

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA EXPERT WORKING GROUP – OPEN MEETING SUMMARY 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023

The LPSA Sub-Saharan Africa Expert group met on July 20, 2023, [Jaap de Visser](#), one of the co-chairs of the SSA expert working group moderated, outlining the objective—enhancing conversations on African decentralization. The group aimed to facilitate insights exchange among local government practitioners, academics, and consultants.

[Paddy Siyanga Knudsen's](#) presentation focused on the pivotal role of local economic development within a conducive governmental framework for service delivery. The discourse delved into a comprehensive understanding of actors, structures, engagement, and equitable resource utilization to enhance the quality of life. Knudsen underlined the vital contributions of local governments in driving development, considering both administrative and political dimensions. An illustrative example from Rwanda highlighted the interplay between the executive and political arms within a District Council. The conversation explored elements like centralized national guidance and potential cross-sectional analysis.

This interactive session aimed to uncover the best practices and lessons of local economic development. Knudsen emphasized the importance of tiered state structures, drawing on instances from Zambia and Tanzania. The discussion extended to private sector engagement, public-private partnerships, and international collaborations as catalysts for local economic development. In her talk, she further delved into capacity enhancement, monitoring, and evaluation as indispensable components, underscoring the necessity for impactful tools and diagnostic techniques. Gender-responsive planning's amalgamation into economic strategies was also raised, underscoring the value of data-driven approaches. In essence, she highlighted the intricate interplay of factors in advancing local economic development.

[Kah Walla](#) discussed transforming African food markets, emphasizing their role in fostering entrepreneurship, economic exchange, and social service access. These markets are crucial for governance and revenue generation. Walla proposed an African eco markets model with five pillars: economic benefits, eco-friendly infrastructure, improved health and social services, inclusive governance, and enhanced management. She highlighted interventions involving democratic governance, eco-friendly infrastructure design, and technology-driven management.

Walla showcased successful case studies from Cameroon, including capacity building, infrastructure development, and revenue enhancement, leading to improved conditions and reduced corruption. Challenges included legal frameworks and cultural shifts, but the model aims to empower visionary local governments, foster partnerships, and contribute to sustainable local economic development in countries like Cameroon, Mali, and Sierra Leone.

The discussion and Q&A session focused on markets as a vital economic space. Paddy Siyanga Knudsen emphasized the importance of co-creation, participatory approaches, and engaging local communities in LED initiatives. She mentioned the challenges of assessing economic productivity within the local space, especially in relation to unemployment, and highlighted the need for robust policies and strategies to guide LED efforts. Kah Walla shared her experiences with market management in Cameroon, discussing challenges related to vested interests, power structures, and the disruption of existing market operations. She underscored the importance of holistic, participatory models and collaborations with various

stakeholders, including local governments and police, to overcome resistance and implement successful LED initiatives.

[Aloysius Bongwa](#) contributed his insights, mentioning his work in Ghana on market development, where a comprehensive approach was applied to address governance, stakeholder involvement, and financing. The discussion also addressed the absence of explicit LED policies in some countries, the role of private investors, and the need for inclusive approaches that empower local communities and promote economic growth. The importance of capacity-building and addressing challenges such as financing and implementation capacity was emphasized.

[Jenifer Bukokhe Wakhungu](#), the Deputy Director for Local Transformative Finance at the [United Nations Capital Development Fund \(UNCDF\)](#) presented UNCDF's three-fold strategic plan ending in 2025, aiming to support local governments in designing, testing, and scaling up inclusive financing mechanisms. UNCDF works across Africa, focusing on transitions related to urbanization, climate change, and economic development. Wakhungu elaborated on five building blocks for local transformative finance: fiscal transfers, local revenue generation and management, domestic capital market development, city-friendly investment funds, and guarantee facilities. She discussed the importance of improving local governments' revenue collection, introducing tools for asset management and climate change adaptation, and promoting investment fund mechanisms. She highlighted a successful project in Morocco and the guaranteed facility supported by the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus, allowing banks to lend to local governments with UNCDF guarantees. The presentation emphasized on the need for robust financing strategies to address various developmental challenges in African localities.

[Jamie Boex](#), the Executive Director of LPSA discussed about the Local Public Sector Alliance's (LPSA) plans. He expressed gratitude for the informative presentations and highlighted LPSA's goal to support local governance institutions in Africa through the LoGICA Framework. Boex announced the online availability of profiles for South Africa and Ethiopia, with plans to finalize profiles for Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. He outlined LPSA's efforts to establish regional and thematic working groups, such as inclusive governance, subnational finance, women's empowerment, conflict, and climate action. Boex highlighted that LPSA is actively looking for individuals to participate in these groups and is welcoming suggestions for a new Advisory Board Chair. The LPSA plans to develop funding proposals to delve deeper into priority topics and continue the State of Local Governance Institutions project, particularly focusing on women's economic empowerment in Africa.

Kah Walla concluded the meeting by expressing gratitude to the speakers. She encouraged participants to visit the LPSA website to learn more about Africa working group's initiatives and join the thematic working groups. Kah Walla emphasized the importance of sharing experiences, both successes and failures, and invited suggestions for future topics. She announced the next quarterly meeting for the Sub-Saharan African Group on **October 19, 2023 (16:00 EAT/ 15:00 SAST/ 14:00 WAT)**.