

Resilience for Ensuring Inclusive Local Communities and the SDGs



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Introduction

As institutions grapple with the multiple challenges facing communities the term resilience has emerged as a concept that offers the promise of coherence. It has the capacity to help policy makers from all sectors make sense of a seemingly ever more dynamic context.

Local government is on the front-line in facing up to these challenges: eradicating extreme poverty, reducing disaster risk, combating the causes of climate change, and fostering community peace and security. In the midst of the COVID pandemic it is local government that communities are turning to. Local government is responding to global and macro level issues outside its control. These manifest locally in increased demand for services and support. These challenges also call for strategic responses and shifts in policy for example to adapt to structural economic shifts or demographic change.

Resilience has particular salience for developmental local government, which responds to failures of centralised and top-down approaches and recognises local agency. Resilience offers a holistic framework that can help local government understand the interconnected challenges it is facing. It can help develop joined up responses that make the best use of local assets and resources, which are strengthened as they are mobilised.

Planning for inclusion is a key characteristic of developmental local government. Resilience provides a framework for planning because it embraces a systems approach. This acknowledges that local government operates in an open system, with diverse and distinct inputs and influences. In this context resilience posits shocks and spikes as part of the system rather than one-off events. Resilience can be seen as the process of continuously strengthening local capacities to deliver inclusive development within an open system.

The term resilience gained credence once more during the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a policy response to growing global levels of insecurity and complexity. In the aftermath of the 2008-2009 global financial crisis and a prevailing economic slowdown, insecure working and living conditions due to poverty and large-scale unemployment were stubborn challenges taking hold across the Commonwealth.

In addition, at that time, during the lead up to the Paris climate talks in 2015 there was widespread concern at the lack of progress or ambition in relation to climate change targets while ever more violent manifestations of the phenomenon wrought havoc through storms, floods and wildfires. Added to this, rapid urbanisation was established as a policy priority following the crossing of the symbolic threshold in 2007 when for the first time more people were living in urban settlements than in rural areas globally. In the 2020s policy makers have once more reached for resilience as they look to frame coherent responses to these issues and the COVID-19 pandemic.

2015 also saw the endorsement of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030)¹ by the UN General Assembly. The framework was formulated during a three-year process of discussion during which governments, civil society and other development stakeholders forged a comprehensive framework with achievable targets, standards and legal instruments for disaster risk reduction. The process was significant in highlighting the need for Agenda 2030 to address disaster risk and climate change reinforced the currency of resilience in the prevailing development discourse.

For each of these global development challenges and initiatives, local government has been at the forefront. It has been responding to the needs of local populations through increasing services to the most vulnerable, communicating essential information and maintaining core services with reduced personnel and shrinking revenue streams. In the face of these ongoing emergencies the theme of resilience has new currency as an essential framework for how cities and local government plan for and adapt to local and global shocks. CLGF has a track record of championing local government as an agent of resilience through its national and regional programme work. This report responds to the need from its stakeholders for progressive narratives that can bring policy coherence to development planning – not least in the context of COVID-19 and ultimately post pandemic recovery.

¹ <https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sendai-framework>

The paper aims to provide a resource for local government stakeholders – local government officials, elected representatives as well as central government counterparts with a mandate to support and enable effective and efficient local government. It will help colleagues understand and navigate the resilience discourse and enable the use of the concept as a framework for policy and practice. It starts by exploring the diverse definitions of resilience as a development concept. It then traces the evolution of resilience as a paradigm. There has been criticism of resilience thinking and this will be discussed. The report will then focus on the utility of resilience. To conclude the paper will highlight the applications of resilience for local government through examples that illustrate various dimensions of the concept.

2.0 Defining Resilience

Brown² acknowledges the significant resilience epistemologies in coming to a definition that speaks to the way it can be applied to diverse areas of development policy and practice. She takes an inclusive approach, that encompasses resilience as the ability to withstand, to bounce back from, and to emerge more strongly from shocks. She refers to the work of the Rockefeller Foundation's, erstwhile 100 Resilient Cities project³. The project focussed on the practical applications and opportunities presented by the concept and defined resilience as the capacity of people and systems to survive, adapt, and grow in the context of stress and shocks, and transform when required.

Brown identifies three dimensions of resilience. Conventionally, resilience is seen as the ability to resist, cope and bounce back in the face of a development challenge. This perspective is cited most often in the formulation of disaster risk reduction approaches. Consideration of the capacity for individuals and communities to adapt to change and uncertainty, is a second dimension. This has featured in the shaping of adaptation strategies related to climate change. The third aspect of Brown's framing of resilience speaks to the capacity for transformation and to take advantage of prevailing uncertainty to become stronger. This aspect of resilience has been relatively underdeveloped and Brown identifies this aspect as a key element in making it useful as a framework for holistic and coherent policy making.

What can be termed "resilience thinking" "acknowledges that change is an ever present and that the systems that institutions operate in are dynamic and unpredictable. This requires adaptive management that enables responses to change (whether rapid, gradual or heralded by the crossing of a threshold). This kind of thinking recognises the potential of shocks and crises to provide the impetus for transformational change. In turn this requires an appreciation of the nature of systems and the ways in which formal and informal institutions interact with and affect each other. This brings an understanding that challenges can compound or offset each other (e.g., COVID-19 and climate change) rather than manifest in isolation. Understanding resilience also necessitates an appreciation that it can be both good and bad. It is not an inherently "good" concept. For example, the ways in which people become trapped in poverty can be resilient and resist efforts to address them.

3.0 Where has Resilience come from?

Academics trace the development of the resilience discourse to C.S Holling's⁴ work published in 1973. Through an ecological lens, Holling described resilience as governing the durability of relationships within a system. He defined it as a measure of the ability of systems to absorb changes and yet persist. This definition distinguishes between resilience (the ability of a system to respond) and stability (the ability of a system to return to a state of equilibrium). Ecologists in the 1970s understood the need to look at ecosystems as a whole instead of individual organisms. Holling observed freshwater lakes as systems subject to change – whether natural or manufactured. He set out to define a concept that made sense of real-world ecosystems, and took account of dynamic processes in all their randomness and diversity, influenced by manifold variables on multiple levels.

Libby⁵ observes that Holling's work has its roots in the then contemporary discourse among ecologists about planetary boundaries. They sensed that

2 Brown, K., 2015. *Resilience, development and global change*. Routledge.

3 <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/100-resilient-cities/>

4 Holling, C.S., 1973. Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annual review of ecology and systematics*, 4(1), pp.1-23.

5 Robin, L., Sörlin, S. and Warde, P., 2013. *The future of nature*. New Haven/London.

there was a limit to what the planet could take in the pursuit of economic growth and could not be expected to recover and revert to a constant state of equilibrium. Libby recognises that when presented with the multiple development challenges of political and economic instability, and climate change, development organisations started to express interest in resilience as a concept. This opened up a new dimension of resilience – more explicitly connected to the sphere of international development.

This school of thought drew on the work of Alinovi et al⁶. This flagged the introduction of the concept of resilience into food security literature as a means of measuring the capacity of households to absorb the impacts of crises rather than predicting the occurrence of such events. Barrett and Conostas⁷ set out a theory of development resilience. This focussed on the individual and collective human capacity to avoid and escape from poverty in the face of multiple pressure points and shocks. This introduced a rights-based element to resilience thinking. They contended that the value of the theory was that it required a holistic and rigorous explanation of the interrelated dynamics of human development, the environment and the management of risk. From this perspective, development resilience is the capacity of a person, household, or other group to avoid poverty when subject to multiple shocks or stresses. Resilience can only be said to exist if the capacity to avoid poverty remains high.

Reflecting on the way in which the resilience discourse has evolved, Bousquet et al⁸ identify two principal schools of thought which are apparent in development policies and programmes. These can be summarised as either focussing on; the resilience of social-ecological systems (see Folke⁹); or more recently, development resilience. Social-ecological systems resilience locates humanity as an integral part of the biosphere with development outcomes contingent on the biosphere's continuous production of ecosystem services (e.g., agroecosystems, forest ecosystems and aquatic ecosystems). Development resilience focusses in the capacity of people (individually or collectively) to withstand, adapt, and recover swiftly following a period of stress or crisis.

To illustrate the different lenses Bousquet et al use the example of food security. In this case development resilience highlights the importance of the ability of households to respond to unexpected

scarcity and shortages and the learning required to recover quickly. In response to the same issue, social-ecological systems resilience highlights the importance of social learning, establishing early warning signals, and the stewardship of ecosystem services. While social-ecological systems resilience promotes sustainable pathways between boundaries within systems, development resilience domain promotes positive outcomes for the well-being of people and communities most at risk.

These are not irreconcilable differences but there has been relatively little cross-fertilisation between these two schools of thought. This, despite persistent poverty and inequality as well as the continuation of manifestly unsustainable development trajectories. This context does mean that resilience is increasingly invoked when dealing with common problems but with differing definitions, approaches and methods.

There are several areas of convergence between the two perspectives. They both recognise the following characteristics of resilience:

- Diversity, for example in terms of a plurality of stakeholders or a variety of institutional approaches.
- Dynamism, in the systems that stakeholders act within, their capacities as well as the variables at work.
- Trajectories of change are uneven, and characterised by thresholds (or tipping points) and traps (where change is not possible for example if a threshold has not been reached).
- Social capital, for example in stewarding natural resources or in post disaster recovery.

- 6 Alinovi, L., Mane, E. and Romano, D., 2008. Towards the measurement of household resilience to food insecurity: applying a model to Palestinian household data. *Deriving food security information from national household budget surveys. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy*, pp.137-152.
- 7 Barrett, C.B. and Conostas, M.A., 2014. Toward a theory of resilience for international development applications. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(40), pp.14625-14630.
- 8 Bousquet, F., Botta, A., Alinovi, L., Barreteau, O., Bossio, D., Brown, K., Caron, P., Cury, P., d'Errico, M., DeClerck, F. and Dessard, H., 2016. Resilience and development: mobilizing for transformation. *Ecology and Society*, 21(3).
- 9 Folke, C., 2006. Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social-ecological systems analyses. *Global environmental change*, 16(3), pp.253-267.

4.0 Critiques of Resilience

Contemporary enthusiasm for resilience as a paradigm is rooted in a growing frustration and disillusionment with development practice. The prevailing approaches and institutions can be traced back to the 1950s when the substantive development challenges were different. The concept of sustainable development, which started to be aired at the time of the UN Conference on the Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 continues to be questioned and resilience can be seen as a successor. Its attraction lies in its ability to make connections between the multiple development challenges faced in the 21st century and communicate the need for systemic change.

In the 2020s, the need to update the development discourse – including the way that resilience has been framed is even more apparent. This still defines resilience as the capacity to “bounce back” after an external shock. In this frame, resilience assumes that “back” is a desirable destination and the underlying causes of insecurities are not addressed. The purpose of resilience building becomes to “correct” self-created vulnerabilities. Bouncing back to the status quo means returning to a flawed system, and missing an opportunity to consider systemic transformation.

References to resilience remain related to economics and climate change primarily. The 2008 financial crisis prompted interrogation by the OECD¹⁰ and regional institutions of dominant macro-economic policy and prevailing financial regulatory regimes. At the same time the global consensus on the climate change responses of mitigation and adaptation came under increasing scrutiny at COP15 in Copenhagen. Climate resilience has been posited as an alternative to adaptation by advocates for systems change.

Bene et al¹¹ track the growth of the resilience discourse between c2000 and c2015 and its widespread adoption by development agencies, including NGOs, bilateral and multilateral institutions. The resilience of resilience as a concept is observed as it has evolved and been redefined, they liken it to a moving target. Bene et al criticise the way that resilience places emphasis

on the workings of systems in a way that underplays the agency of individuals and their ability to make choices and engage directly with the challenges they face. This is illustrated by the way in which resilience has in some cases been posited as the opposite of vulnerability. Advocates in the Global South have challenged the way in which a narrative of vulnerability denies agency and further entrenches and perpetuates dependency on aid and concessions from Bretton Woods institutions. Resilience should be able to convey the sense that people can be vulnerable and resilient simultaneously.

Critics also take issue with the way that resilience is increasingly presented as a normative construct (inferring a positive outcome or desired state). This downplays the negative aspects of resilience (for example, some communities may have improved their resilience but in doing so may have had to make trade-offs that have been detrimental). This is at odds with the use of the term as a technical characteristic of a system, which is neutral and does not automatically lead to positive impacts.

Resilience has become shorthand for desired states and positive development outcomes and universal definition has proved difficult. This has presented difficulties in managing for resilience. There is no consensus on how to measure or assess progress. In turn, identifying common indicators makes comparison difficult. This is a significant barrier to multilevel, inter-systems analyses that resilience is widely promoted as encapsulating.

5.0 The Value of Resilience for Local Government

Resilience is a powerful and enduring concept that has far reaching utility for developmental local government. It has the ability to highlight the importance of the linkages between people living at the margins of society and the systems and services they depend on. It places emphasis on geographies and so helps to frame issues for

10 Sánchez, A.C., Rasmussen, M. and Röhn, O., 2015. Economic resilience: what role for policies? *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 1251, OECD Publishing

11 Béné, C., Newsham, A., Davies, M., Ulrichs, M. and Godfrey-Wood, R., 2014. Resilience, poverty and development. *Journal of international development*, 26(5), pp.598-623.

example, related to urbanisation¹². Perhaps most importantly it provides an integrating narrative that has the potential to bring different disciplines and communities of practice together. In the context of planning for a post COVID-19 future the power of integrating health, climate and economic considerations by using this unifying frame.

A systemic frame can help communities navigate contemporary development challenges, which are beginning to be understood as comprising multiple variables and requiring inputs from diverse stakeholders. The concept is particularly relevant where vulnerable people are dependent on others who themselves are similarly challenged by the same set of stressors or shocks. The holistic nature of resilience and its emphasis on the interdependency of distinct system components enables the use of tools such as vulnerability mapping to identify commonalities and interrelationships between diverse communities.

Resilience can also help understand that while some of the variables that affect communities and their environments are local, others emanate from places that are remote. These variables interact and reinforce or neutralise each other. This understanding can help identify where inputs are needed and can target interventions.

Early discussions of the role of local government in applying resilience have focussed on disaster risk reduction (DRR). Johnson and Blackburn¹³ reviewed the activities of more than 50 city local governments on DRR. The review served to illustrate the ways in which city governments framed resilience and had used this to adjust plans, engage with stakeholders, mobilise finances, assess risk, make improvements to informal settlements, and implement planning and building regulations. This shaped a definition of resilience for local governments in the context of DRR: resistance + coping capacity + recovery + adaptive capacity.

Johnson and Blackburn explored the interrelationship between DRR and sustainable development. They found that many city governments had integrated DRR into existing environmental programmes. They noted that this occurred at a local level while the institutions and policies of climate, disaster risk, and development at a national and international level remained compartmentalised. A resilience discourse has

seen city governments address global issues such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions (for example, through investments in public transport). Cities have also invested in natural resources that provide ecosystem services as part of their commitment to risk reduction. These examples show that municipalities have acted to build resilience-building and simultaneously reduce vulnerability as part of broader strategies to enable cities to thrive within environmental constraints.

6.0 Dimensions of Resilience Illustrated

This paper has identified the universal characteristics of resilience as diversity, equity and sustainability. These can be applied to the pressing development issues across the Commonwealth: climate, economics, urbanisation, international migration and gender equality. In addition, the dominant challenge facing local government from January 2020 onwards has been COVID 19 and this requires specific attention. For each of these issues, CLGF has an interest in exploring policy responses and the ways in which institutions have progressed these challenges.

6.1 Climate and Resilience

Climate change represents an existential and escalating threat for the Commonwealth's small states, which played little part in creating the crisis. Climate change amplifies linkages between land, energy, water, food, agricultural and other policies. For example, climate change directly affects agricultural production and output on which many countries rely, in turn affecting international competitiveness and terms of trade. The lack of predictability of rainfall can fuel domestic and regional conflict and poverty levels, welfare and put pressure on other services.

¹² Arup has developed a City Resilience Framework and City Resilience Index with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. These provide a basis for assessing and measuring resilience at a city scale. The Framework identifies variables that contribute to the city's 'immune system', across four dimensions of city resilience:

- People: The health and well-being of everyone living and working in the city
- Organisation: The systems within the economy and society that enable urban populations to live peacefully, and act collectively
- Place: The quality of infrastructure and ecosystems that protect, provide and connect people
- Knowledge: Appropriate leadership and strategy enabling the city to learn from the past and take timely action

¹³ Johnson, C. and Blackburn, S., 2014. Advocacy for urban resilience: UNISDR's making cities resilient campaign. *Environment and Urbanization*, 26(1), pp.29-52.

New governance systems are needed to enable collaboration and inclusion in building climate resilience. These systems can highlight the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, youth and other marginalised groups. Accountability mechanisms can facilitate the reporting back to affected populations on outcomes of international climate negotiations. Civil society and small state governments can build alliances through new governance systems to effect action on climate change.

CLGF's engagement with climate resilience has come through its participation in global processes – particularly those focussed on cities. For example, CLGF has been an active participant at the World Urban Forum (WUF). At its last gathering (the 10th Session held in 2020) WUF issued an outcome statement (the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions¹⁴), which stated:

“Strategic integrated urban planning provides the tools to ensure the integration of urban heritage, culture, local economic needs, environmental considerations, biodiversity, low carbon development and climate resilience to ensure the creation of sustainable, prosperous, liveable communities.”

The Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA) was launched in 2015. It is part of the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM), which is the largest network of cities driving urban climate action, uniting more than 10,000 local authorities on climate change. CoM SSA convenes municipalities that have made commitments on climate change and sustainable energy. Since 2019, CoM SSA has been co-funded by the European Union (EU), the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ), and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

Mbabane, Eswatini

At a local level In Mbabane, Eswatini, more than 1000 people from low-income communities or informal settlements have been trained in sustainable environment management and income generation, with support from the Eswatini Local Government Association. Nearly 900 climate smart gardens have been

established and reusing waste materials has led to the production of 3,400 kg of compost. Some of the compost has been sold and some used in the Climate Smart Gardens and other commercial products using reusable waste materials. The project has brought food security, improved socio-economic status and better environmental management for low-income communities. The project was funded by the UK Department of International Development and support from the European Union.

6.2 Economic Development and Resilience

Approaches to a green economy and a blue economy have received significant attention as means of addressing growing financial uncertainty and vulnerability. They have been promoted as offering a more resilient and sustainable economic path; one that re-balances the social, environmental and economic drivers. These approaches have currency for all Commonwealth states as they consider post Covid economic recovery strategies and “Green New Deals.”¹⁵

Coming out of the pandemic, there is an opportunity to develop economic paradigms that acknowledge planetary boundaries and the need for equity. Scaling up and sharing knowledge and experiences of emerging economic approaches can support governments and civil society working locally, nationally and regionally. Local government can continue to support economic resilience building by ensuring greater space for the voices and perspectives of those most vulnerable to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and help identify opportunities that can be shared across the Commonwealth.

CLGF concluded a three-year programme in 2021 (funded by the UK government), which demonstrated the utility of local government as a facilitator of economic activity. The programme highlighted the need for connections and linkages between trade policy and local economic development (LED) at the local, national and

14 World Urban Forum 10th Session: https://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/WUF10_final.pdf.

15 https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/ZOE_WWF-Report_201119.pdf

international level¹⁶. LED has been framed as a means of building resilience by broadening and deepening sustainable development. The background paper for the 2019 CLGF Southern Africa Regional Conference¹⁷ developed this theme:

“LED contributes to strengthening social trust and cohesion, helping to build societies that are more stable and resilient to growing, complex and widespread risks, preventing conflict, and ensuring sustainable development.”

Port Loko City Council, Sierra Leone

When Port Loko City Council was established in 2018, it was given a mandate to ensure development across the city and the surrounding areas. In 2019 it began a programme to create a conducive local environment for local businesses. It built the capacity of local SMMEs to engage with council procurement processes, and made procurement contracts more accessible for SMMEs. The programme aimed to keep council expenditure circulating in the local economy.

The registry of businesses operating within the city was updated and SMMEs were provided with training on basic bookkeeping, record management, business development and basic concepts in procurement. The training improved the day-to-day operations of most SMMEs and enabled businesses to record inflows and outflows, reducing their losses and improve profitability. The training also supported the establishment of new businesses and helped keep start-up costs to a minimum. The programme also worked to increase local council staff awareness and capacity for local economic development. This process resulted in more contracts being awarded to small businesses, as well as the inclusion of additional clauses in bigger contracts to promote local SMME participation through sub-contracting.

LED can improve the resilience of local stakeholders by: creating an enabling environment; expanding the market; reducing costs; and supporting redistribution and economic participation. The economy of Ilembe District Municipality (IDM) in South Africa’s KwaZulu Natal Province is structured around cultural heritage tourism and agriculture (principally sugar cane). About 30%

of the land is owned by private sugar farmers in this largely rural district. Unemployment rates are high and some parts lack essential services. To address social, economic and spatial inequalities, the local government established a private company to: improve its regional competitive advantage; facilitate the economic participation of stakeholders; and strengthen the district’s technical capacity to promote trade and investment. The local government also established an LED Forum to bring together local stakeholders. This included representation from the local municipalities within the district, business, labour, national government, provincial governments, state-owned enterprises, donors and CBOs. In this example, the local government identified spatial inequality as a barrier to LED and provided an arena, where issues could be tabled and solutions generated. It also demonstrated the value of using an arms-length agency to strengthen its capacity to promote LED.

6.3 Urbanisation and Resilience

More than half of the world’s population now lives in cities and by 2050 the proportion is expected to rise to 70%. Cities are home to extreme deprivation and environmental degradation with one billion people living in slums and informal settlements. At the same time, approximately 75% of global economic activity is urban; as the urban population grows, so will the urban share of global GDP and investments. Planning for urban resilience requires multi-level governance and participatory systems. It calls for collaboration between local governments and communities. It also requires coordinated and integrated policy approaches between national and local governments.

Effective and resilient urban planning provides an opportunity for agencies and communities to engage with the complexity and inter-related nature of urban ‘ecosystems.’ Rather than isolate planning for economic infrastructure and commerce, there needs to be a holistic perspective,

¹⁶ CLGF paper: Local Economic Development as a Driver of Trade in the Commonwealth https://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/Publications/reports/Local_Economic_Development_%28LED%29_as_a_Driver_of_Trade_in_the_Commonwealth.pdf

¹⁷ CLGF (2019), Promoting Local Government and Local Economic Development in Southern Africa: Towards the Localisation of the Development Goals: Background Paper for: CLGF Regional Conference, 25-26 June 2019, Lusaka, Zambia

connecting the economic with social amenities and environmental infrastructure.

Resilience in this context must enable coordinated responses to urbanisation. This highlights the importance of central government agencies with responsibility for local government. For example, the migration of labour from rural areas may threaten the viability of crops and require policy measures such as incentives to help ensure national food security. This exemplifies the way that resilience can engender systems thinking.

Freetown City Council, Sierra Leone

In 2019, Freetown City Council launched Transform Freetown as an ambitious strategic planning process, supported by the national government of Sierra Leone. The city generates 30% of the country's GDP, houses 15% of its population, and occupies less than 0.5% of the national land mass. The planning process gathered input from a broad spectrum of community stakeholders to ensure that the Transform Freetown priorities reflect the needs of Freetown and its residents. Planner drew on data from a needs assessment conducted at a local level, as well as inputs from service providers.

Transform Freetown's priorities are grouped within four clusters - Resilience, Human Development, Healthy Cities and Urban Mobility. Working Groups set targets in each priority sector and shaped the plan around them. Resilience was identified as a priority in recognition of the pressing challenges of environmental management, revenue mobilisation and urban planning and housing. The plan highlighted the need for community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives including increasing vegetation cover across the city by 50%. The focus on revenue generation outlined steps to automate property rates and business licensing, while diversifying the city's income through better use of its assets. The urban planning and housing priority called for the development of more than 5,000 quality low cost housing units and strengthening compliance with planning regulations.

CLGF participated in the first G7 U7 Urban Summit, in June 2021, which was entitled: Cities unlocking recovery and resilience. The summit brought together

local government and city networks including: ICLEI, EUROCITIES, Global Parliament of Mayors and United Cities and Local Government (UCLG). The summit took place against the backdrop of the pandemic and forthcoming climate talks at COP 26. The summit's outcome statement¹⁸ highlights the importance of cities: as conglomerations of resources; and as focal points for policy development and agents of change. The statement calls for cities to be included in national planning processes and provided with the powers and resources to play their part as nations look to a more resilient future.

6.4 Migration and Resilience

The history of international migration charts multiple associations with human vulnerability. The international community has recognised that migration can bring substantial benefits as part of an inclusive globalization process. The only reference to resilience in Agenda 2030 outside the context of the environment and climate is made in relation to migration. Migrant networks have helped to build social capital and increase the resilience of communities of origin through remittances. They have also contributed to social resilience in recipient countries with new knowledge and insight.

Building systems that enable resilient societies requires a shift away from seeing migrants as a problem to recognising migration as a reality that societies need to respond to; and which necessitates building policies that address complex realities. Detention centres, the suppression of migrant rights and a dehumanising media narrative are indicative of the failure of institutions to reconcile migration and resilient societies. In this context resilience can help to strengthen democracy and governance, by providing a framework for inclusive development.

The World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments' Summit took place in Durban, South Africa in 2019. The political declaration¹⁹ issued at the summit stated: *We strive to fight discrimination and foster human solidarity, protect dignity for all regardless of legal status. In this regard, the*

18 G7 U7 Urban Summit Declaration: <https://www.corecities.com/sites/default/files/field/attachment/Final%20Statement%20G7%20U7%20Summit%5B7%5D.pdf>.

19 UCLG Durban 2019 Political Declaration https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclg_theurbanpoliticaldeclaration_en_rv.pdf.

movement supports a rights-based approach to migration beyond issue of border management, providing access to basic services and opportunities for social transformation through inter-cultural dialogues

Koboko Municipality, Uganda

In Uganda, Koboko Municipality has become a focal point for refugees, with kinship and tribal ties, common language and heritage. The result of the prevailing government policy is that the refugees are not repatriated but neither are they officially recognised. In practice this means that the municipal government receives no additional central government resources to supplement its budget in order to meet the needs of a growing population and the associated stress on local services such as schools and health centres. There have also been conflicts over access to natural resources such as water and firewood. It is common for refugees move between the city and the camps where they are housed, leading to additional social problems such as child exploitation and prostitution.

In response the municipal government has focussed on engaging with the refugee community for example by identifying tribal leaders and using informal local governance mechanisms that have evolved. This has enabled a degree of regulation, including through self-policing. This has also helped to inform local government policy to address particular challenges that refugees face. In this context local government that engages with a refugee community provides is resilient, when compared to a camp-based approach that relies on humanitarian inputs from international agencies. This is contingent on central government support through legislation (for example by recognising the legal status of self-settled urban refugees) as well as resources for local government.

6.5 Gender Equality and Resilience

Institutions are central to challenging the explicit and implicit biases that perpetuate gender inequality – indicative of a lack of societal resilience. Initiatives that support women's rights and gender equality make institutions more resilient

by enabling the fullest participation of all. Holding agencies accountable for a lack of progress against policy commitments on gender equality can open up spaces for further consideration of ways in which resilience can be strengthened.

Resilient societies are successfully built when women's voices are heard and integrated in policy making. Open channels for inclusion guarantee women's meaningful representation. Women's resilience and agency are directly linked to inclusive and responsive societies. There have been improvements in some aspects of women's representation in local and national government. While important symbolically, this has not been matched by substantive improvements in women's rights. Educational, religious and traditional systems are part of the governance mix alongside supportive policies and willing institutions, if resilience is going to be strengthened.

With funding from the European Union, CLGF has been able to develop the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network (ComWLG). This is in line with SDG 5 on gender equality. This has focussed on strengthening women's participation in local government. This is seen as part of a resilience strategy. Launching the network at the CLGF Conference in 2017, The President of Malta, HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, said:

We must acknowledge that gender parity is a vital contributor to the success of all of our institutions and across our communities and societies. Gender parity is not only a point of moral necessity, but also it makes good social, economic and political sense.

Local Government Elections, Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the Local Authorities Elections Act (2017) was amended (The Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2017) to ensure that local councillors were elected using proportional representation so that 60% of them represent single member or multi member wards and 40% are returned from a list called the 'additional persons' list without a ward-based constituency. The total number of local government councillors increased from 4486 to 8356. Under Section 27F of the Amendment, 25% of the total number of members in each local authority had to be women members.

The new electoral system provided an opportunity to make local politics more resilient by legislating for closer engagement between the people and their representatives at the ward level. The women's mandatory quota added a missing dimension by bringing an underrepresented section of the community into the public domain of representative politics. By increasing women's participation in politics, changing public perceptions about women's place in public life and breaking an established culture of patronage, the reform made local politics in Sri Lanka more resilient.

6.6 Covid and Resilience

The pandemic was experienced differently across the Commonwealth, revealing pre-existing capabilities and vulnerabilities. Where formal institutions were unable to respond to the demands placed on them, informal arrangements drew on and mobilised community resources. In this context local government played an essential role in enabling and coordinating community response as well as deploying its own assets. This experience also highlighted the importance of constructive central-local government relationships that provided councils with the political mandate to act as well as the financial resources they required.

CLGF has a record of supporting local government engagement with health for resilience. It is a partner in the Commonwealth Healthy Cities Agenda. This supports a network of Commonwealth city leaders and link them with international health advocates, vector borne disease, tuberculosis (TB) and Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) specialists, experts on the built environment, philanthropic and other external funders and pharmaceutical companies to address vector-borne (especially mosquito-transmitted), TB and NTD prevention in cities.

In the longer term, this initiative aims to mobilise substantial and sustainable support for urban health investment across the Commonwealth, with a strong focus on vector-borne diseases, TB and NTDs, with city and local government leaders playing a central role in decision-making at local, national and global level.

COVID-19 has highlighted the need to prioritise the prevention of illness, especially in urban centres.

The essential role of local government in raising awareness of, and implementing, control measures has made them highly visible, even though central government is generally responsible for health policy. The Commonwealth Healthy Cities Agenda aims to build on this recognition of the need for local leadership to ensure city leaders are recognised as key partners in addressing important health challenges.

CLGF has also recognised its role as a clearing house for information that may be of help to local government as it responds to the pandemic across the Commonwealth. Covid is also a feature of new programmes and initiatives that CLGF has supported (e.g., Bloomberg City Champions). CLGF members, including local government, regional bodies and central government line ministries are looking to the organisation for support as they look ahead.

Bloomberg Philanthropies 2021 Mayors Challenge

The 2021 Global Mayors Challenge is working to uncover the 50 most innovative solutions transforming cities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. 631 cities in 99 countries submitted their best ideas for consideration 50 Champion Cities were selected in March. These cities will have access to world renowned experts in innovation and data to help them improve their innovative ideas to tackle the most pressing challenges facing their cities. They will all resubmit by the end of 2021, and 15 of the 50 will become Grand Prize Winners and each receive \$1M to bring their ideas to life. The retained projects will focus on issues such as measuring carbon footprints; reforestation; community upskilling; waste treatment; and improving water, sanitation and hygiene.

7.0 Conclusion

Many international institutions recognise the importance of supporting resilience – particularly at a local level. This can be seen as a response to Agenda 2030 as well as a recognition that inclusive development is done best when it is done locally.

The European Union has played a leading role in recognising the importance of local government. and the role they play in so many factors that

impact the continent's future. Over 60% of decisions taken at the European level have a direct impact on municipalities, provinces, and regions and 70% to 80% of public investments in Europe are made by local and regional authorities²⁰. The EU strengthens resilience within Europe, for example through the Recovery and Resilience Facility. This makes €723.8 billion available through grants and loans to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for coming challenges and opportunities. The EU has also placed the concept at the heart of its development assistance programmes for example by making the connections between peace, security and resilience and in the 2013 Communication “Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes”²¹. In addition, the EU is an established development partner that works alongside local government champions and has Framework Partnership Agreements with AIMF, CLGF, PLATFORMA, UCLG and UCLG Africa providing both political and financial support to the local government sector.

The theme of resilience has particular salience for the Commonwealth. The institution developed its own vulnerability index for developing countries, highlighting the challenges facing small states more than 20 years ago²². Today, facing large scale youth unemployment and existential threats to small states, there is an acute awareness of the impact of continuous shocks on the resilience of member states. Covid 19 has served to deepen multiple crises in developing Commonwealth countries. It has also exposed the fragility of institutions and policy responses in developed Commonwealth member states. Resilience now has global salience and can be applied in many contexts.

CLGF is the Commonwealth's agency for local government. Its three core priorities are: strengthening local democracy; promoting effective local development by improving policy, governance, and service delivery capacity; and supporting cities and sustainable urbanisation. It is well placed to play an essential role in strengthening the efforts of local government as agents of resilience across the Commonwealth's 54 member states.

The organisation's regional networks and partners mean that resilience programmes can be tailored to the particular contexts. This is essential as the paper has demonstrated that resilience does not lend itself to template approaches. CLGF's stakeholders include both local government and central government line ministries. The paper has also highlighted the importance of intergovernmental dialogue and an enabling environment for municipalities to deliver resilience.

Ultimately this report is evidence of CLGF's conviction that resilience is a concept that has relevance for local government stakeholders. This is rooted in CLGF's commitment to developmental local government and an understanding that resilience offers a framework that can bring diverse stakeholders together in common cause. A fundamental critique of contemporary development practice is that policies and institutions are not pulling in the same direction or working at cross purposes. Resilience encourages an appreciation of the complexity and interconnectedness of the current development challenges and encourages stakeholders (local government, the central government line ministries and agencies responsible for local development, as well as civil society and the private sector) to work together. Resilience thinking goes further and encourages stakeholders to look forward rather back.

20 https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/local_government_structuresandcompetences_2011_en.pdf

21 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0280:FIN:EN:PDF>

22 Atkins, J., Mazzi, S. and Easter, C., 2000. A Commonwealth vulnerability index for developing countries. *London: Commonwealth Secretariat, Economic Paper, 40.*