



FELCOSUMBRIA

Fondo di Enti Locali
per la Cooperazione decentrata
e lo Sviluppo umano sostenibile



United Nations
Development
Programme

International Forum on Aid Effectiveness at the local level

TERRITORIES NETWORKING FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Innovative tools and practices for decentralised cooperation

Foligno – June 15-17, 2011

Background

Development cooperation is undergoing a crucial phase of transformation, with new perspectives and new challenges, including the need to combine the implementation of innovative practices and principles for the management and effectiveness of official development aid (along the direction defined in the roadmap to Busan) with the constraints imposed by the global economic crisis.

Whilst the countries of the North, severely affected by the crisis, are reducing resources allocated to development activities, governments and other national actors from emerging countries have now taken on increasingly important roles in the official development aid framework. Just recently still aid recipients, these emerging players are gradually becoming more assertive, with some even becoming donors themselves.

The last decade has witnessed the gradual evolution and consolidation in different countries of a phenomenon that undoubtedly constitutes a key novel element in the international cooperation panorama: namely, the continued and dynamic growth of the role played by territories as protagonists of local development processes.

In the framework of what can be defined as a "territorial approach to development", local authorities and territorial stakeholders have taken on an increasingly decisive role in influencing both regional and global initiatives, as well as in responding to international human development challenges through decentralised cooperation.

In fact, over the last ten years, decentralised cooperation has not only increased its presence and strength, having been able to identify targets of "common interest" to develop joint actions with the territories of the South. It has managed to maintain and increase assistance even when at the national level cooperation resources have undergone significant reductions.

Originally conceived as actions directly undertaken by local authorities, decentralised cooperation has increasingly taken on the form of "territorial" collaboration. This entails that community stakeholders become active and protagonist development participants and leaders through the political and institutional roles of local governments in development processes and cooperation strategies. Territorial systems also gain value as social, economic, and participatory laboratories, rich in experiences and innovations. As such, territorial cooperation is in no way limited to initiatives carried out by local government but remains open to the social, economic, academic, and collaborative realities that constitute a society's dynamic and living fabric.

Keeping in mind this outlook of complementarity between the local and global dimension, the interdependence between actors and territories calls for the promotion of not only economic but also political, cultural, and social efforts for territorial internationalisation. Territorial cooperation can be used as a research tool to find common interests and actions, fostering dialogue and developing strong and sustainable relationships between the parties concerned.

In this light, the European Union's approach proves to be especially important as it has seized this period of transformation and change, recognising and supporting the role of local authorities.

Trustful of the potential of decentralised cooperation, it has even created specific lines of funding for cooperation between territories.

The future prospects of international cooperation therefore depend on how will the challenges be addressed, amongst which are: how to better direct the potential of the leading figures in territorial cooperation? How to effectively and innovatively channel the “drive” of individual territories into a multilateral framework? How to assure the participation and impact of the territories in the definition of guidelines, programming priorities and cooperation’s operating procedures? The increased involvement of territories in development cooperation initiatives can be used as an indicator verifying the usefulness, at least at local level, of the Aid Effectiveness principles set out in the Paris Declaration in 2005.

Territorial cooperation, a new organisational modality, and regional, national, and European complementarity within a multilateral framework

The abovementioned situation calls for a thorough analysis of the organisational, strategic, and even administrative decentralised cooperation methods necessary to ensure that the outcome of the war against poverty and exclusion makes up for the effort, especially under the strain of the current global crisis.

Territorial cooperation is rich in diversity and number of actors, initiatives and experiences, but it also runs into many risks. Some of the challenges incurred include fragmentation of actions and actors, the limited availability of economic resources, discontinuous support, project-based interventions and the perception of the local level as marginal in relation to broader regional, national and international policies and strategies.

For this reason, it is imperative to foresee the creation of tools and organisational methods that can lead to the creation of a “system” and to maximise the potential and resources mobilised by local governments and stakeholders. This in turn, would increase the effectiveness of decentralised cooperation in fighting poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In recent years, new organisational bodies for local entities have emerged in Italy, for example local cooperation funds, representing a new type of association between local institutions and suggesting a new form of territorial organisation. Such examples, currently yielding important results, have demonstrated the capacity to introduce innovative and effective dynamics as well as to appropriately respond to regional cooperation opportunities and challenges.

These new organizational forms that are born and inspired by the experience of local funds in Spain, meet different requirements. On the one hand, the need to ensure the presence in the territories of an organisational reference point upon which the institutional instances can rely on, even the small ones. On the other, the need to establish a common framework where all territorial players can take advantage of experiences and skills fundamental for cooperation. It is therefore a concrete alternative, which addresses the need to develop adequate instruments for promoting and strengthening the role of local authorities in development policies and international cooperation, and ensure the involvement of public, private and associative territories and their role as protagonists.

Hence, territorial cooperation is a practical alternative that provides the needed tools for promoting and strengthening the role of local governments in development policies and international cooperation. And at the same time, makes sure to include public, private, and associational stakeholders in the territories in their role as protagonists.

Decentralised cooperation is currently going through an extremely interesting phase of dynamic experimentation, devising and implementing methodological, organisational and operational instruments generating:

- an organisational context capable of mobilising and networking territorial governments, stakeholders, resources, experiences, and innovations, as well as facilitating the establishment of partnerships between territories at the local level;
- a coordination instrument in the territory which allows for a steady involvement and promotes coherence, continuity, and effectiveness in the framework of a long-term planning;
- a governance instrument capable of defining effective territorial cooperation policies, strategies and synergies in order to multiply the results and impact on development processes.

Current experiences demonstrate that a structured territorial network, capable of programming and of producing coherence and effectiveness, facilitates the synergy and complementarity between territorial cooperation and international cooperation initiatives of the intermediate governments, as well as with policies and efforts at the national level.

Territorial cooperation becomes even more effective in contributing to the fight against poverty and the sustainable human development efforts when able to articulate its own initiatives and strategies with those of intermediate and national governments, international organisations, and the European Union in a multilateral framework, following the harmonization recommendations expressed in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda.

The articulation and coordination of territorial cooperation with the initiatives promoted by the European Union and the United Nations are the expression of a new multilateralism which promotes, based on the role of the territories, dialogue between local and national governments, local and international actors, and ensures greater effectiveness and impact of aid on development processes.

If the creation of a territorial network allows to maximise the potentialities of the territory, its partnership with the United Nations' broader strategies supporting human development—such as UNDP's ART Initiative (Articulation of Territorial and Thematic Cooperation Networks for Human Development) — allows for a more effective impact and coordination with the development processes of partner countries.

To be more effective in strategic terms, territorial networks can operate in a complementary manner with the multilateral framework, which provides a methodological, organisational, and operational reference point linking decentralised cooperation initiatives with local and national policies. ART represents a reference framework which allows the harmonisation of actions with local and national territorial development strategies, improving the effectiveness of the support to ongoing processes.

This kind of architecture, promoting the complementarity between the local, regional, national, and international levels within a multilateral framework, constitutes an innovative reference which offers new prospects for international cooperation, fully addressing the priority of aid effectiveness. In particular, it responds in a practical and operational manner to the responsibility which represents the eighth Millennium Development Goal, commonly contributing to: *“develop a global partnership for development”*.

The Forum

This event, which will provide the opportunity to examine and discuss these issues, is aimed at key Italian, European and international development actors. It will offer a space for analysis, comparison, and suggestion of improved organisational modalities for local governments and territories, as well as their articulation with the intermediate level, national governments, the European Union and international organisations within a multilateral framework, following the path laid out in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda on aid efficiency, complementarity and harmonization.

The Forum will also contribute to the broad international consultation process on aid effectiveness at the local level, promoted by UNDP together with various decentralized cooperation networks (the main moments of the process occurred in Barcelona, October 2010; Dakar, February 2011; and Medellin, April 2011). The results of the consultation are intended to influence the preparatory works and outcome document of the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in late November in Busan (South Korea).

The Forum is also intended to be a space for reflection on this cooperation approach and its utility as instrument for dialogue between citizens and territories, which is not only useful but necessary in the current political scenarios, such as the Mediterranean.

Geneva – Foligno, May 10th, 2011