



# **The decentralized cooperation in waste management and capacity building of local authorities in Ekurhuleni, South Africa**

**Evaluation of results and valorization of  
good practices**

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## **List acronyms and abbreviations**

EMM	Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality
DCoG	Department of Cooperative Governance
GA	Get Answers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NA	Nets Africa
TR	Tuscany Region



## Executive summary

The report illustrates the **qualitative evaluation** of the project "**Action to support waste management services at Ekurhuleni municipality in South Africa**". This project was implemented between 2015 and 2017 in South Africa by an international partnership formed by Oxfam Italia (action coordinator), Confservizi CISPEL Toscana, Municipality of Florence, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM), and the South African Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG). The project, funded by Tuscany Region (TR), was conceived as strategically and operationally integrated into the broader European project Get answers (Greening Economy Through the Adoption of New Solutions in the Waste and Energy Recovery Sectors, GA in short).

GA's main aim was to improve **the waste management system** in the area of Tembisa, by supporting the **capacity building** of EMM; at the same time, the project aimed to **create job opportunities in the green sector**, in particular in recycling, for unemployed people who live in the same township.

The report is organized into two main parts: the first part illustrates the background, context, and operational strategy of the project, the second part deals with the results of the project. The genesis of GA is strictly connected with one of the pilot actions developed in the context of Nets Africa, a previous cooperation programme to enhance local development in South Africa. In the first part of the report we will illustrate in detail the genesis of GA, and subsequently the project strategy which is focused on the involvement of the cooperatives and the local community, as well as on the capacity building of the South African local authorities.

The description of socio-economic context of Tembisa, the township where GA was implemented, is important to understand the consequences of the project on the field. The institutional and legislative background on waste management, on the other hand, provides an overview of the current South African political and administrative processes, and of the specific opportunities and challenges for the introduction of a new waste collection and recycling system. Similarly, it helps understand the involvement of cooperatives and opportunities for local job creation in the green sector.

At the end of the first part of the report, a specific paragraph is dedicated to highlighting the added value of the decentralized cooperation model, whose main elements are: the proactive role played by the institutional actors in terms of political engagement and implementation of the project; the mobilisation of local competences and resources in the two countries (Italy and South Africa); the direct involvement and strengthening of local administrations in the delivery of their tasks and areas of competence.

The second part of the report illustrates the results of the project and is based mainly on the analysis of the interviews carried out on the field with project partners and stakeholders; in this section, some direct quotes from the interviewed people are reported in order to better show their point of view.

One of the main results of GA was the introduction of a new system for managing waste collection in Tembisa, and for involving local cooperatives. More specifically, we analyse the perceptions of cooperatives' members about the concrete consequences of the project on their work and life. Moreover, we present the activities carried out by GA to increase the awareness of the local community on waste management and sustainability issues; such activities have been carried out in

local schools and with the families of Tembisa. Another important result of the project, which is highlighted in the report, is the strengthening of the local capacities of EMM, which results in the support to a more effective implementation of the decentralization process. The influence of GA is analysed also in terms of future perspectives for the partners and stakeholders. At the end of the section on the project results, a short paragraph is dedicated to the presentation of all the lessons learned that have emerged from the analysis and discussion of the results.

The conclusions of the report aim to address the key features of GA, to highlight its difference from the previous NA Programme, and the main features for which we may identify GA as a good practice of decentralized development cooperation. Lastly, we discuss the heritage of GA for the main actors involved (Oxfam Italia, RT and EMM ) and emphasis how they could capitalize what they learned in this project for future experiences in South Africa and beyond.

## Introduction

The project "Action to support waste management services at Ekurhuleni municipality in South Africa" was implemented between 2015 and 2017 in South Africa by an international partnership formed by Oxfam Italia (action coordinator), Confservizi CISPEL Toscana, Municipality of Florence, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM), and the South African Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG). The project, funded by TR, was conceived as strategically and operationally integrated into the broader European project Get answers (Greening Economy Through the Adoption of New Solutions in the Waste and Energy Recovery Sectors), and rooted in the previous relationship between the two territories. The overall objective of GA, and consequently of the Action funded by TR, was to improve the waste management in Ekurhuleni municipality through the involvement of the municipality, the cooperatives and the local community, empowering each of these actors to play its own role in an effective and synergistic way.

Considering the degree of interconnection and integration between the two projects, the analysis presented in this report will generally refer to the overarching action of GA. At the same time, it will draw relevant lessons for an effective and multi-level decentralised cooperation.

In addition to being a strategic and important action for TR and all the partners involved, the project is particularly important also because it represents the last initiative of the NGO Oxfam Italia before leaving South Africa to make way for the birth of a new member of the Oxfam International confederation: Oxfam South Africa. Indeed, in the past few years Oxfam Italia together with the other organizations of the confederation

present in the country (Oxfam UK, Oxfam Australia) has worked constantly to strengthen local capacities and to transfer programmes and strategic partnerships to the local actors, which is part of the overall strategy of Oxfam International to promote local autonomy and full ownership of the development process. Overall, the establishment of Oxfam South Africa represents a great opportunity for the country since it allows to increasingly involve local resources, especially political and human rights activists, and to further empower them, by activating new projects and processes of local development.

The following external evaluation focuses on the impact and the processes originated, in GA, thanks to the connection among the Italian partners, the EMM, the cooperatives, and the local community.

In the first part of the report we will discuss the genesis of the project, contextualise the institutional background of Ekurhuleni and illustrate the socio-economic features of Tembisa (the area where the project was implemented); moreover, we will recall the key-aspects of the development cooperation model used in GA – inspired by decentralised cooperation principles – which places great emphasis on capacity building of local authorities and on horizontal partnership between local actors. The second part of the report will describe the results and the impacts of GA on the South African municipality and local community in Tembisa. Through this analysis, we will highlight the value created by the partnership in terms of future perspectives and lessons learned.

Overall, this work aims at sharing the key lessons learned of GA with the stakeholders operating in the development cooperation sector (especially in the environmental and waste management field) and with the local actors in a country with a recent process of democratization and decentralization.

## The methodology

The present evaluation has been performed using qualitative methods. This methodological approach has been chosen in order to better capture the value of the local development processes activated by the project, as well as the cooperation model put in place by the partners. More specifically, the evaluation focuses on the analysis of the support processes put in place by the project and of the relationships built between the partners. This is done through the description of the activities implemented and the collection of feedback and perspectives by the different actors involved. Overall, the analysis of the processes and the consultation of the partners allowed to effectively shed light on the key lessons learned by the partners, which represent one of the main results of the project.

The evaluation has been articulated into three main phases: first of all, the desk analysis of background documents concerning the project and the context; secondly, the realisation of a set of interviews with partners and stakeholders in Italy (5); and lastly, a field trip in South Africa covering the project's settings and interviews with local partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders (14). The points of view of interviewees have been organized to highlight their perception of the impact of the project and the value of the processes implemented.

# **1. Background, context and operational strategy of the project**

## **1.1 The genesis of the project: from Nets Africa Programme to Get Answers, the opportunity to reinforce a model**

The GA project was drafted in 2012 based on the good results of one of the pilot initiatives in the NA Programme (2008-2012). With an original and successful approach, NA sought to consolidate the role of South African local institutions in broadening democratic participation in local governance; and in the formulation of policies and implementation of initiatives to reduce poverty and ensure access to basic services. One of the most successful initiatives in NA was focused on the waste management public services, more precisely it was “Waste Coops in Ekurhuleni areas of Wattville and Actonville”.

The official partners of GA are Ti Forma, Cispel Confservizi Toscana, and the EMM (EMM), located in the Gauteng province. The overall project lasted 36 months, from 2014 to 2017, and was co-funded by the European Union and by TR.

Specifically, in terms of partnership, Oxfam Italia contributed to the coordination of the project and the connection especially between Cispel and the EMM, through its socio-political knowledge of the South-African background and previous experience in projects about waste. Based on its role on the territory and in line with local policies, the EMM was responsible for overall supervision of the project in strict collaboration with Oxfam; at the same time, EMM was also the main beneficiary of the capacity building activities. Confservizi Cispel Toscana was the technical partner responsible especially for providing training and capacity building to the Municipality and for the

development of the waste collection scheme. The South African Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) facilitated the relationship/networking with other relevant national and para-national agencies which were implementing similar programmes. The Municipality of Florence was involved in the project mainly for the organisation of a study tour of the South African delegation in Italy, which aimed to show to the local partners the experience of the Florentine waste management scheme, while also strengthening the relationships between the two municipalities and the other stakeholders.

The interest of EMM regarding an improvement of the waste management collection is linked to the more general need to improve their capacity to manage local public services and to the need to promote job creation for the local population. Two more elements influenced the birth of GA: the recent decentralization process of economic resources and political power in South Africa, and the need to improve the implementation at local level of the national legislation on waste management and environmental issues.

The connection between GA and the waste management pilot project in NA is important in terms of partnership and framework of the project. In terms of activities, GA is similar to the previous pilot initiative; however, the results were achieved in three different areas in Northern Tembisa. The partnership involved was already tested in the NA programme, and the pre-existing good relationship among the partners and their increasing awareness of the key-themes of the project has been crucial for the genesis of GA. Therefore, GA represented the opportunity to continue and strengthen the international partnership, the waste management collection model, and to foster a local process of community engagement.



### **1.1.1 The project strategy and the main objectives**

As in the NA pilot initiative, GA's main aim was to improve the waste management system and, at the same time, to create job opportunities in the green sector, in particular in recycling, for unemployed people who live in the township.

From the operative point of view, the strategy of GA consisted of three main pillars:

- The implementation of the improved waste management model in three areas of Tembisa through the building of three plants for waste collection and sorting, and the capacity building of cooperatives (Tiyisetsane; Matsupatsela; Inhlanzeko) which worked in the new infrastructures;
- The improvement of knowledge and competences of EMM officials regarding environmental issues and green economy, and at same time the capacity building of local stakeholders in relation to waste management;
- The increasing of local community awareness regarding environmental issues and recycling of waste, involving the schools, the young people, and the families living in the township of Tembisa.

## **1.2 The socio-economic context**

Oxfam Italia represents the main link between the Italian and South African local authorities involved in the project, thanks to its previous experience in several development cooperation projects, and its deep knowledge of the South African socio-political context.

The topics addressed by GA are quite articulated and include waste management, job creation, capacity building of local authorities and cooperatives, and community awareness regarding environmental issues and waste recycling. Before presenting the results of the evaluation, it is useful to mention

briefly the main features of the socio-economic context and the institutional and legislative background of the area involved in the project.

EMM is located in the Gauteng Province and was established in 2000 after local elections; it is the fourth largest municipality in South Africa and has a population of around 2,5 millions of inhabitants. From the socio-economic point of view, in Ekurhuleni the 65,7% of the population is younger than 35 years old and the rate of unemployment is 34%, higher than the provincial average rate (30%); a percentage between 10 and 20 of the employment rate is represented by jobs in the informal sector.

Although South Africa is economically the most advanced country in Africa, it presents some features that make the background quite complex: for example, the significant level of economic inequality between the poorest part and the richest part of the population; the recent and fast process of democratization, the incomplete decentralization of political and administrative power and the difficult implementation of local governance. Due to all the issues and priorities mentioned above, local authorities were often prevented from focusing their attention on environmental issues. On the other hand, at the end of apartheid, the fast urbanization process and occupation of wide areas in Gauteng by informal settlements, encouraged local authorities to focus their efforts on improving the access of those communities to basic services; this was done however without implementing specific environmental actions which would have been needed to guarantee a more sustainable development and the cleaning of those areas.

Despite some limitations, the decentralization process gradually brought an improvement in the quality of democracy, visible in the reduction of poverty and the gradual reduction of development problems. Indeed, compared to the central government, local authorities often find it easier to identify the needs of local communities and the key-fields for supporting

local development. With an eye to this, the national legislative background tried to foster the decentralisation process and strongly involved the municipalities on environmental issues and waste management.

### **1.3 The institutional and legislative background on waste management**

At national level, the legislative path towards the regulation of waste management started in 2008 with the Waste Act. Few years later, in 2012, the National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) was developed. These regulations state the rules according to which local authorities are bound to promote an environmentally sustainable economic development model, to reduce the production of waste, and to reduce the consumption of natural resources. In particular, in the NWMS there are some crucial objectives which are of key importance and were therefore fully included in the strategy of GA:

- to shift of 25% of the recyclable materials from the landfills in the municipalities by 2015, thanks to a separation process, and at the same time to increase people's awareness of the impact of waste on their health, well-being and environment;
- to support green economy in South Africa through the creation of new job opportunities (69.000) in the waste sector, and to involve 2.600 small and medium enterprises and community organizations in the waste management activity;
- to implement integrated planning for local waste management, and to build partnerships between the local authorities and relevant public and private stakeholders.

At a local level, the Gauteng Province approved the Green Strategic Plan in 2011, stating as main objective "the reduction and the minimization of waste, and the establishment of proper

public services for waste collection". Also the Municipality of Ekurhuleni underlines the importance to be an "eco-sustainable city" and consistently with this waste minimization is one of the fundamental priorities for the development. In terms of political awareness, the local authorities highlight in their documents the importance of environmental issues and the need of waste minimization.

From the operational point of view, in Ekurhuleni there are five provincial waste disposal plants which do not include North Tembisa, the area where the activities of GA were implemented. Therefore, the project has launched these new themes in a poor area with a difficult socio-economic context.

The area of intervention in North Tembisa (in Ekurhuleni Municipality) is a semi-urban area with a population of around 200.000 and a high rate of poverty and unemployment. A wide part of the territory is occupied by informal settlements with poor access to the basic public services, such as electricity and water. At the same time, the actual level of awareness of the local community concerning their rights to access such services (and to be informed regarding local economic resources and training) is also very low.

It is important to recall that in the last years (National Waste Management Strategy, Goal 3) the South African central government has launched some measures in order to encourage the establishment of new cooperatives operating in waste service delivery and recycling. On one side this policy was positive because it invested in the concept of cooperative organization and on the opportunity to develop local economy and employment, on the other side, it often sponsored weak cooperatives with a low level of internal organization and effectiveness and a high mortality rate. The presence, in the project, of partners from Tuscany represented an additional incentive to strengthen the support to cooperatives and their sustainability, building on the historical presence and

experience of the cooperative movement in the Tuscan socio-economic development.

## **1.4 The added value of the decentralized cooperation model**

The Italian definition and approach to decentralized development cooperation is broadly in line with the international orientations adopted by the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union. In general terms, we may define decentralised cooperation as an approach to development cooperation that emphasises the importance of local contexts and the role of local actors in development. Consistently with this view, decentralised cooperation projects focus their attention on supporting decentralisation processes in partner countries for example by promoting the adoption sustainable local policies, or delivering capacity building programmes to local authorities and institutions, as well as fostering the development of public-private partnerships for the strengthening of local services, and promoting empowerment and inclusion of local communities.

In general terms, the decentralized cooperation approach aims at being closer to local communities and at giving more importance to the tangible needs and priorities of people in their everyday life, compared with a more centralised development cooperation model. Consequently, decentralized cooperation supports the decentralization policies in partner countries, by strengthening the role of public and private actors at local level, and empowering the local communities and associations.

The GA initiative, on the basis of the strategy illustrated above, can be fully considered an example of decentralized development cooperation. Therefore, it is interesting to highlight what are the main added values of the project strategy in terms of cooperation model. In the next chapter, the actual realisation

such added value will be more directly highlighted through the illustration of the concrete results of the project.

We may summarize the main elements of the decentralised cooperation model as follows.

- Firstly, the proactive role played by TR and EMM in terms of political engagement and implementation of the project.
- Secondly, the mobilisation of local competences and resources in the two countries (Italy and South Africa), and the promotion of direct relationships between territories.
- Thirdly, the direct involvement and strengthening of local administrations in the delivery of their tasks and areas of competence, specifically regarding waste management, and the connected support given to the implementation of decentralization, democratization and local development processes.

Before presenting the results of the project, it is interesting to quote an extract from an interview to the representative of TR which clearly explains the role of the local authorities and their direct support for the proactive role and the autonomy of South African actors.

From the TR perspective, the contribution to the project has been mainly cultural and oriented to spread the importance of environmental issues. At the same time, in Tuscany's view, an important added value has been given by the promotion in the partner territory of the value and principles of the cooperative movement, which constitute an important resource to build embedded organizations that can be sustainable and bring development in the long period.

*"We cannot do trainings and support South Africa for ever, our aim is not to remain there forever. In the middle period our objective is to promote a new awareness towards the separated waste collection and the employment opportunities for disadvantaged people with a low level of education. It is*

*important to instil the cooperative culture, how you can build a cooperative, the approach based on the trust, the exchange among members”.*

## **2. The results of the project**

The following section reports on the activities implemented by the cooperatives, the municipality and the local community, and discusses the impact of those activities. Based on the information collected through the interviews and their analysis, step by step, we will also try to identify some important lessons learned for future partners and stakeholders in the development and waste management field.

### **2.1 The new management of waste collection: the cooperatives and the employment**

#### **2.1.1 The waste management in Tembisa: a difficult background**

According to the South African law the municipalities are the sole responsible for waste management; however, it is established that each municipality must guarantee exclusively the waste collection, while the waste sorting and recycling are left to the initiative of private enterprises, and the local public actor is not involved directly in these latter activities. Private enterprises collect waste mainly from big economic actors, such as shopping centers, big companies, banks, etc., through direct contracts with them; while in the remaining areas, for example the township in Tembisa, waste is collected by some informal collectors who then confer it to the so-called middlemen, who in turn sell such waste to the private enterprises. The informal trash-collectors are individual workers which collect waste with a low level of effectiveness, and, as consequence, they receive a very low price from the middlemen.



In Tembisa there is no legal landfill. There are instead several sites of illegal dumping, therefore waste collection tends to be very expensive for the municipality, for two main reasons: the waste collection is not covered by the public service, and the municipality is forced to deposit undifferentiated waste in the private landfills further away from the area, because the local ones are already full. Overall, a large amount of undifferentiated waste is produced in the area, due to such lack of structured organizations involved in waste collection and separation of different materials.

As a result, Tembisa, when the GA project was launched, was an area with a large presence of illegal dumping sites, where the garbage was often burned near the houses and the informal settlements. That situation had negative effects in terms of quality of air and life, especially for people that live in the informal settlements and that are the poorest and the most exposed to the absence of basic services. According to Italian experts, the production of waste in those areas can be estimated around 0,4 kg per person/per day; this means that the economic potential in the recycling sector is significant.

As mentioned before, GA was focused also on the support and training of local cooperatives employed in waste collection and sorting in Tembisa. In particular, the cooperatives involved are three: Tiyisetsane; Matsupatsela; Inhlanzeko.

From a formal point of view, the cooperatives involved in the project were pre-existent, but, as a matter of fact, each member of each cooperative used to work as an individual and not as a part of an organized and structured entity. Involving cooperatives that were already registered has been important to strengthen them and to work with a pre-existing group of people instead of forming and funding new additional organizations. For such cooperatives and workers, the project constituted an opportunity since they could improve the quality and quantity of waste collected and earn more money when selling it to the

private enterprises operating in recycling; indeed, the enterprises are expected to pay a higher price for waste that is already separated compared to waste that needs to be additionally processed to properly separate the materials.

### **2.1.2 The activities to improve the capacity building of the cooperatives**

Through GA, three groups of workers in Tembisa started a path to turn their group into an actual structured cooperative, adopting shared aims and a functional internal organization. The support to such three cooperatives addressed two main aspects:

- The infrastructures - The project provided the cooperatives with adequate facilities for their activities, including large operational areas that can be used for sorting, baling and storage, a separate office, and an ablution block outside. All the equipment was provided: from the bicycles with baskets, to the proper shoppers needed for door to door waste collection, to the tools for bailing the waste.
- The technical and managerial capacities: the project organised a number of workshops and training sessions for the members of the cooperatives, regarding various aspects:
  - 1) Technical aspects of waste collection and recycling, such as the sorting of the materials, the different categories of waste, the threats and potential benefits of waste to the environment, Waste Management equipment and the description of the concepts and principles of Waste Management;
  - 2) Organizational and managerial aspects: the project transferred capacities to the cooperatives on how to be more functional and efficient. The training mainly focused on regulation and policies for the management

- of a small business in South Africa; drafting a business and marketing plan;
- 3) Financial planning: the capacity building addressed aspects concerning the management of money and cooperative finances;
  - 4) Community awareness raising: the cooperatives were trained on how to create an effective communication strategy to raise awareness in the local community regarding waste recycling and differentiation.

### **2.1.3 The impact of capacity building activities with the cooperatives: evidences from the interviews**

The interviews carried out during the external evaluation showed a positive perceived impact of the aforementioned activities, from the cooperatives' point of view, but also according to the partners involved.

First of all, the members of the cooperatives underlined the fact that for people living in a challenging context like the one described above, individual needs tend to be extremely pressing, and finding a way to reconcile the immediate need to for an income (to satisfy everyday life and family necessities) with the investment of time and responsibility required to create a structured cooperative is not always easy, although people are aware that the latter would ensure a longer term perspective.

According to the cooperative members, GA positively impacted mainly two main spheres: their immediate everyday working life, and their future perspectives of life and employment.

Regarding the first sphere, the members stated in the interviews that the project supported them by providing them the right facilities and the equipment for their work, giving them the certainty to find, the next day, the waste they collected the day before (avoiding the theft of the waste), improving the quality of their work by giving them proper tools to bale the waste and

bicycles to do the collection in the township; moreover, the project gave them the certainty of their income because they could now sell the recycling waste directly to private enterprises avoiding the middlemen.

The training sessions for the cooperatives were provided by Cispel in cooperation with Oxfam Italia and with the help of cultural and linguistic moderators.

The members of the cooperative considered the training sessions useful because they learned to rationalize and plan the waste collection in order to increase the quantity and the quality of waste. For example, they learned how to divide the internal organization in three groups: one should be responsible of the collection, the second one for the transport of waste and the third one should be responsible for the sorting.

***Lesson learned - The **training** sessions should be **adapted to the real needs** of the beneficiaries and their background***

Other crucial aspects emerged from the training sessions: the most important one is that building a cooperative should be considered a proper business project, which is done collectively by a group of workers-entrepreneurs. In other words, thanks to the training the members became aware about both the environmental and socio-economic value of recycling the waste, and the more general “cooperative” values, such as the shared decision making activity and the mutual aid among members. Regarding the future perspectives, the workers of the cooperative seem to be more confident: now they are not unemployed, they have a job, they can work and offer better future perspectives to their children.

*“We learnt many things from the training: we know how we can manage ourselves, we can work to increase our income,*

*especially through the right separation and the baling of waste. Now we are a unique body, we work together, if you scratch my back, I will scratch your back... We are focused on our job, we would like our children to go to school, we want to give them a better future compared to our life”*

The rise of confidence in the future and the personal motivation are strongly linked to the building of waste plants and the cooperative, which now is not only a formal organization but a group of people that can structure its tasks and improve its productivity.

The cooperative members think that an entrepreneurial attitude is very important for developing a business idea and for ensuring its economic sustainability in the future.

An attractive perspective for the future can be for example to extend the waste collection to further areas in the townships, including the organic trash, to increase the awareness of the local community of the different categories of waste, and increase the amount of recycled waste.

*Lesson learned* - To establish a sustainable and durable cooperative, it is important that the members have a clear perception of the economic potential of their activity, and take a strong entrepreneurial attitude towards the **pursuit of the business idea**

*“When we started we did not have anything, now we have the scale, the bicycles, the baling machine. The waste we collect has more value. We work together, we have mutual respect, I must not make decisions alone, we can share, we have to be cohesive, if we have a problem we can try to solve it together...”*

One of the main challenges for the strengthening of the cooperatives is to achieve high awareness of all members in terms of their shared ownership. In order to launch a cooperative, the starting investment of the members in terms of time and commitment is fundamental; however, based on the disadvantaged life conditions of members, they do not always share the same needs and involvement toward the project, the cooperative values and principles. Unfortunately, the pressing need to satisfy basic needs makes it more difficult to accept that in order to build an efficient and effective cooperative takes time, and that the income, at the beginning, may not be satisfying.

*“It is a big challenge, especially because in the cooperative there are different types of people, some members are here because they are hungry, others are interested in the improvement of our performance. We need to carry on our business idea, to increase the amount of recycling waste”*

*Lesson learned - The building of a cooperative entails an **investment of each member** in terms of time and personal motivation, and it requires a strong commitment towards sharing both the goals and the difficulties along the path*

From the perspective of partners involved in the project, especially the Ekurhuleni municipality, Cispel and Oxfam Italia, the main impact on the territory is the management of poverty and the creation of new jobs: around 68 persons, before unemployed, have now a new job perspective. The strengthening of cooperatives represents an important opportunity to support the local economy, to promote the awareness of the township's people in terms of empowerment and capacity to launch and manage an economic activity.

Through GA it has been possible to reach people of disadvantaged groups: in fact, the majority of workers involved are women, who often play a key role in the family and have to take care of their children.

*Lesson learned – The **collection, separation, and recycling of waste** can represent an interesting area for the development of local businesses and can bring important opportunities to foster the **development of the local economy***

Although their level of education is low and their previous experience in formal jobs is very weak, slowly the members of the cooperatives, through the trainings, started to plan their work, to recognize the importance of rationalizing the waste collection in the township, and to build a structure organogram. Cispel, the technical partner, expressed clearly its satisfaction about this steps, which, in their view, the newly acquired skills and competences will be strategic and useful to gain a larger role for the cooperatives in the waste value chain.

Finally, from the municipality's point of view, the reinforcement of the cooperatives and their improved effectiveness also allow to save public money: the more the recyclable waste collection increases in the township, the less the local authority will need to pay for additional private landfills, because the amount of undifferentiated and useless waste will diminish.

*Lesson learned - An efficient and effective separated waste collection system allows to save public money because it reduces the use of private landfills*

Last but not least, this has led to the improvement of environmentally wholesome conditions in the township. Thanks to the work of the cooperatives the streets of Tembisa are cleaner and the illegal dumping has been reduced, as well as the activity of burning the waste.

*“The main result of the project was the managing of poverty. When we gave all the needed resources to the cooperatives, they started to work more, the number of the members increased, the area became cleaner, and there was more awareness of the local community regarding the recycling and, the economical and operational benefits of waste management”*

*“Thanks to GA around 20-25 members have been involved for each cooperative. They share the income they earn by selling the waste to the enterprises. The employment was the main concern for the municipality. Women are the main people involved in the cooperatives, they often come from a disadvantaged background, with a low level of education, they represent the head of the family and take care of their children”*

*“Even if the design ability of the cooperative is still quite weak, through the trainings they have improved their capacity to manage the different internal tasks (...) The meaningful thing was to see the achievement of the project, strongly linked with people that have basic needs, now they have a job as cooperative member, we built the organogram, with their names and surnames, during a workshop together. There are around 68 workers in the three cooperatives. Another important result for the project is the reduction of the role of the middle man in the waste value chain, now the cooperatives can work in this sector and increase their income”*



One of the challenges the cooperative needed to face, especially at the launch of the project, was the competition with the informal collectors, since both searched for and collected waste in the township. A solution to that competition was identified in the debate during the interviews, and was considered important for the future sustainability of the cooperatives and their strategic development. The solution focussed on concentrating the activity of the cooperatives on door to door collection and on the separation of the different categories of waste, indeed, this was identified as a way to overcome the competition with informal collectors in the township. The improvement of waste quality was indicated as very important for the economic sustainability of this activity in the future, but also the improvement of waste quantity is important, and can be achieved through the rise of awareness and cooperation by the local community for separating the waste. Another potential entrepreneurial perspective for the cooperatives, mentioned by the local authority, may be represented by the production and sale of plastic pellets to the enterprises which make objects from the recycling materials. This change would allow the cooperatives to get a greater income, instead of selling the less remunerative plastic bales.

*“The cooperative is an interesting and brilliant way to work, but we need to find the right members that are committed and want to invest their energies in this project”.*

*Lesson learned – the **future sustainability** of local cooperatives in the long term also strongly depends on their capacity to evolve and see the **emerging opportunities arising from the market**, such as the opportunity to develop new products from recycled plastic or to adopt new strategies to improve quantity and quality of their production*

## **2.2 The municipality of Ekurhuleni: towards a more effective implementation of the decentralization process**

### **2.2.1 The activities to improve the capacity building of the municipality**

The objectives of GA that addressed directly Ekurhuleni municipality were mainly in two areas:

- Support to the decentralisation process: the project aimed to improve the policy making activity of councillors, and the planning of tools to address waste management and climate changes at local level;
- Capacity building: the project aimed to improve the competences of the municipal officials in the waste management and recycling field;

The training sessions for the officials focused mainly on the strengthening of their technical competences on environment and green economy, in order to support the new waste management model tested through GA and, before, through the NA programme.

The trainings were held by international and local experts and the main topics were:

- The connection between climate change and waste management;
- Integrated waste management from a legal perspective (course recognized and accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority);
- Solid waste incineration;
- Treatment of organic waste for the recovery of materials and energy.

The conferences and workshops in South Africa were crucial to increase the knowledge of key-topics, such as environment, the use of natural resources and the value of waste recycling at an administrative and political level in Ekurhuleni; and at the same time to involve all South African stakeholders (public authorities, associations, research centres, companies, experts and institutions) interested in those issues and willing to be connected with Italian partners.

In addition, the study tour in Italy (Florence) increased the EMM's awareness of waste management from the institutional, economical and legislative point of view. Specific attention was given to the technological aspects. Indeed, the study tour organized by Cispel and Oxfam was focused on illustrating to the EMM's delegation different waste management options and waste treatment technologies through visits to Montale Waste to Energy Plant (incinerator), Revet Recycling Plant, Case Passerini Recycling Plant (Organic waste treatment), Romagna Compost Pole Plant and Orologio Cooperative.

### **2.2.2 The impact of improving the capacity building of the municipality: evidences from the interviews**

At an operational level, the implementation of GA was coordinated through the Technical Task Team, which includes the Departments of Environment and Waste Management of the EMM and Oxfam Italia. This task team had already been created with the previous pilot project in the NA Programme.

The establishment of the Technical Task Team allowed municipal officials from different Ekurhuleni's departments to attend the training sessions and work together for the first time, to face and approach new topics, namely waste management in the township and the related environmental issues. Having an external mentor in the training sessions was considered, in some of the interviews, as an opportunity for municipal officials

to collaborate and to recognize the role of each department in the waste management value chain.

*“The added value of the project was the fact that we could work together, which is also the trend promoted by the national level. We built a framework for waste management, a model, we worked with different departments, at technical and political level. We got good results from the economical point of view because we can reduce the use of private landfills”*

*“The presence of an external and impartial mentor during the trainings was important because he gave us an objective point of view, it helped us to be less competitive and to respect the role of each one in the waste management value chain. We should learn to work together!”*

*Lesson learned - When different departments work together they can more easily recognize the importance of each one in the waste management value chain, and this helps to increase the collaboration at the administrative level*

As mentioned previously in paragraph 1.3, the decentralization process in South Africa is quite recent, so also the full implementation of local governance and the processes of management of competences and economic resources at local level are partially new to the officials and political representatives. The partnership of GA was well recognized and validated also thanks to the previous experience in NA, which achieved positive results in this respect and brought a new institutional awareness regarding the economic value of waste and recycling. All these factors incentivized the birth of GA and increased the political commitment of local actors around those topics.

The introduction of a method of waste management and recycling in disadvantaged areas, such as Tembisa, represents a test for the EMM to experiment its role as a proactive actor in local development policies, and expresses its potential in working directly with local community. The contribution of this working method in terms of capacity building can be used also in other municipal fields, in cooperation among different departments, in identifying local needs and political priorities, in dialoguing with local stakeholders, which are all key-elements for improving local governance and making the decentralization of powers more effective in the medium and long term.

*“The provision of technical support at an administrative level can influence other departments which were not involved in waste management. The capacity building we experimented through the project did not concern only waste management, it can be valorized in many other fields”*

*Lesson learned - The capacity building of local authorities contributes to increase their overall proactive attitude and helps to make the decentralization process more concrete in practice. However, both the capacity building and decentralization processes take time to become embedded in the institutions, and therefore a long term approach is needed to produce and observe sustainable results*

An additional element that demonstrates the rise of engagement and visibility of local institutions around environmental issues was the participation of the EMM to the “Greenest Municipality competition”, organized by the national Department of Environmental Affairs. In the 2016 edition the prizes were awarded to municipalities based on the

environmental performance and management in 2015. EMM won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for the Metro Municipalities, valued at Rand 3,000,000.00, and GA project together with all the other municipal environmental projects contributed to this meaningful goal.

Coming back to GA, if we consider the level of implementation of the project, the managers interviewed at municipal level were satisfied because around 60-70 per cent of the activities were completed. At same time, two challenges emerged as crucial: on one hand, there have been some challenges in relation to the timing of implementation, linked to some changes of budget and the consequent adjustments in the planning of activities; on the other hand, the engagement of the local community in the township was particularly challenging for the local authority.

Regarding the first challenge, the administrative offices of Ekurhuleni approached the procedures of funds management according to the rules of the European Union, and it was recognised that in this process the technical support, the experience and the facilitating role of Oxfam Italia were crucial. Regarding the second challenge, the interviewees highlight that engaging these communities is not easy but the effort of local politicians was fundamental and unavoidable, because in the disadvantaged areas, such as Tembisa, people may not easily understand the reasons behind the choice to develop new waste recycling facilities instead of building new houses for the community, which are felt as urgent considered that the majority of people live in informal settlements without basic public services (water, electricity).

The engagement of local community and pre-existing local enterprises represented a priority for the EMM and at the same time this is a precious lesson for future projects.

*“One of the main challenges has been the changes of budget and consequently of activities because each change needed to be approved by European commission. Another challenge was*

*the relationship with the local community in Tembisa, to instil the importance of waste recycling utilities while people wanted us to build new houses. It is very important to involve people that live where the projects will be implemented, it must be a priority for future projects. It is also important for local economy to involve local enterprises”*

Working with the cooperatives for the training activities was another useful element to obtain the approval of the local community for the project in Tembisa, since the awareness of cooperatives’ members allowed to communicate more effectively to the local community the economic value of waste and the opportunity that it will bring also in terms of job creation and opportunities. Moreover, the cooperatives worked to teach to the families in the township how to separate the waste and implement the door to door collection system. Overall, the direct relationship between local community and the workers of cooperatives trained by the project helped to share the meaning of the project and the positive implications for the area.

*Lesson learned - The success of the waste collection system strongly depends on the engagement and acceptance of the local community; in this respect the role of local cooperatives is crucial since they can better communicate the meaning and benefits of the intervention to the local population*

## **2.3 Strategies for involving the local community: how the activities improved people’s awareness**

As anticipated, the engagement of the local community and the increase of its awareness on the environmental issues represented a significant part of GA, because it represents a

strategic area to improve both the acceptance of the project from the Tembisa population and the practical effectiveness of door to door collection activities operated by the cooperatives. Several types of beneficiaries were reached by the awareness raising activities, mainly the schools, eco-guides, young people, and the local families living in the townships.

Regarding the school, all the activities saw the participation of the cooperatives operating in the project. The activities included practical activities and stimulating exercises for the students, such as the testing of swap shop exchange points. These have been launched and are currently managed by the cooperatives in collaboration with teachers from the selected schools, whereby children can exchange recyclable waste for stationery. Three schools have been included: Mashemong Primary school, Winnie Mandela Primary school and Seotlana Primary school. The objectives of this initiative were three: to sensitize students about recycling; to help increase the business of cooperatives and, at the same time, stimulate their capacity for "marketing" activities through the creation of incentives to recycling; to help indigent students who struggle to buy school stationery to access these items through the swap sites.

Another example of activity implemented in the schools was the art & craft activity realised during the waste awareness workshop facilitated by a community artisan in the context of the South African Clean Up and Recycle week. The students were taught how to make simple items like penholders, book covers and decorative bowls from recyclable waste. Educational videos were showcased to the students on different topics, such as waste management and recycling, water conservation, energy efficiency and sustainable agriculture. The students also received recycling colouring books and environmental playing cards.

In September 2016, a study trip to the Simmer and Jack Landfill site was organised for 30 students and 3 Teachers from the Winnie Mandela Secondary School. The students learnt about



the operational management of a landfill site, gaining first-hand information on the amount of waste that arrives daily at the landfill, and on the energy generation that takes place on the site. They also gained important insights on the negative environmental impact of improper waste management.

The promotion of local community awareness was implemented also through the youth environmental camp. The event lasted three days and was organised, during the National Environment Week, in collaboration with the Ekurhuleni Environmental Resource Management Department, Gauteng Department of Education and Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The camp was held at Roodeplaat Nature Reserve with learners and teachers from 6 schools within Ekurhuleni. The Gauteng Department of Education assisted in selecting the schools that participated, and the criteria covered the following factors: good performing schools, links to the curriculum and previously disadvantaged schools.

The objectives of the camp were three-fold: to create environmental awareness and promote environmental education; to discuss, debate, and promote the importance of sustainable development and sustainable living; to bring about a positive change in attitude to the way in which all people should relate to the environment.

*“If children change their attitude towards the environment and the separation of waste, also their parents can improve their attitude”*

Such activities were implemented also with the local community in Tembisa. In particular, it is worth mentioning the mobilization of community members during the cleanup activities. In this case the aims of the initiative were to raise awareness about the impacts of illegal dumping in the community, to instil the

spirit of sorting waste at source, and to get the community to be involved in the cleanliness of their environment.

The work with municipal eco-guides has been a further activity which tried to strength the active response of the local community. For example, a training workshop for eco-guides on the connection between climate change and waste management took place in September 2016. A hundred Municipal Eco-Guides from Tembisa, Katlehong and Thokoza benefited from these information/awareness raising sessions on climate change and waste management related practices (reduction, reuse and recycling). The workshop discussed the importance of appropriate waste management and recycling, related to the current climate change. The main objective was to give to the eco-guides the necessary know how to educate the communities about taking care of the environment, appropriate management of waste and recycling.

*“Regarding Tembisa, the eco-guides come mainly from the local community where the cooperatives involving in GA are working. Both the eco-guides and the cooperatives contributed to improve the awareness of the families, to explain the importance not to pollute the environment. The project belongs to the community, it does not belong to few people, it is very important to hold them responsible”*

All the aforementioned activities increased the awareness of the local community on the importance of environmental issues and separated waste collection, even if they live in informal settlements with disadvantaged conditions. The involvement of the local community - children, teachers, families - was essential to share the establishment of new waste processing plants in Tembisa, to stimulate their help in separating waste and awareness in recycling and reducing waste production.

*Lesson learned - **Involving the local community** is fundamental in order to effectively **raise awareness on a new issue**, as environment and waste recycling, in disadvantaged area*

We conclude this paragraph with the following table, summarizing the main numbers on the project, the actors involved (cooperatives, workers, women, officials, schools and students) and the activities implemented (public events and the waste collection).

Looking at the table it is interesting to remark the difference between the amount of waste collected in Tembisa before GA and during the project: in just six months the cooperatives involved collected 70% of the waste that had been collected in the full year before the starting of GA. The efficacy of the waste collection has improved in the township, and the launch of the cooperatives and their functional organization has given results also from a quantitative point of view.

*Table 1 – Main data about GA*

n. cooperatives involved	3
n. workers involved in the cooperatives	63
n. women employed in the cooperatives	45
n. municipal officials involved in the training	12-18
n. schools involved in awareness raising activities	15
n. students involved in the awareness raising activities	600
n. public events to increase the awareness of the local community of Tembisa	4
amount of waste collected, in Tembisa, during the year before the starting of GA	296 317 tons /year
amount of waste collection operated by the cooperatives during the last years of GA	210 009 tons/ 6 months

## **2.4 The heritage from GA: the perspectives of the partners and stakeholders**

The heritage from GA is double: on one hand it created the three waste processing plants' infrastructures, provided all the equipment for the cooperatives, and improved jobs for approximately 68 cooperative members; on the other hand it represented a way of implementing policies at local level, while providing a source of inspiration and vision for future interventions and challenges of similar type.

The EMM's managers declared that after the project they feel more confident regarding the topic of waste management, they are interested in investing public money in order to implement the separated waste collection also in the other township of the municipality, and for this purpose the role of technical partner Cispel Toscana was judged very useful especially to supervise the technological aspects. The study tour in Italy represented a very positive initiative for the participants from the EMM, who were Environment council members, managers and officials of the municipality. They highlighted the value of this visit to the waste management plants and the importance to be informed about the technological equipment used in Italy. Furthermore, the study tour was crucial in terms of inspiration for the future of waste management in Ekurhuleni and for the development of more profitable business ideas for local cooperatives, such as for example the production of plastic pellets and objects made by recycling materials. Even if those business ideas will not be feasible in the short run, the knowledge about profitable and innovative projects was useful to instil in the EMM's representatives the economic value of the recycling of waste and the many opportunities of development in this sector.

*“Regarding the long-term effects, the infrastructures will persist in the future and can be improved. The municipality has now a*

*new policy framework that can be implemented in other fields. Moreover, in the future the cooperatives can become responsible of waste collection in wider areas of the municipality”*

*“The Environment council member would like the GA experiment to be replicated in other eleven townships of the municipality. During the study tour in Italy she was impressed regarding the business opportunity to use the recycling material for creating new objects...”*

*Lesson learned - In the capacity building process, it is important also to inspire the future vision of the municipal representatives*

Another interesting heritage of GA has been represented by all the technical meetings, sharing and exchanging of information and thoughts in the partnership, especially Oxfam Italia, Cispel and the EMM, with regard to the planning of waste management and the relationship of the EMM with other stakeholders, such as the private enterprises.

The key-point in the management of local governance is the enhancement of the role played by the cooperatives in the waste collection. The main initiatives that represent an heritage in this area are three and although they are still underway, it is important to mention them because they show how the results of GA can be supported in the future.

Firstly, with the recent birth of Oxfam South Africa it will be important to involve the local NGO in supporting the three cooperatives engaged through GA after the end of the project. The specific tasks are still to be fully determined by Oxfam Italia and Oxfam South Africa, but this perspective is essential in

order for Oxfam South Africa to become more embedded in the local development processes and valorise the important heritage left by the long presence of “sister” Oxfam organisations from other countries, such as Oxfam Italia.

Secondly, through the draft of the Cooperation Agreement between the EMM and the development contractors, some criteria for the formal recognition of the cooperative’s role in the relationship with the private enterprises, which should be in charge of waste management in Tembisa and in the other wards outside the direct control of the municipality, have been identified. The formal role of the cooperatives could be recognised through the mentorship of the private enterprises, and through the opportunity for the cooperatives to be the owners of the waste they collected, so as to be able to sell it directly to the recycling enterprises.

The existing debate and exchange inside the technical task team of GA about public-private relationships shows the influence and the support given by the project to the public waste management decision-making processes.

*Lesson learned - The engagement of local political and administrative actors is crucial in order to create a base for public-private partnership which can promote local economic actors (such as the cooperatives)*

Thirdly, on March 2016 Oxfam Italia and the EMM proposed a project to the European Union, with the EMM as leader partner, and the same partnership of GA plus Oxfam South Africa. The main objective of this proposal was strictly linked with GA, indeed it looks at the cooperatives as small and medium enterprises which will be the beneficiaries thanks to the promotion of a regulatory framework for a sustainable waste recycling system in the EMM.

## 2.5 Main lessons learned

As illustrated in the previous paragraphs, many lessons learned came out of GA. In the following table we recall all the aforementioned lessons learned, which have been formulated starting from the analysis of the interviews and the perceptions of the three actor groups, namely the local cooperatives, the public officials and representatives of Ekurhuleni municipality, and the Italian partners (Oxfam, Cispel, TR). Such lessons learned represent a crucial heritage of this project, which can be valorised by the actors also beyond this specific project and beyond the specific topic of waste management, in their everyday work and in other different projects.

**Table 2 - The point of view of interviewees in terms of perceived lessons learned**

The members of cooperatives	Public officials, representatives of Ekurhuleni municipality	Italian partners (Oxfam, Cispel, TR)
1. The building of a cooperative entails an <b>investment of each member</b> in terms of time and personal motivation, and it requires a strong commitment towards sharing both the goals and the difficulties along the path	3. When different departments work together they can more easily <b>recognize the importance of each one</b> in the waste management value chain, and this helps to increase the <b>collaboration at the administrative level</b>	9. The <b>capacity building</b> of local authorities contributes to increase their overall <b>proactive attitude</b> and helps to make the decentralization process more concrete in practice. However, both the capacity building and decentralization processes take time to become embedded in the institutions, and therefore a long term
2. To establish a <b>sustainable and durable cooperative</b> , it is	4. An efficient and effective separated waste collection allows <b>to save public money</b> because it reduces the use of	



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important that the members have a clear **perception of the economic potential** of their activity, and take a strong entrepreneurial attitude towards the **pursuit of the business idea**.

private landfills

5. **Involving the local community** is fundamental in order to effectively **raise awareness on a new issue**, as environment and waste recycling, in disadvantaged area

6. The success of the waste collection system strongly depends on the **engagement and acceptance** of the **local community**; in this respect the role of local cooperatives is crucial since they can better communicate the meaning and benefits of the intervention to the local population

7. the **future sustainability** of local cooperatives in the long term also strongly depends on their capacity to evolve and see the **emerging opportunities arising from the market**, such as the opportunity to develop new products from recycled plastic or to adopt new strategies to improve quantity and quality of their production

approach is needed to produce and observe sustainable results.

10. In the capacity building process it is also important to **inspire the future vision** of the municipal representatives

11. The **training** sessions should be **adapted to the real needs** of the beneficiaries and their background

12. The engagement of local political and administrative actors is crucial in order to create a base for public-private partnership which can promote local economic actors (such as the cooperatives)

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8. The **collection, separation, and recycling of waste** can represent an interesting area for the development of local businesses and can bring important opportunities to foster the **development of the local economy**

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## Conclusions

### ***From Get Answers to Nets Africa: the evolution of Tuscany's decentralised cooperation in South Africa***

In the following conclusions, it is important first of all to highlight the **main differences between Get Answers**, the project discussed in this report, **and Nets Africa**, the Programme from which GA originated and that was strengthened and expanded by its action.

The first difference lays in the fact that, differently from NA which had 4 different pilot actions, GA was focused on a **unique topic**, namely waste management and the recycling. This choice allowed for a better focalisation of the project on the needs of the municipality in this area, and for a more effective adaptation of the technical support to the specific local context. Secondly, we have seen that GA was more focused on **tangible activities** (to install waste plants; to train cooperatives and officials), as compared to the actions implemented in NA which focused more on the exchange and dissemination of experiences between territories.

Thirdly, compared to NA, GA empathized more strongly with the objective of **creating new jobs for the local community**, and for this purpose it developed a strong strategy to work with three local cooperatives, providing them with practical support and training to their members.

### ***The added value of Get Answers as a decentralized development cooperation practice***

Overall, the analysis and evaluations illustrated in the this report show that the project GA represents a successful good practice of decentralized development cooperation. In the following table

we summarise the main elements which allow to identify GA as a good practice of decentralized cooperation.

Table – Key elements to identify GA as a good practice of decentralized development cooperation

<b>1. Alignment with local development priorities</b>	The project supported the local authorities (especially EMM and TR) in the pursue of specific local priorities such as the <b>struggle against poverty</b> , the <b>improvement of disadvantaged women's conditions</b> , and the promotion of human and <b>sustainable development</b>
<b>2. Promotion of democratic governance</b>	The governance of the intervention was based on the creation of a <b>multi-stakeholder task team</b> , which involved the different departments of the EMM and the international partners of the project (Oxfam Italia and Cispel). This multi-stakeholder task team proved to be an effective tool for supporting the exchange of information, the sharing of goals, and the implementation of cooperative actions among the parties involved, and especially the local authority and their different departments.
<b>3. Mobilization of local</b>	For the success of the initiative, the

<p><b>resources and capabilities</b></p>	<p>project strongly relied on the mobilization of key local resources of both the territories involved (in Italy and South Africa). These included <b>economic resources</b> as well as <b>technical competences and human resources</b>, which were crucial for the success of the project. Moreover, the recent formalization and involvement of Oxfam South Africa in the follow up of the project will further strengthen the sustainability of the action and enhance the opportunities to mobilise resources for the continuation of the actions in the future.</p>
<p><b>4. Engagement and capacity building of local authorities</b></p>	<p>An important objective of the project consisted in the <b>strengthening of local authorities to promote a more decentralized, democratized and locally owned development process</b>. Indeed, the project successfully improved the capacity of the EMM to deal with new topics and issues (i.e. environment and waste recycling) and to work with the community, in order to promote empowerment and raise awareness on key sustainability topics.</p>

<p><b>5. Engagement and partnership with local communities and private actors</b> (such as the cooperatives)</p>	<p>By including waste management cooperatives in the project, GA supported the development of effective <b>public-private partnerships at local level</b> and promoted sustainable local development processes. The training provided to the cooperatives can be further thought of as a catalyst of <b>economic development processes</b>, since it has the potential to increase the role of the cooperative as a social and economic actor.</p>
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In addition to the above mentioned elements, we may recall that an additional opportunity created by the project for strengthening waste management in the future is represented by the new project submitted to the European Union (March 2016), with the EMM as a lead partner. The project concerns the promotion of a regulatory framework for a sustainable waste recycling system, and for the involvement of cooperatives as the most relevant example of small and medium enterprises at local level.

### ***The heritage of Get Answers for the partners involved in the project***

For **international partners** (especially Oxfam Italia and TR<sup>1</sup>), the project has also been an important opportunity to learn and

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<sup>1</sup> We included only TR, and not the Municipality of Florence, as main Italian institutional partner involved in the use of heritage came from GA. The Municipality of Florence was not included because it had a specific action

improve their own understanding on how to **best support and give a contribution to decentralized development processes** in the partner countries. Indeed, the project has been an opportunity to reflect on the importance to address 4 different levels of an “high quality development cooperation”:

1. **Technical aspect** – Success in decentralized cooperation is achieved when there is an appropriate transfer of technical competences, as well as an open sharing of knowledge and methods. In the case of GA, the Italian partners valorised their significant experience in waste management, which they used as a starting point to introduce a sustainable waste management model in Ekurhuleni. This model took into consideration the background of Tembisa and brought new technical waste management knowledge.
2. **Cultural aspect** – in challenging areas such as the environment, an high level of cultural awareness and political priority is crucial to enable change and to foster the introduction of new sustainable practices. In Tembisa, the topic of waste collection and environmental sustainability was new to all the actors involved, and promoting a new awareness on the topic was an essential part of the project. Working with all the stakeholders (local authorities, economic actors, local community, schools) proved to be key in order to promote local ownership of the issue and foster collaboration between the actors, each one participating according to its role.

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just in the last part of the project (the study tour), differently as we illustrated TR had a more structured and important role.

3. **Economic aspect** – the new processes and practices launched through the project need to be economically sustainable. In this case, sustainability has been made possible by the effort made to turn the waste collection activity into an effective business opportunity for local cooperatives.
4. **Institutional aspect** – the successful and sustainable implementation of projects like GA always requires a strong level of commitment and cooperation both inside (between departments in EMM) and among institutions (EMM and other local stakeholders). At international level, on the other hand, decentralized cooperation promotes horizontal partnership between local actors in a multilevel context, which enhances policies at local, regional, national and international level and opens up opportunities to integrate economic resources from different sources (indeed, GA relied on both European and regional funds).

Looking more specifically on **the role of the NGO**, it is important to address its double role in the process of decentralized cooperation: first of all, the NGO proves to be a suitable and qualified actor for **the coordination of the project**, thanks to its knowledge of the context, of the development processes, and its capacity to manage in a professional way the implementation and continuous monitoring of the planned activities. Secondly, **the NGO plays a key role as an enabler of the collaboration and exchange between partners and stakeholders**; indeed, the NGO can be really seen as a catalyst of cooperation and a intermediary that allows all partners to know their mutual needs and work together in effective ways.

Some examples are useful to better illustrate the **concrete circumstances in which the NGO played a part in**



**empowering the actors** involved in the GA project. The empowering role of Oxfam was particularly important for example when the partners encountered difficulties in combining and mediating between their different working models (for instance, the different work model between Italian and South African partners, or between different departments of the same institution). The NGO also provided support and improved the communication process between the local institutions and the local community (for instance, the exchanges between EMM and inhabitants of Tembisa). The NGO further played a role in the formalization of an agreement between local authorities and economic stakeholders.

Based on the deep knowledge of the context, the NGO is able to establish strong relationships with all the actors involved, to keep an independent and overarching role, which helps reconcile the different priorities and responsibilities of the other actors. The NGO has the capacity to bring and valorise its accumulated knowledge of the cooperation processes, and the lessons learned from previous projects and contexts; this knowledge is crucial to manage projects with several different development objectives, subjected to developing and changing processes in multiple and diverse contexts around the world.

Lastly, it is important to highlight the crucial role of the South African local authorities, which is absolutely fundamental in this type of decentralised cooperation interventions. There are at least four main **suggestions that can be addressed to the local authorities**, in order to increase the results of GA in the future.

First of all, **the creation and maintenance of effective public-private partnership at local level** needs to be supported and incentivized in the future: for example, the formalization of the relationship between the municipality and the private enterprises involved in waste management seems to be a good tool to preserve and enhance the role of the cooperatives.

Secondly, **the work model based on the cooperation among different Ekurhuleni departments** needs to be promoted and developed also when it comes to other municipal competences, beyond the waste management.

Thirdly, **the existing internal organization of the cooperatives, which has been improved by the project**, needs to be further strengthened and supported, this step being a priority before planning the development of new business ideas.

Lastly, although the evaluation of the project shows that the implementation process produced very good results, it seems crucial for the future and for the sustainability and scaling up of the waste management related actions, that the South African public actors continue their **involvement in additional structured projects, in order** to capitalize the capacity acquired and continuously raise their actual implementation level.

