



# THE PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The case of Lebanon  
Lessons learned and recommendations

PART ONE



**OXFAM**  
Italia

# PART ONE. WORKING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN DEVELOPMENT AND EMERGENCY PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES: DEFINITIONS, CONTEXT AND OXFAM ITALIA EXPERIENCE

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In recent years, the importance of local authorities (LAs) has been highlighted by scholars and practitioners: the change begins from the bottom and key actors of this change are active citizens and effective states that are the two sides of the same “development coin”. Being closer to citizens than other public institutions, LAs play a key role as catalysts for change. The purpose of this study is to reflect on the partnership with LAs for responding to emergencies and linking relief and rehabilitation to development activities. In particular, this paper critically assesses the experience of Oxfam Italia (OIT) of working in partnership with local authorities for responding to Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. This case-study analysis is based on desk-based review and interviews with key informants in Italy and Lebanon.

Generally speaking, thanks to its history and expertise, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs in Lebanon through the perspective of “localising” the response: the territory (as geographical area and public and private ac-

tors that inhabit and contribute to the social change of the context) is the “instrument” for and the “objective” of humanitarian interventions. Hence, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs establishing a territorial approach to humanitarian assistance.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section, with a critical review of five major development programmes implemented by OIT, presents the OIT approach: strengthening bottom-up poverty reduction processes and the improvement of local service delivery, providing LAs and civil society with technical assistance for supporting local development and social cohesion. The second section critically discusses the OIT humanitarian assistance in Lebanon carried out with the active involvement of LAs, highlighting that working in partnership with LAs enhances the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance, despite some constraints to cope with. Finally, some recommendations to enhance the OIT approach have been pointed out.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Rationale and objective

In recent years, the importance of local authorities in development has been highlighted by scholars and practitioners, demonstrating that top-down development policies and programmes cannot alone succeed in addressing the complexities of sustainable development and fighting poverty. Both in emergency context and development, the change begins from the bottom and key actors of this change are active citizens and effective states, that are the two sides of the same “development coin”.

Influencing the sub-national policy contributes to the building of effective State. Starting from this perspective, in its multi-year experience of working with domestic and abroad local authorities as active partners in development and humanitarian projects and programmes, OIT takes a role of catalyst of change, supporting bottom-up poverty reduction processes and the improvement of local service delivery. In order to influence the social change in the country, OIT provides local authorities and civil society with technical assistance for supporting local development and social cohesion. Thanks to its role of brokering and networking, OIT carries out its programmes through institutional and capacity building, valorisation of the territory and facilitation of North-South and South-South knowledge sharing networks. For the aim of this research, five major programmes implemented by OIT in partnership with local authorities have been selected and analyzed.

### OIT experience in Lebanon: strengths, challenges and added value in working with LAs in emergency context

After the conflict between Israel and Lebanon in summer 2006, OIT started to work in Lebanon with post emergency interventions aiming to restoring social and economic conditions of the country, working with a wide range of partners including NGOs, national institutions and local authorities. After the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, OIT started working to alleviate the impact of the refugees’ emergency.

Currently OIT is implementing humanitarian interventions with two local authorities (LAs) in Lebanon, the Union of

Municipalities of Zgharta and the Municipality of Bcharre. OIT sectors of humanitarian intervention are emergency food security, Non-Food Items (NFI), WASH, education, protection and cash for work. Total budget for emergency activities has increased from 20.000 USD at the beginning of 2013 to 2.700.000 USD until December 2014. Beneficiaries of OIT humanitarian action are Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees from Syria and the host communities. A total of 74.675 individuals have been reached (42% women and girls).

The OIT experience of working with LAs in Lebanon has highlighted some factors as strengths of the humanitarian partnership established: first of all, the OIT recognized professionalism and impartiality, the ability and expertise in working with LAs, thus the ability to establish good relations with the local actor, to understand the added value of a partnership with a LA also in humanitarian programs and to deal and compromise with the problems that may occur. Secondly, the active involvement of LAs in design and implementing humanitarian projects – fostered by the constant presence of OIT staff on the field – and the establishment of an efficient two-pronged management structure (political and technical level) have enhanced the level of ownership and quality of and commitment by LAs. Finally, initial training for LA team has been a tool for long-lasting capacity building. Working in partnership with LAs enhances the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian response thanks to the strengthening of the legitimacy of LAs, a deeper knowledge of the territory and needs of local communities, the creation of capacities for strengthening the resilience of the community, a strong linkage between relief and development and more influence for change in local regulations and national policies on disaster preparedness and management. Notwithstanding, some constraints must be pointed out: due to their nature as public bodies, LAs are affected by institutional instability and turnover. Also, some activities (i.e., voucher distribution) are not considered “interesting”, whilst improving services are considered more appealing as they have a positive impact on the entire communi-

ty. This may generate a different commitment of LAs in project implementation. Secondly, the lack of proper skills and sensitivity in civil servants to deal with complex humanitarian scenarios and the unavoidable bureaucratic hindrances of a public body make working with LAs a demanding process. Finally, the dwindling or the shifting to other areas of funding resources could hinder the necessary medium-long term development perspective of NGO-LAs' partnership. Taking into account lessons learned from Lebanon experience, a crucial future driver of action for the partnership between OIT and Lebanese LAs is to jointly work towards processes based on the needs and priorities of the territory: territorial planning, disaster preparedness and improved capacity to face emergency events. For example, the establishment and/or improvement of civil protection systems could be an interesting sector of activity.

**A territorial approach in humanitarian response: replicability and further areas of work**

Thanks to its history and expertise, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs in Lebanon through the perspective of "localising" the response: the territory (as geographical area and public and private actors that inhabit and contribute to the social change of the context) is the "instrument" for and the "objective" of humanitarian interventions. In Lebanon, on the basis of territorial characteristics and needs and thanks to existing partnerships, OIT and LAs have undertaken a dynamic bottom-up and long-term process aiming at fostering the quality of citizens' and refugees' life and wellbeing and increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable, both Lebanese and Syrian (territory as an "objective"). This process has been devel-

oping through the guidance of LAs, with the financial and technical support of OIT and the mobilisation of additional private and community capacities and resources (territory as an "instrument" of development). Hence, OIT is implementing humanitarian programs establishing a territorial approach to humanitarian assistance.

Some recommendations to make the OIT approach more relevant, efficient and effective have been pointed out. Firstly, linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) projects based on a new partnership with local authorities should be promoted and enhanced, also reinforcing Oxfam advocacy action to channel international funding to Lebanese local authorities according to their needs in the context of Syrian crisis. Secondly, in order to develop a rapid and effective humanitarian action, an improvement of initial phase of assessment on capacities and willingness of local authorities of working in humanitarian projects is recommended. Moreover, due to the nature of the LAs, it is important to enhance mitigation strategies for coping with institutional instability and ensure long-term perspective to the partnership through a new attention to local socio-economic development needs of the territory. In this sense, personnel of the NGO able to deal with both humanitarian and development dynamics could ease the process and the establishment of a fruitful partnership. The enhancement of capacity building component of the projects and the strengthening of preparedness and resilience of communities through decentralized humanitarian aid and the activation of Italian stakeholders should be additional key drivers of OIT future action. Finally, an enhancement of assessment, monitoring and evaluation tools to strengthen Oxfam policies with evidence from the field is recommended.





# THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

01



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# Local authorities and civil society: the two sides of the same development coin.

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In the last two decades, scholars and practitioners of development have clearly demonstrated that centrally-led, top-down development policies and programmes cannot alone succeed in addressing the complexities of sustainable development and fighting poverty. The change begins from the bottom and key actors of this change are active citizens and effective states<sup>1</sup>. Public authorities, private sector and civil society play a central role in the development process, especially at local level.

The participation of citizens (“active citizens”)<sup>2</sup> in decision-making processes that affect their lives and access to accountability mechanisms is fundamental to the promotion of sustainable development and poverty reduction. This is particularly relevant at the local level, where citizens live and work, where basic services are provided and where enterprises are established. Citizens have, therefore, common interests at stake, to set objectives and work together in identifying solutions particularly aiming at improved access to services, a more balanced distribution of available resources, greater social cohesion and enhanced accountability and transparency of public authorities, including to accountability mechanisms<sup>3</sup>.

Effective states “are essential for development. States ensure health, education, water, and san-

itation for all; they guarantee security, the rule of law, and social and economic stability; and they regulate, develop, and upgrade the economy. There are no short cuts, either through the private sector or social movements, although these too play a crucial role”<sup>4</sup>.

Being closer to citizens than other public institutions and according to the concept of subsidiarity (that constitutes the rationale underlying to the process of decentralization)<sup>5</sup>, local authorities play a key role as catalysts for change<sup>6</sup>. Local authorities have the primary responsibility for the implementation of national policies and for public service delivery in the territory. Also, they manage and implement public policies on the basis of the interactions with other public institutions, citizens and private sector and through the allocation of available resources. Hence, good governance at local level is necessary to achieve sustainable development and equitable outcomes.

In recent years, the importance of local authorities in development has been clearly recognized by the international community<sup>7</sup>.

The European Consensus on Development, the revised Cotonou Agreement and a number of EU institutions’ Conclusions, Resolutions and Opinions reiterate local authorities’ signifi-

*Local authorities  
are key  
change agents*





cant expertise not only in terms of service delivery but also as catalysts for change, conflict prevention, decentralization and confidence-building in the development process<sup>8</sup>. The importance of local authorities in the fight against poverty and the promotion of local economic development has been recognized also in the Busan Partnership for effective development cooperation document<sup>9</sup>, in major United Nations conferences and declarations<sup>10</sup> and through the implementation of United Nations programmes as UNDP ART Programme, specifically directed to “enabling processes for effective development cooperation at the local level”<sup>11</sup>.

UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel for

### *Territory as “instrument” for and “objective” of local development*

Post-2015 agenda stated in their report that “Local authorities form a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens and will have a critical role in a new global partnership (...). Local authorities have a critical role in setting priorities, executing plans, monitoring results and engaging with local firms and communities. In many cases, it is local authorities that deliver essential public services in health, education, policing, water and sanitation. And, even if not directly delivering services, local government often has a role in establishing the planning, regulatory and enabling environment—for business, for energy supply, mass transit and building standards. They have a central role in

disaster risk reduction—identifying risks, early warning and building resilience. Local authorities have a role in helping slum-dwellers access better housing and jobs and are the source of most successful programs to support the informal sector and micro-enterprises”<sup>12</sup>.

Specifically, relevant actors in the international development community have highlighted the role of local authorities in building resilience and in disaster risk reduction<sup>13</sup>.

It is important to note that local authorities exercise their power over and implement their development function in a specific territory. Development processes at territorial level that local authorities can trigger and manage have many names in literature, such as local development, territorial approach to development, territorial development<sup>14</sup>. Notwithstanding, we can outline an underlying element that characterizes all these concepts: the territory is the “instrument”

for and the “objective” of local development<sup>15</sup>. On the basis of territorial characteristics and needs, local stakeholders implement a dynamic bottom-up and long-term process based on a multi-actor and multi-sector approach, in which different local institutions and actors work together to define priorities, and plan and implement development strategies (territory as “objective” of development). Through the guidance of local authorities and the mobilisation of additional private and community capacities and resources (territory as an “instrument” of development), a change in the quality of citizens’ life and wellbeing could be triggered, ensuring a balance between socio-economic growth, equity and environmental quality and increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable. Furthermore, local political processes, transparency and democratic ownership of development could be reinforced<sup>16</sup>.

The key role local authorities play in development processes is shown in the figure below<sup>17</sup>:







Moreover, it's important to point out that, thanks to the continuous interaction with an active local civil society, local authorities can lobby and demand for change from national government in order to design and implement policies for equality and inclusion.

Powers that local authorities can exercise over their territorial community depend on the decentralisation process in the country. It constitutes a particular aspect of public sector reform and involves the transfer of a range of political authority and powers including revenue-raising, responsibilities in service delivery and financial, human and administrative resources from higher levels in the political system to public authorities

### *Decentralization as the empowerment of people through the empowerment of local governments*

at lower level<sup>18</sup>. Decentralization has three main dimensions: political (political power and authority have been partially transferred to elected and empowered sub-national levels of government), administrative (the transfer of decision-making authority, resources and responsibilities for the delivery of a select number of public services, or functions) and fiscal (resource reallocation to sub-national levels of government)<sup>19</sup>.

But in recent years, a consensus among development practitioners and decentralization experts has emerged that “decentralisation is about more than merely shifting power and resources away from the central level or

strengthening the administrative capacity of local governments. Instead, decentralization is increasingly defined as the empowerment of people through the empowerment of their local governments. This definition recognizes that decentralization is a means rather than an end in itself: decentralization should be pursued in order to empower people over the public sector so as to achieve improvements in the delivery

of public services. In this light, decentralization is about more than providing resources to the local government level and strengthening human resource capacity at the local level. Under the new definition, decentralization should be considered unsuccessful unless local officials translate their enhanced mandate and greater financial resources into more efficient, responsive, and accountable public services”<sup>20</sup>.

1. See GREEN, Duncan, *From Poverty to Power. How active citizens and effective states can change the world*, 2012. Green states that “In the interaction between states and citizens lie the seeds of developmental success and failure”(p. 19).
2. GREEN, *ibidem*, p. 11, says that an active citizenship is fundamental in development process “(B)ecause people working together to determine the course of their own lives, fighting for rights and justice in their own societies, are critical in holding states, private companies, and others to account”.
3. EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes*, Communication, 2013.
4. GREEN, *op. cit.* note 1, p. 19.
5. According to the principle of subsidiarity, public responsibilities, regulatory functions and spending are transferred to the lowest institutional or social level, closest to citizens, that is able and entrusted to complete them (see EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op. cit.* note 3).
6. For a definition of “local authorities”, please go to the Glossary.
7. See, for example, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Local Authorities: Actors for Development*, 2008; EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, Communication*, 2011; EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op. cit.* note 3; FERNÁNDEZ DE LOSADA, Agustí et al., *Study on capitalisation of European decentralised cooperation experiences*, European Union, 2013; IRISH AID, *Local Development Policy – Communities*, 2008, *The Hunger Project*, 2013 *State of Participatory Democracy Report*.
8. EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Local Authorities: Actors for Development*, 2008, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0626:FIN:EN:PDF>
9. Paragraph 21: “Parliaments and local governments play critical roles in linking citizens with government, and in ensuring broad-based and democratic ownership of countries’ development agendas. To facilitate their contribution, we will: a) Accelerate and deepen the implementation of existing commitments to strengthen the role of parliaments in the oversight of development processes, including by supporting capacity development – backed by adequate resources and clear action plans. b) Further support local governments to enable them to assume more fully their roles above and beyond service delivery, enhancing participation and accountability at the sub-national levels.” (2011).
10. For example, the *Rio Earth Summit* 1992 and the acceptance of Agenda 21 which recognized that global problems have their roots in local actions and, that, cities are thus key actors in the quest for sustainable development; the *United Nations Millennium Declaration* and, in particular, the *Road Map Towards its implementation* (2001), which underlined the importance of strengthening local government and civil society participation in decision-making processes; the *Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg* (2002) in which the important international developmental role of local government was stressed once again. Also the *United Nations 2005 World Summit* re-emphasized “the important role of local authorities in contributing to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs”<sup>9</sup>. (for further information, see Matovu, George W., DE GUTTRY, Andrea and NARDI, Luisa, *Contribution of Decentralized Cooperation to Decentralization in Africa*, 2008).
11. “UNDP launched the ART Global Initiative in 2005, as part of its commitment to support countries in their efforts to accelerate progress on the MDGs and achieve sustainable development. Since then, the Initiative has demonstrated that regional, municipal and local authorities have an important role to play in promoting sustainable development.” (from the website of ART <http://web.undp.org/geneva/ART/>).
12. UNITED NATIONS, *Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, 2013.
13. See, for example, DFID, *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*, 2011; GREEN, Duncan, *From Poverty to Power. How active citizens and effective states can change the world*, 2012, OXFAM et al., *Missed Opportunities: the case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses*, 2013.





14. Please find some definitions of these concepts in the Annex A.

15. PINILLA, Maria José Caldes et Al., *La cooperazione decentrata allo sviluppo: riflessioni teoriche e spunti dall'esperienza della Toscana nel campo della salute globale*, CeSPI, 2010.

16. EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes*, 2013, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/civil-society/documents/com\\_2013\\_280\\_local\\_authorities\\_in\\_partner\\_countries\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/civil-society/documents/com_2013_280_local_authorities_in_partner_countries_en.pdf)

17. Boex, Jamie and Yilmaz, Serdar, *An Analytical Framework for Assessing Decentralized Local Governance and the Local Public Sector*, Urban Institute Center on International Development and Governance, 2010.

18. EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes*, Communication, 2013. For other definitions, please consult BINDER, Juergen K. et al., *Towards an EU approach to democratic local governance, decentralisation and territorial development*, European Union, 2008.

19. BINDER, Juergen K. et al., *ibidem*, p. 28-29.

20. BOEX, Jamie and YILMAZ, Serdar, *An Analytical Framework for Assessing Decentralized Local Governance and the Local Public Sector*, Urban Institute Center on International Development and Governance, 2010, p. 2. The authors state that “we cannot expect communities to be empowered over their local governments if the local governments themselves are hampered by incomplete empowerment themselves”.



# A tool to make territories work together: the decentralized cooperation.

## Some theoretical aspects.

Decentralised cooperation is one of the central concepts in the international cooperation world today. According to existing literature, this concept appeared for the first time in the Fourth Lome Convention (1989). While the involvement of local authorities in external cooperation and development policy, especially through town twinning, has a long history, the last decade has witnessed a radical change in its nature. Decentralised Cooperation has emerged as a new and important dimension of development cooperation. It has become more comprehensive and professionalised, relying on institutionalised networks with outreach into developing countries, utilising a diversity of tools in all the regions of the world and with an exponential increase in financial allocations<sup>1</sup>.

What does decentralized cooperation mean? There is no universally accepted definition of decentralized cooperation, but we can point out some common elements that come out from definitions we can find in Declarations, resolution and policies of major donors and literature. The European Community Council Resolution on decentralized cooperation focuses attention on “operations and initiatives on sustaina-

ble development undertaken by decentralised cooperation agents of the Community and the developing countries” aimed at promoting participation in development processes, responsiveness, reinforcement of civil society and grassroots democracy and networking among decentralized development actors<sup>1</sup>. The ART-

GOLD Handbook defines decentralized cooperation as “(t)he systematic cooperation links between local communities in donor countries and local communities in countries that need support, aiming to create and/or consolidate long-term cultural, technical and economic partnerships between the two”<sup>2</sup>. In specialized literature we can find a similar definition<sup>3</sup>.

It is important to point out that, in literature, the term “local communities” refers to a decentralised political-administrative level of a country, e.g. a municipality, or groups of towns, which answers to a local administrative body such as a province, county or department. They include the political administration (mayor, city councilors, etc) and the population. (...) The organised local community is thus the protagonist of DC initiatives, mobilising resources, culture, history and all the potential of its territory”<sup>4</sup>.

### *Responsiveness, networking and advocacy for change*



Hence, we can identify as common elements of decentralized cooperation concept<sup>5</sup>:

- The responsiveness to needs and priorities directly expressed by the population in a specific territory;
- The active involvement of sub-national authorities and local civil society as main actors of cooperation activities;
- The creation of long-term vertical and horizontal partnerships among North-South and South-South stakeholders and the strengthening of territorial development networks, with an active dialogue and new public-private partnerships as a strategy and basis for sustainable quality service delivery;
- The willingness to empower local authorities and local civil society to reinforce their advocacy action for change by national government and the enhancement of the linkage of local action with campaigning at national level to eradicate poverty and inequality;
- The emphasis on a process approach (to create genuine involvement and ownership with emphasis on listening, dialoguing, mobilisation of local resources, joint monitoring, etc) and on concerted decision-making processes between accountable local authorities and active citizens;
- The emphasis on capacity building and institutional development.

1. European Commission, *Local Authorities: Actors for Development*, 2008.

2. Council Regulation (EC) No 1659/98 of 17 July 1998 on decentralised cooperation, article 1. Also, in the *European Commission Glossary: Towards a common understanding of the relevant terms*, 2010, it has been pointed out that “the EC developed the decentralised cooperation approach as a new way of doing cooperation by involving all relevant actors in the design and implementation of programmes and projects. It reflects the ‘multi-actor’ approach to development that is now mainstreamed. The European Union supports decentralised cooperation initiatives with the particular aim of promoting: (i) a more participatory development policy, responding to the needs and initiatives of populations in developing countries; (ii) a contribution to diversification and reinforcement of civil society and basic democratisation in these countries; (iii) the mobilisation of European decentralised cooperation actors and of developing countries in favour of these goals.”

3. UNDP ART Global Initiative, *Harnessing the Power and Potential of Information and Communication Technologies for Local Development: a practical Handbook for local Mediterranean policy makers*, 2012, available at [http://web.undp.org/geneva/ART/isi\\_med/handbook/](http://web.undp.org/geneva/ART/isi_med/handbook/)

4. MANENTI, Ambrogio, *Decentralized Co-operation a New Tool for Conflict Situations: A case study of the Experience of World Health Organization WHO, Regional Office for Europe in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 1999.

5. *Ibidem*.

## DECENTRALIZED COOPERATION IN THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE

It is interesting to describe the Italian point of view concerning decentralised cooperation.

The regulatory framework at the national level is composed of the Acts n° 49/1987, 68/1993, 267/2000, the reform of the Italian Constitution's Title V as well as the Act n° 131/2003, while at the regional level decentralised cooperation is regulated by specific international cooperation laws that most of the Italian regions have adopted. In fact, in the last years, Italian local government institutions such as Regions, Provinces and Municipalities have been involved in humanitarian and development activities with other countries. Some activities of decentralized cooperation started on a small and isolated scale as twinning projects or solidarity actions. Some others have been co-ordinated by the Italian Co-operation (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or UN organisations (UNDP and WHO)<sup>1</sup>.

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines “decentralized cooperation” as “the action of development cooperation realized by Italian local authorities (...) with the involvement of organizations of the civil society of their territory, and implemented in partnership with institutions of the same nature in developing countries, fostering the participation of civil society of the country in a decision-making process aimed to en-

hance the sustainable development of their territory”<sup>2</sup>. According to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, principles of decentralized cooperation are partnership, mutual development, democratic ownership, multi-level and multi-stakeholder action, subsidiarity, mutual accountability, sustainability<sup>3</sup>. Some local governments in Italy started acting in the field of international co-operation in 1960s. From then on, several local autonomies in Italy promoted and provided financial aid for NGO actions in the territory. In 1987, when the current national law on co-operation for development was approved (Law No.49 on 26th February 1987), almost all regions participated in the debate for a regional law on international co-operation. The following year, the Regulation, DPR No.177 on 12th April 1988, Art.7, formally recognised Local Authorities (Districts, autonomous Municipalities and Local Authorities) as having an intentional role in governmental development work maintaining initiatives and methods of collaborating with the General Direction for Development Cooperation (DGCS). This resulted in a document that outlined Italian decentralised cooperation guidelines and implementation schemes, and stipulated an agreed Protocol with The National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and the Union of Italian Provinces

(UPI). The involvement of Local authorities in planning and monitoring activities of the DGCS is guaranteed by the DGCS itself through a specific internal coordinating structure, the Unity of Coordinating Decentralised Cooperation – UCD<sup>4</sup>. It is useful to focus the attention briefly on the experience of Regional Authority of Tuscany in decentralized cooperation<sup>5</sup>. This Regional Authority has developed one of the most interesting systems of decentralized cooperation in Italy. The current regulations on international cooperation of the Regional Authority are the Regional Law 26/09 and the International Activities Integrated Plan (2012-2015). These two acts regulate the complex regional system for international cooperation in which the Regional Authority takes on a general guidance role linking different territorial

actors. The functions of the Regional Authority is to promote, coordinate, plan and finance decentralized cooperation activities implemented by local stakeholders (not only NGOs, but also local authorities, Universities, associations, etc). According to Stocchiero, the Regional Authority of Tuscany has an “integrated” model of decentralized cooperation: the Regional Authority plays a strategic role because it channels resources to initiatives of regional interest and also because it defines criteria that orient local stakeholders’ action to geographical and/or thematic priorities<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, in its planning documents, the Regional Authority points out the importance of boosting the best resources of the territory at cultural, social, economic level through the mechanisms of decentralized cooperation<sup>7</sup>.

1. MANENTI, *op. cit.*, note 4 pag.14.

2. Translated by the author. In Italian “L’azione di cooperazione allo sviluppo svolta dalle Autonomie locali italiane, singolarmente od in consorzio fra loro, anche con il concorso delle espressioni della società civile organizzata del territorio di relativa competenza amministrativa, attuata in rapporto di partenariato prioritariamente con omologhe istituzioni dei PVS favorendo la partecipazione attiva delle diverse componenti rappresentative della società civile dei Paesi partner nel processo decisionale finalizzato allo sviluppo sostenibile del loro territorio.” The text is contained in ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, *Linee Guida della D.G.C.S sulla cooperazione decentrata*, 2010, pag. 2.

3. *Ibidem*.

4. From the website [www.netsafrica.org](http://www.netsafrica.org)

5. The registered office of Oxfam Italia is in Arezzo, in the Region of Tuscany.

6. STOCCHIERO, Andrea, *La cooperazione decentrata delle regioni italiane e i partenariati internazionali per lo sviluppo locale*, CeSPI, 2000.

7. *Ibidem*.





## THE MULTI-YEAR OXFAM ITALIA EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH NORTH AND SOUTH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

02





## Brief description of major projects and programmes implemented in partnership with North and South local authorities.

The experience of Oxfam Italy (OIT) with North and South local authorities as active partners in development projects and programmes has arisen in the context of the promotion and development of a decentralised cooperation system promoted by the Regional Authority of Tuscany (see box above).

Oxfam Italia has been working with local authorities for about twenty years. The story of this partnership is deeply related to the beginning and development of Oxfam Italia from local association to International NGO<sup>1</sup>.

The relation of Oxfam Italia with its territory (firstly, the area of Arezzo, in Tuscany, and afterwards, the entire Tuscan territory) has always been strong: it has defined the main steps of development of the Organization and it has given Oxfam Italia the “territorial” resources and skills needed to implement high-impact decentralized cooperation actions<sup>2</sup>.

For example, thanks to Oxfam Italia brokering action, a twenty-year partnership between Arezzo territory and Salcedo, in Dominican Republic, has been established with a coordinated action in the sectors of education,

health, rural development and responsible tourism. The partnership Arezzo-Salcedo represented an important experience for its duration, stakeholders involved, innovation and impact on territories.

In Salcedo, the cooperation with Arezzo could promote the design and implementation of local pro-poor policies and the delivery of quality services, afterwards adopted also at national level.

In Arezzo, cooperation with Salcedo had been the first international cooperation experience of the territory and had realized sensitization actions for the enhancement of a more active citizenship<sup>3</sup>.

Generally speaking, OIT takes a role of catalyst of change, supporting bottom-up poverty reduction processes and the empowerment of effective local authorities and the active involvement of civil society<sup>4</sup> through the improvement of local service delivery. In order to generate social change, the key points of OIT’s approach are:

1. making the civil society an “active” citizenship by participation;

*Make civil society “active”, influence sub-national policy change, trigger political leverage: the OIT approach*





2. influencing sub-national policy change through capacity and institutional building, valorisation of the territory and facilitation of North-South and South-South knowledge sharing networks;
3. supporting a bottom-up process of policy-making to trigger political leverage, raising local issues to the higher institutional levels to obtain resources and well-addressed national policies for instance, activating vertical subsidiarity (from national towards local institutions) and the horizontal one (within private and public stakeholders belonging to the same territorial or thematic area)<sup>5</sup>.

For the aim of this research, five major programmes implemented in partnership with local

authorities have been selected in order to highlight some characteristics they have in common that could contribute to the understanding of an Oxfam Italia approach of working with local authorities, in other words, Oxfam Italia expertise.

### **SeeNet. A trans-local network for the cooperation between Italy and South-Eastern Europe**

The project is the second phase of an experience started in 2003, supported by Regional Authority of Tuscany and Oxfam Italy with the financial contribution of Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aimed at the institutional strengthening and the improvement of managing competences in two fields of work: economic development and management of public services. The SeeNet programme has developed

a network of local authorities from Italy and South Eastern Europe that have collaborated in a three-year Programme of decentralised cooperation in order to strengthen the governance skills of involved territories and promote sustainable local development. The Programme focused on the consolidation of long-term partnership between the two shores of the Adriatic Sea and on the support to the integration process in the European Union of South-East European countries. Furthermore, the Programme intended to establish an integrated system of decentralised cooperation in Italy aimed at promoting the development of innovative local policies<sup>6</sup>.

### **La Basura Sirve. Reduction, recycling, waste collection and environmental sensitization for the construction of social cohesion in Latin America**

The project represented the third phase of an action started in 2004 and funded by European Union through the Programme URB-AL III, created in 1995 with the aim of strengthening the cooperation between Europe and Latin America in the sector of urban policies<sup>7</sup>. Specifically, the action of Oxfam Italia in partnership with the Municipality of Arezzo was on the institutional and technical improvement of urban solid waste management. The project has focused not only on the technical aspects of solid waste management, but also on social problems related to the environment in Latin American cities. Main objective of the intervention was the promotion of social cohesion through sensitization and institutional building. National and international exchange networks among main stakeholders built up in the previous phases of the intervention

have been strengthened. At local level, the project has promoted good practices of policy planning involving local authorities and civil society.

### **NetsAfrica. South African-Tuscan Network**

The NetsAfrica Programme aimed to facilitate the process of administrative decentralization within the Republic of South Africa, consolidating the roles of local institutions in the process of democracy and peace, and developing effective policies for the alleviation of poverty and improving access to basic services. Partners of the programme were Italian and South African Municipalities and Provinces, with the support of Italian experts identified on the basis of the needs expressed by local South African partners during the Programme<sup>8</sup>.

### **MedCooperation. The Route to peace and development in the mediterranean**

Med Cooperation was a decentralised co-operation programme among three Israeli municipalities, three Palestinian ones, the Regional Authority of Tuscany together with Italian municipalities, provincial authorities and NGOs. The Med Cooperation network has been established in 1999 by various Tuscan subjects involved in solidarity and collaboration initiatives in the Middle East, in order to enhance the reciprocal comprehension, the reconciliation and the peaceful coexistence between Israeli and Palestinian peoples through a more effective dialogue with local stakeholders. The first stage of the programme terminated in July 2003, followed by the second stage set out in March 2005 and terminated in 2012<sup>9</sup>.

### **T-Net. Territorial networking for capacity building and local development: a cross border experience linking Lebanon, Jordan, France, Italy**

The project aims to create a network of already existing “territorial networks” of small municipalities in Lebanon and Jordan already cooperating with local authorities from the Regional Authority of Tuscany (Italy) and the PACA Region (France). The objective is to promote socio-economic local development in Mediterra-

nean Basin through cross border cooperation among territorial networks of local authorities and civil society. The dimensions of work are twofold: networking and establishment of partnerships both inside every single country and among them in order to create a Joint Coordination Table including Lebanese, Jordan and European actors and implementation of territorial integrated projects in line with a strategy identified inside the Joint Coordination Table in the sector of local economic development<sup>10</sup>.

1. Oxfam Italy is founded on the experience of Ucodep, a non-governmental organization that has been actively fighting against poverty and injustice for the last 30 years. Since 2010 Oxfam Italia has become the Italian affiliate of the Oxfam International confederation.
2. “The experience of Ucodep is strongly connected to local actors. This close partnership existed even before the ‘formal’ definition of decentralized cooperation in Region of Tuscany. (...) Ucodep was a link to create partnerships among local authorities, which were the catalysts of the partnership” (Zanobi Tosi, OIT Project Manager).
3. COLETTI, Raffaella and MARTELES, Silvia (in collaboration with Andrea Stocchiero), *Arezzo-Salcedo. Dieci anni di cooperazione*, 2008, p. 1254. From the website [www.netsafrica.org](http://www.netsafrica.org)
4. Oxfam Italia approach is in line with Oxfam’s Theory of Change, that sees the interaction between effective states and active citizens as fundamental to human development. See *The Power of People against the Poverty. Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019*, p. 10
5. DELLI, Giulietta and PAOLI, Lorenzo *Tackling Poverty Through Decentralisation and Local Governance: Five Concrete Experiences of Oxfam Italy*, 2014.
6. From the website [www.see-net.org](http://www.see-net.org)
7. The first two phases of the programme were respectively on the identification of problems and good practices on solid waste management (2004 – 2006) and the implementation of new model of solid waste collection and strengthening of recycle (2006 – 2008). All the three phases of the intervention were leaded by Municipality of Arezzo.
8. From the website [www.netsafrica.org](http://www.netsafrica.org)
9. From the website [www.medcooperation.org](http://www.medcooperation.org)
10. From the website [www.tnetenpi.com/index.html](http://www.tnetenpi.com/index.html)



Main characteristics of these programmes are showed in the following table. Results achieved by programmes and projects analyzed will be detailed in the following sections.

	SeeNet 2	La Basura Sirve	NetsAfrica	MedCooperation	T-NET
<b>Duration</b>	2009 - 2013	2009 - 2012	2008 - 2012	2000 – 2003 2005 – 2012	2011 - ongoing
<b>Areas of intervention</b>	South East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia)	South America (Peru, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador)	South Africa	Israel and Palestine	Lebanon and Jordan, Italy and France
<b>Main Donors</b>	Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Authority of Tuscany	European Union	Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Regional Auth. of Tuscany, European Union, Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation, Italian local authorities	European Union
<b>Main partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 Italian Regions + Autonomous Province of Trento</li> <li>• 46 local authorities from 7 SEE countries</li> <li>• Universities, NGOs and Research Centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality of Arezzo</li> <li>• 6 local authorities from 4 South America countries</li> <li>• Lille Metropole (France)</li> <li>• Private sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Auth. of Tuscany + 4 Tuscan local authorities</li> <li>• 6 South African local authorities</li> <li>• Private sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Auth. of Tuscany + 18 Tuscan local authorities</li> <li>• 3 Israeli local authorities</li> <li>• 3 Palestinian local authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reg. Auth. of Tuscany</li> <li>• 3 Lebanese Unions of Municipalities</li> <li>• 1 Jordanian local authority</li> <li>• Provence-Alps-Côte d’Azur Region</li> <li>• UNDP ART GOLD</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>a. Facilitate the South East European Programme partners’ territories access to EU pre-accession funds;</p> <p>b. Encourage the adoption and development of innovative programs and services on territorial valorisation and management, economic development and social and territorial and social planning</p>	<p>a. Disseminate the experiences of Santiago de Surco and Cuenca through systematization and capitalization;</p> <p>b. Improve solid waste management with the increase of recycling through social mobilization and technical improvement</p>	<p>a. Improve the capacity of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in supporting the path of strengthening local institutions under the new reform of local government;</p> <p>b. Enhance the capacity of local authorities in the formulation of policies and services to fight poverty and ensure access to basic services.</p>	<p>Strengthen the existing decentralised cooperation network among Tuscan, Israeli and Palestinian local authorities and their related communities by promoting a socio-economic development at local level through the valorisation of local territorial contexts in the Northern part of the West Bank and Israel</p>	<p>Strengthen the capabilities of territorial planning in Lebanon and Jordan to design and implement local socio-economic development projects thanks to institutional building strategies and the creation of territorial networks</p>



## The Oxfam Italia approach: common aspects of programmes and projects analyzed.

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Comparing the projects/programmes summarized in the table above, we can highlight some common aspects.

**a.** Three or more years of intervention. While the location of the intervention varies from Latin America to South Africa and Mediterranean area, the duration of all the programmes implemented is three years or more. This means that the action of decentralized cooperation has always been developed according to a medium-term strategy and in a strategic framework wider than a “one-off” intervention.

**b.** Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Union as main donors. It is interesting to point out that major programmes considered here have been funded mainly by donors with an important funding capacity and a medium-term perspective as the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union. This aspect ensures the possibility for the stakeholders to implement a more complex and integrated action. Those donors were and are able to fund medium-term programmes, giving also continuity to interventions already implemented.

**c.** Bottom-up development process through institutional building and valorisation of the territory. The programmes/projects analyzed have different objectives depending on the nature and the location of the intervention. Notwithstanding, we can observe that these objectives share an underlying common approach: the importance of fostering the grassroots development process giving the territory (intended as local stakeholders and local economic, cultural, social and natural resources) a central role in order to influence local and sub-national policy change. It is noteworthy the contribution of programmes as MedCooperation, T-NET, SeeNet and NetsAfrica to peace and reconstruction process in conflict and post-conflict areas.

*OIT plays a role  
of institutional  
brokering  
and networking*

**d.** Multi-stakeholder partnership. The programmes and projects analyzed have experienced the active involvement not only of local authorities but also of NGOs, civil society, private sector, research centers and Universities too (for example, in the valorisation of cultural and environmental tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The underlying criterion is that the causes of poverty



and inequality have to be addressed at national and sub-national level, activating all the actors that could play a role in it. Also, the creation of vertical and horizontal partnership is an instrument to enhance or rebuild the social cohesion of the territory, making the territory the main actor of its own development. In this sense, Oxfam Italia has played the role of institutional brokering and networking, stimulating the creation and the fostering of such partnerships and collaborations, attracting potential partners at local, national and international level and animating the North-South and South-South networks created.

**e.** Participation. Thanks to the creation of multi-stakeholder partnership, the programmes and projects analyzed have fostered

the participation and awareness of citizens as a key factor of the policy-making process and a catalyst for the building and strengthening of an active citizenship. Oxfam Italia has facilitated participatory processes in all the territories involved, giving the citizens new tools to raise their voice, lobby for change by local authorities and dialogue with them for the improvement of service delivery and development policies. Participatory processes have also led to social inclusion of marginalized people (for example, the inclusion of informal workers in municipal waste collection system in La Basura Sirve experience).

**f.** A wide range of activities sharing a common methodology. The programmes and projects

analyzed have implemented a wide range of activities, from the valorisation of cultural tourism to the technical improvement of solid waste management. Notwithstanding, these programmes and projects share a common methodology based on capacity building, trainings and workshops, exchange of experiences, sensitization with civil society and dissemination of good practices. In other words, the improvement of organizational and institutional skills of local stakeholders – right holders, duty bearers and civil society. Indeed, all the activities are oriented to the creation and improvement of skills at institutional, technical, organizational and operational level for all the stakeholders involved. New or improved capacities are installed in order to ensure the sustainability of the intervention and its replicability.

It is also interesting to highlight the importance given to the dissemination and exchange of experiences and good practices among stakeholders and the enhancement of a South-South cooperation network (for example, the establishment of fruitful exchanges among Latin America Municipalities on the waste management issue).

Most of the time, capacity building and exchange of good practices are realized thanks to the participation of Italian experts, that represent the added value of the expertise of Tuscan territory in the sectors identified, each actor according to its specialization. Tuscan territory is involved in the action and

its expertise activated by Oxfam Italia in the framework of a decentralized cooperation partnership, as in the experience of SeeNet programme and its actions for the promotion of territory through an integrated approach.

*Capacity building,  
exchange  
of experiences,  
sensitization  
and dissemination of  
good practices  
as OIT methodology  
of work*

**g.** Effective changes in local policies. In the programmes and projects analyzed, there was always a component of “influence” on local policies and regulations. The successful implementation of local-level concrete activities

has been an “instrument” of influence and lobbying for change in local regulations and for the setting of new priorities of development on the basis of active citizens and empowered local authorities pressure (for example, the recognition of importance of the restoration of cultural heritage in MedCooperation experience).

**h.** Working at local level to make a change at national level. Successful changes in practices and regulations at local level have triggered changes at national level, as in the case of NetAfrica and La Basura Sirve programmes. For example, the success of waste management systems experienced by Municipalities partners of La Basura Sirve programme has fostered a renewed attention on social and environmental issues at national level.

**i.** A two-pronged management structure: political and technical level. Despite differences influenced by the context, the issues





addressed and the nature of the partners involved, the programmes and projects analyzed share a common management structure based on a political and a technical level. The political level is represented by a political organ, responsible for the direction and the definition of the political policy of the programme. This role is played by the local authorities that lead the action of decentralized cooperation (for example, Regional Authority of Tuscany and Municipality of Arezzo), with the solid support of Oxfam Italia in the setting of priorities, adoption of unified, sound and con-

sistent work approaches, involvement of new stakeholders, mobilization of territories and expertise, advocacy issues. On the other side, the technical organ (operational secretariat) is responsible for a qualified technical and administrative management as well as for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme. OIT has played this role, sometimes with other NGOs involved in the action (for example, MedCooperation). Political and technical level has a continuous exchange in order to ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the programme and the achievement of its results.



# Critical and success factors in working with local authorities.

Through the analysis of evaluations and monitoring reports of the programmes and projects selected as case studies, we can point out some critical and success factors in working with local authorities<sup>1</sup>.

## RELEVANCE AND IMPACT ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT<sup>2</sup>

### RELEVANCE OF THE ACTION FOR TACKLING LOCAL PROBLEMS AND SUPPORTING LOCAL PRIORITIES

Projects and programmes are fully coherent with the strategies and priorities of partners involved. They also address key problems on the ground.

- The Final Evaluation of NetsAfrica emphasizes that the Programme “addressed key elements that are priorities of national, provincial and municipal South African Governments”.
- The relevance of the action has been also pointed out in the Final Evaluation of MedCooperation Programme.
- Socio-economic local development and networking “suite well the needs of Lebanon and Jordan where a decentralization process is on-going requiring an enhanced capacity of local governments to lead local development strategies mobilizing internal human and physical assets” (From the Intermediate Evaluation Report of T-NET Project).

#### Success factors

### A SUCCESSFUL AND INTEGRATED BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

Projects and programmes have triggered and enhanced grassroots development process through an integrated approach.

- In the framework of NetsAfrica programme, the pilot initiative on Ward Based Planning in the Buffalo City municipality is coherent with political priorities such as increasing social cohesion and the development of public participation. The initiative has been taken into account traditional mechanisms (i.e., the involvement of community leaders, etc.), trying to prioritize the needs of the community after a careful assessment of the main existing troubles. Moreover, interviewees recognize the relevant attempt to alter the idea of a dependence from above: from a “wish list” submitted to the municipality to a participatory bottom up mechanism.
- SeeNet Programme has developed new capabilities for an integrated local development planning fostering the interaction among various sectors (tourism, culture, agriculture, SME).

## ACTIVATION OF STAKEHOLDERS AND DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-SOUTH AND SOUTH-SOUTH NETWORKS

### THE ENHANCEMENT OF NORTH-SOUTH AND SOUTH-SOUTH NETWORKS AS A TOOL FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

North-South and South-South cooperation networks built up with the institutional brokering and networking action of Oxfam Italia are one of the most appreciated elements of project and programmes implemented.

- The SeeNet Programme has fostered new concertation processes through new methodologies and the definition of new dialogue tools to be used in the future in order to ensure the sustainability of development networks created

### THE IMPORTANCE OF MOBILIZATION OF TUSCAN TERRITORY SKILLS AND KNOW-HOW

The exchange of good practices and the support of Tuscan experts is really appreciated and considered relevant for local needs and contexts.

- The Final Evaluation of NetsAfrica emphasizes “the capability of Tuscan partners to activate the best practices of territory and to be flexible in adapting their views to the context”.
- Thanks to the Tuscan experience of an integrated promotion of territory that links together agriculture, tourism and valorisation of typical products, regions of Erzegovina and Dubrovnik have created two new innovative tourism packages for the promotion and local development of the area.

### SUCCESSFUL INSTITUTIONAL BROKERING AND NETWORKING OF OXFAM ITALIA

Oxfam Italia has stimulated the creation and the development of vertical and horizontal partnerships, attracting potential partners at local, national and international level and animating the North-South and South-South networks created, not only among local authorities, but also among civil society and private sector.

- According to NetsAfrica final evaluation, the Programme has obtained positive results in terms of cultural awareness, dynamism and commitment of partners.
- The SeeNet Programme has triggered relevant public-private partnership for the territorial development.

### COMPLEXITY OF THE PARTNERSHIP

High number of partners, different legal status, and different levels of experience can hinder the sound implementation of activities.

### WEAK INVOLVEMENT OF SOME ACTORS

Some partners disappeared or gradually decreased their visible role: this is anyway a possible outcome whether their political representatives change. Other reasons for local authorities to quit the program were also internal conflicts, or conflicts among local authorities, or among local authorities and other political level (for example, Regional Authority of Tuscany). Difficulties in connection between political and technical level have been reported too and a lack of involvement of political level.

### A WEAK TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSION

Sometimes the North-South and South-South transnational dimension of projects is not developed enough and partners in the South do not understand what international partners can bring-in in term of knowledge and best practices.

- Improvement of the internal communication of the project.
- Organization of more frequent stakeholder meetings not only for discussing on problems and concrete activities, but also for re-sharing the vision underlying the intervention.
- Enhancement of the institutional brokering and networking action of Oxfam Italia.

Success factors

Critical factors

Mitigation strategy

## IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

<p>Success factors</p>	<p><b>A CONTINUOUS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY OXFAM ITALIA</b></p> <p>The presence on the field of OIT personnel and the back-up from OIT Headquarters has been pointed out as strength for the sound implementation of planned activities. This presence has been perceived by local stakeholders as the expression of the deep commitment of the NGO in the local development process started up by the projects and programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sorinel Ghetau has affirmed that, in SeeNet experience, OIT has accompanied day-by-day the implementation of activities, facilitating the achievement of intervention results.</li> </ul>
<p>Critical factors</p>	<p><b>AMBITIOUS TIMING OF THE ACTIONS</b></p> <p>Due to the decision-making process of local authorities, more time-consuming than the one of local NGOs, activities have been delayed and/or rescheduled</p> <p><b>DIFFICULTIES IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Sometimes there is not a thorough understanding of all the administrative tasks entailed by the project (including expenditures verification, planning, budgeting and procurement), as well as monitoring activities.</p>
<p>Mitigation strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of Oxfam Italia personnel of the field.</li> <li>• Re-scheduling of projects and programmes activities in a participatory way, taking into account the causes of the delay and fostering project management skills of local authorities.</li> <li>• Consolidation and systematization of project management procedures for the partners.</li> </ul>

## IMPACT ON LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLICIES<sup>3</sup>

<p>Success factors</p>	<p><b>AN ENHANCED CAPACITY FOR SCALING UP FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL LEVEL</b></p> <p>Results achieved at local level regarding the implementation of innovative pro-poor policies and/or delivery of quality services have had an impact on national level. Indeed, national authorities are opener to change policies and practices if they have at disposal successful examples of change from the ground achieved by lower level of governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to NestAfrica final evaluation, the contribution provided by the Programme to develop medium term policies at national level was satisfactory, especially thanks to the Community Development Grant proposal, that was officially included in the national Green Paper on Cooperative Governance.</li> </ul> <p><b>THE EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CITIZENS FOR LOBBYING FOR CHANGE AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL</b></p> <p>Programmes and projects implemented have achieved improvements in the capacity of local authorities and civil society organizations in advocating their needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the Final Evaluation of NetsAfrica Programme, “thanks to priority initiatives of Nets Africa Programme, that through training and learning by doing have deeply focused on a shift in the mindset of beneficiaries (from a wish list to the elaboration of priorities), a changed awareness has been fostered. Mainly, that change is highlighted in terms of cultural attentiveness to different ways through which advocate and promote needs”.</li> <li>• The success of waste management systems experienced by Municipalities partners of La Basura Sirve Programme has fostered a renewed attention on social and environmental issues at national level.</li> </ul>
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## SUSTAINABILITY

### HIGH LEVEL OF LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Partners are very actively involved and committed in the implementation of the project.

- In the SeeNet Programme Action 2B on the development of rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, local partners have directly cofunded concrete interventions for the design of rural tourism packages
- In MedCooperation experience, Israeli and Palestinian local authorities have mobilized local funds in terms of human resources and provision of services for the restoration of cultural heritage because of the recognition of importance of the intervention for their own local development.
- The high level of local ownership of the action has been also pointed out in the Intermediate Evaluation Report of T-NET Project.

### STRONG INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTIONS AND THE WILLINGNESS TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING DEVELOPMENT NETWORKS IN THE FUTURE

Success factors

Programmes and projects implemented have created new institutional networks which all members are interested in maintain.

- NetsAfrica Programme Tuscan and South African stakeholders have expressed their strong motivation and interest in preserving and expanding the network created. At the end of the Programme, members of network established by the Programme have developed new projects and proposals together.

### SENSITIZATION AND STRENGTHENING OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AS AN EFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGY AGAINST SPOIL SYSTEM EFFECT

The institutional sustainability has been also guaranteed through sensitization and awareness raising activities for citizens: aware citizens have demanded to newly elected representatives the continuity with virtuous policies implemented by predecessors.

- This is the important lesson learned of La Basura Sirve Programme: in a political context characterized by institutional instability and spoil system such as Latin America, virtuous policies implemented by the programme have been adopted also by newly elected powers.

### LIMITED ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

Critical factors

In some cases, the sustainability of the action is mainly guaranteed by the follow up ensured by the Italian and European donors for the realisation of activities, not by regular budget of local authorities or financial capacity generated by the intervention itself.

### INSTITUTIONAL INSTABILITY AND SPOIL SYSTEM

In some cases, the turnover of civil servants – at political and technical level - has hindered or delayed the effective and efficient implementation of activities and the sustainability of the intervention.

Mitigation strategy

- Oxfam Italia promotes grassroots development processes that involve not only local authorities, but also civil society and private sector. These stakeholders hold local authorities accountable for the development plans undertaken together and call for the continuity of successful policies.
- The success of this mitigation strategy is outlined in the Final Evaluation of La Basura Sirve Programme.
- Institutionalization of new policies and services implemented through local regulations.



## INSTITUTIONAL AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY<sup>4</sup>

### Success factors

#### BUILDING UP NEW SKILLS AND CAPACITIES

Institutional and capacity building for local authorities and civil society is really appreciated and considered important for the sustainability of the action.

- “If we consider the civil society organizations in Watwill and Actonwill as new providers of waste collection and recycling, we should notice an improvement in the capability of the municipality to guarantee something that wasn’t activated before NetsAfrica” (From NetsAfrica Programme Final Evaluation).
- In the framework of SeeNet Programme, 200 trainings have been organized and over 1200 people trained (not only civil servants, but also private economic actors and representatives of civil society).

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

### Success factors

#### THE PRESENCE OF AN OPERATIONAL SECRETARIAT AS ESSENTIAL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERVENTION

The Operational Secretariat was able to create a “system of shared and known rules in creating synergies and development opportunities”<sup>5</sup>. It has provided local partners with qualified technical assistance and it has coordinated the activation of Tuscan expertise.

- As pointed out by Sorinel Ghetau, Director of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Department of Oxfam Italia, the role of SeeNet programme Operational Secretariat was not only technical and financial management of the programme or capacity building, but also building up and enhancement of vertical and horizontal partnerships, facilitation of participatory processes, activation and animation of Balcan and Tuscan territories. This aspect is confirmed by the experience of NetsAfrica partnership (see above).

### Critical factors

#### A TOO COMPLEX MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

In some cases, the management structure of the projects and programmes has been considered too complex and the relation between political and technical organs too complicated and, sometimes, inefficient.

#### DIFFICULTIES IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Sometimes there is not a thorough understanding of all the administrative tasks entailed by the project (including expenditures verification, planning, budgeting and procurement), as well as monitoring activities.

### Mitigation strategy

- Ongoing adjustments in the management structure according to problems arisen.
- In the second part of the Programme, the governance structure of NetsAfrica Programme was perceived by the partners as more functional than in the first part. This was mainly due to some adjustments made by the Programme Secretariat.
- Organization of training on project technical and administrative management.

1. Documents consulted: ROSSIGNOLI, Serena and COTICCHIA, Fabrizio for Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, *NetsAfrica Final Evaluation Report*, 2012; CECCARELLI, Giorgia (ed.), *La Basura Sirve – An experience of territorial cooperation for social cohesion in Latin America*, 2013; COLACE, Lara, *The Route to Peace: Tourism between Israel and Palestine towards Peaceful Coexistence. Final Evaluation Report*, 2012; LOCALGLOBAL, *Final Evaluation of SeeNet Programme*, 2013; T-NET project – *Intermediate Evaluation Report*, 2013. For further information, please consult the original documents, all available in pdf format.

2. 3. 4. Neither critical factors nor mitigation strategy have been outlined in evaluation phase.

5. DELLI, Giulietta and PAOLI, Lorenzo *Tackling urban issues in developing countries: the innovative approach of Oxfam Italia*, 2014

# The added value in working with local authorities.

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In literature, the added value of working with local authorities is well recognized:

1. The undertaking of political commitment by local authorities for development cooperation;
2. The sensitization and mobilization of skills and resources of the territory in international relations through the creation of territorial systems for cooperation development;
3. The direct commitment of local authorities on topics of their own competence to foster a change in development policies and practices;
4. The activation of human and financial resources from both local authorities and territorial stakeholders (public-private partnership)<sup>1</sup>;
5. The establishment of long-term vertical and horizontal multi-stakeholder partnerships;
6. The responsiveness to local needs;
7. Awareness raising in the North and South and the enhancement of an active citizenship.

The added value of working with local authorities in Oxfam Italia experience – as highlighted by the success factors shown in the table above - is in line with the aspects pointed out in literature, especially with the elements of the responsiveness to local needs, the mobilization of “territorial” skills and the establishment of long-term multi-actor partnerships. In Oxfam Italia action aimed to influence sub-national and local policy change, local authorities have

played a fundamental role as strategic partners for the achievement of expected results of the action through their institutional, technical and financial resources. It is easy to note that the results achieved by the programmes and projects analyzed hardly could be reached without the active involvement and the commitment of local authorities<sup>2</sup>.

Five main results have been achieved by programmes and projects analyzed:

- 1.** The improvement and/or adoption of innovative public policies and quality services at local and national level in the sectors of intervention through grassroots development process with high levels of participation and ownership<sup>3</sup>;
  - According to Sorinel Ghetau, the implementation of successful pilot projects at local level aimed at the improvement of quality service delivery can influence the adoption of more effective pro-poor policies at national level.
  - The SeeNet Programme has directly or indirectly contributed to the enhancement and/or start up of 30 local development policies and/or delivery of quality service.
  - The citizens of the five cities partners of La Basura Sirve programme (about 800.000) have directly and indirectly benefitted of the improvement in waste management systems.



2. A successful knowledge transfer of Italian and Tuscan “territorial” skills to local authorities involved and thus the creation of capacities for a long-lasting empowerment of local stakeholders<sup>4</sup>;

- In the experience of NetsAfrica Programme, “Tuscan skills” were correctly identified and, in many cases (i.e. Urban Agriculture) they have been crucial in filling technical gaps that could have damaged the priority initiatives, providing knowledge and expertise. Specifically, in waste management initiative in Ekurhuleni areas of Wattville and Actonville”, technical assistance given by the Tuscan experts had directly meet the local needs in the field of coop organisation and, above all, waste collection and recycling. Interviews

confirm the involvement of South African partners in identifying these competences, which has been integrated by the skills of local consultants.

3. The creation of strong thematic networks with active South-South exchange of experiences and best practices<sup>5</sup>;

- The enhancement of South-South cooperation networks built up thanks to OIT projects and programmes can trigger South-South exchange of good practices tailored to the needs of local communities.
- In NetsAfrica experience, additional projects and proposals have been developed “by capitalising the same partnership built during

the implementation of the Programme”(from NetsAfrica Final Evaluation).

- The successful waste management experience of Municipalities of Santiago de Surco (Peru) and Cuenca (Ecuador) have been capitalized and disseminated to give other partners the opportunity to rethink their social cohesion strategies through integrated actions in waste management sector.

#### 4. The strengthening of social inclusion and active citizenship<sup>6</sup>;

- Working with both local authorities and civil society enables development actors to tackle the issue of local development from a “double entry point”, strengthening the crucial interaction between active citizens and effective states (Sorinel Ghetau).
- A crosscutting issue of NetAfrica programme was the one of participation, particularly crucial considering recent development of South African context, as an instrument to foster decentralisation and to guarantee responsiveness of local services activated at municipal level.
- 230 informal workers have been included in formal waste management system thanks to La Basura Sirve Programme.
- Awareness rising and mobilization activities for local civil society have been ones of the most successful interventions of MedCooperation Programme. In the cities of Taybe

and Tulkarem, the awareness campaign on cultural heritage was organized taking as subject historical buildings (under restoration by the Programme). Through these campaigns, communities were able to re-discover the value of these premises and, generally speaking, of their cultural heritage.

#### 5. An important contribution to the decentralisation process and to the reconciliation and the peaceful coexistence in conflict or post-conflict contexts.

- In the experience of MedCooperation programme, “the final declarations and agreements reached at political level are the evidence of the results achieved (...). Nobody can deny that at the beginning a completely different international environment encouraged the representative of the six Middle East municipalities to jointly agree in working together and with the Italian local authorities. But exactly because of the worsened situation [the Second Intifada in 2000] and the step back of the ME peace process, the declarations reached after the break out of the Second Intifada, have an increased value”<sup>7</sup>.
- The NetsAfrica Programme has fostered the creation of useful mechanisms such as the Roundtable and the Training Unit that could consolidate the role of institutions through adequate tools of participation.

*Local authorities  
have played a  
fundamental role as  
strategic partners for  
the achievement of  
project results*





1. STOCCHIERO, Andrea, *I nodi dell'evoluzione della cooperazione decentrata italiana*, Working paper CeSPI 37/2007, 2007. See also EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Local Authorities: Actors for Development*, 2008.
2. With reference to T-NET project, as pointed out in the intermediate evaluation report, due to stage of the project there are not yet objective elements for assessing the impact of the project or results achieved.
3. As pointed out for NetsAfrica, SeeNet and La Basura Sirve programmes.
4. 5. As pointed out for NetsAfrica, SeeNet, MedCooperation and La Basura Sirve programmes.
6. As pointed out for SeeNet and La Basura Sirve programmes.
7. COLACE, Lara, *op. cit.*, note 2, pag.31.



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