



Concept Note

Working Group Session

“Transparency and accountability as tools to empower local governments”

Commonwealth Local Government Conference 2017

21st- 24th November 2017, Valletta (Malta)

Transparency and accountability as key factors of better local governance and service delivery

The overarching theme of this year’s conference is “Fit for the future: resources and capacity for effective local government”. This session will look at how transparency and accountability are elements that make local government stronger and enable them to better deliver public services and increase local governance.

Trust in the capacity of public institutions to deliver is the key for urban governance to work. Without the trust of their citizens, the task to manage urban settings becomes almost impossible. Gaining and maintaining this trust is the cornerstone to fight informality, bring citizens to collaborate with local policies and increase the reach of the always too short public resources.

Most of the public trust in the role government is created (or lost) at local level. When local governments are inefficient or corrupt, cities cannot reach their potential as a place for poverty reduction, social progress, economic growth, environmental protection or cultural development. Mismanagement and corruption are major obstacles to achieve development goals. This is why so important that all local government establish specific policies to prevent corruption and mismanagement to happen.

Cities are ideal locations for analysis and action to combat corruption, as they are the space where the interaction between key local actors occurs and they enable the generation of networks, being key platforms for the exchange of good practices and for improving learning on actions and policies regarding corruption issues, both locally and globally. Many local governments in the world are already committed to fight corruption by fostering transparency and accountability while improving the living conditions of citizens through the provision of efficient and effective services in an open, competitive and fair manner. These initiatives allow local governments to communicate more with their citizens and to govern better and on the other side are an opportunity for citizens to have the tools and information needed in order to play a more active role in local management.

These objectives cannot be achieved without considering the necessity of providing local governments with normative and technical tools to improve their capacities and in doing so, include participatory and innovative tools that can guarantee ownership and sustainability and improve trust between the government, the city stakeholders and the citizens.

This session is organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) in the framework of its Urban GLASS project – Governing with the citizen, jointly designed with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) and with the partnership of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The project is creating awareness about the necessity for cities and local governments to actively start fighting corruption in urban development. But also to bring international attention about the essential role of local governments as agents who effectively are already fighting corruption and generating trust in the role of public sector.

More information at www.urban-glass.org

Working Group Session

The objective of the session is to identify specific actions able to bring transparency and increase accountability to local management as a tool to increase efficiency and service delivery.

Specific objectives

- 1) To create awareness about how developing transparency policies at local level is an instrument to empower local governments and enable them to deliver better.
- 2) To identify elements that needs to be part of those local policies.
- 3) To identify innovative solutions that local governments are already using to improve transparency and accountability in urban management.
- 4) To identify success factors and risks in implementing local policies on transparency, accountability and citizen participation in city management.

Methodology

Panelists will consist of three/ four elected representatives. We also expect the presence of a representative of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime.

Session coordinator: Diana López Caramazana, Head, Local Governments and Decentralization Unit, UN-Habitat (Diana.lopez@unhabitat.org)

Languages: English

Questions for the speakers

The session seeks to find a wide range of responses to the following questions:

- How the lack of transparency in municipal management is affecting the good governance of your city?
- What are the main challenges for transparency and accountability in your city?
- What are the experiences and best practices of the participants in fighting corruption and creating citizen trust in their management?
- How much does transparency and accountability policies contribute in achieving that?
- What are the main constraints and problems that corruptions entail for local governments to guarantee equal access to basic services?
- What can be done to improve this? Does civic participation in service provision activities help to increase their quality and equality?