas for activities and priorities. The CIB secretariat will make sure that your ideas and suggestions

² CIB was able to arrange for simultaneous interpretation to French and Spanish with the financial support of UCLG.

enter into the final work plan 2021 as much as possible, which will be distributed to all members in January 2021.

Structural alignment of work and efforts with DeLoG, Metropolis and regional UCLG sections

This year, the CIB secretariat had much more frequent contact with DeLoG, Metropolis and regional UCLG sections. We arranged get-togethers with new focal points, organized events together (notably the Cities are Listening event with DeLoG), pointed each other towards certain activities and helped promote each other's work and events.

CIB also actively participated in the Connective cities event for Local Government Associations in September 2020. The 3-day (online) event was an excellent space to explore possibilities for synergy, cooperation and joint action in the years to come.

The alignment with other networks and the regional UCLG sections will continue in 2021, leading to even more joint action and coordination.

