

Local Action 21

Local Action 21 was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development Local government Session as a **motto** for the second decade of **Local Agenda 21**.

Local Action 21 is a **mandate** to local authorities worldwide to move from agenda to action and ensure an accelerated implementation of sustainable development.

Local Action 21 strengthens the **Local Agenda 21 movement** of local governments to create sustainable communities and cities while protecting global common goods.

Johannesburg Call

What is Local Action 21?

At the Local Government session of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, local government leaders from around the world – as well as representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-HABITAT and the World Health Organization (WHO) – joined ICLEI in launching Local Action 21 as the next phase of Local Agenda 21.

As local governments strive to move from agenda to action in the post-Johannesburg decade, *Local Action 21* serves as the *motto*, *mandate* and *movement* towards sustainable communities. Local Action 21 supports the ongoing efforts of local governments in response to Agenda 21, the Rio Conventions, the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Declaration.

Tremendous participation

The local government preparatory process towards the Johannesburg Summit – facilitated by ICLEI in cooperation with all major local government associations – took place over a two-year period leading up to the Summit and revealed tremendous momentum and achievements in local participatory sustainable development planning. Local Action 21 strategies will ensure the unwavering, systematic implementation of local action plans over the next decade and ensure the momentum of more than 6400 Local Agenda 21 processes is maintained.

A political culture of community involvement, stakeholder participation and consensus building must continue to be built, fostered and maintained. This has been the focus of Local Agenda 21 processes throughout the world and through these sustainable development planning processes, community visions have been developed, priority issues determined, and concrete goals and targets for action set.

From Agenda to Action

Moving from Local Agenda 21 to Local Action 21 means communities take a step beyond general sustainable development planning and address specific factors that have previously prevented them from becoming sustainable – issues such as

poverty; injustice, exclusion and conflict; unhealthy environments; and insecurity. Local Action 21 *creates sustainable communities and cities*.

By reducing cities' contribution to the worldwide depletion of resources and environmental degradation, Local Action 21 *protects global common goods*.

By introducing and anchoring instruments in municipal management to ensure unwavering implementation, effective monitoring and continual improvement of environmental conditions, Local Action 21 institutes *municipal sustainability management* that applies state-of-the-art systems and tools.

Sustainable communities

Four *focal areas* have been defined for Local Action 21:

Viable local economies should eradicate poverty, addressing Target 1 of the Millenium Development Goals and Targets. While poverty cannot be alleviated where structures maintain inequality, it is of equal importance to create a supportive framework for indigenous as well as foreign direct investment, access to modern technology, local entrepreneurship and diversification of local production as well as improved market access for locally produced products. Public-private partnerships may be a vehicle to support this. A basic requirement is the conscious development of local human resources through education and vocational training.

Just and peaceful communities address the social aspect of sustainability and the ability of a community to allay tensions between diverse ethnic and religious groups. The methodology of Local Agenda 21 (consensus building on community visions and goals) may help to moderate social conflicts where they form a major obstacle to sustainable development. Just and peaceful communities must overcome the high degrees of inequality, gender disparity, and social exclusion existing in many places, thereby providing supportive conditions for the development of viable local economies and the alleviation of poverty.

Eco-efficient cities will address the environmental issues related to air quality, energy efficiency, integrated water resources management, waste stream management, eco-mobility, etc. Through the efficient use of natural resources and switch to renewable energy sources, stable environmental conditions can be provided to communities and economies in the longer term. An eco-efficient city is better prepared for future global environmental resource conditions.

Resilient communities and cities are prepared for and cope with unexpected events such as natural or industrial disasters and economic crises. Urban resilience has a positive impact on the quality of life for the poor who are most affected by disasters and crises. As investors require low risks, managing cities towards more resilience will create better conditions for investment and thereby the creation of viable local economies.

Protecting global common goods

Sustainable development calls for an integrated approach to creating sustainable communities and cities. Global common goods that local governments are determined to protect include air, climate, water, soil, biodiversity, health and food.

Through Local Action 21, local governments contribute to the implementation of the 'WEHAB agenda'. According to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (17 May 2002), WEHAB comprises "five specific areas where concrete results are both essential and achievable". These are:

Water and Sanitation – provide access to at least 1 billion people who lack clean drinking water and 2 billion people who lack proper sanitation.

Energy – provide access to more than 2 billion people who lack modern energy services; promote renewable energy; reduce over-consumption; and ratify the Kyoto protocol to address climate change.

Health – address the effects of toxic and hazardous materials; reduce air pollution, which kills 3 million people each year; and lower the incidence of malaria and African guinea worm, which are linked to polluted water and poor sanitation.

Agricultural production – work to reverse land degradation, which affects about two thirds of the world's agricultural production.

Biodiversity and ecosystem management – reverse the processes that have destroyed about half the world's tropical rainforests and mangroves and are threatening 70% of the world's coral reefs and decimating the world's fisheries.

Local Action to protect the commons

Local governments are engaged in international campaigns and programmes addressing the protection of global common goods and the WEHAB goals:

Local Climate and Air Quality Action - ICLEI's *Cities for Climate Protection Campaign*[™] (CCP) works with over 700 local governments worldwide to cut emissions that cause global warming and air pollution. The CCP contributes to both the WEHAB Energy and Health agendas. The CCP provides a strategic framework and tools for local governments to quantify their emissions, to set reduction targets and to implement and monitor these targets.

The CCP has the explicit aim to support local-level performance, so that cities help national governments to meet their targets under the UNFCCC. ICLEI's Campaign approach and experience helps build local government capacity to support the effective implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and thereby supports the UNDP Capacity 21 program core activity of MEA capacity development.

Local Water Action – ICLEI's Water Campaign provides local governments with a framework to support their unique water management efforts. The Campaign identifies three local water agendas for specific target action – municipal operations, the urban community, and the local watershed. The Water Campaign is based on a series of performance milestones that advocate the systematic identification and evaluation of water resource management challenges facing local governments. The Water Campaign contributes to the WEHAB Water & Sanitation and Health agendas.

Local Land and Soil Action – local governments have started building networks and developing programs and campaigns that address land use management and soils protection. Efforts include ICLEI's European Soils Network, the Soil and Lands Alliance of European Cities and Towns, and the proposed international Cities Against Desertification programme.

Local Biodiversity Action – at the 2006 ICLEI World Congress, the City of Cape Town, South Africa, proposed a 'Local Action for Biodiversity' initiative. This was adopted as part of ICLEI's Strategic Plan for the 2007-2012 period.

Local Health Action – the Healthy Cities network coordinated by the WHO is a network for more advanced healthy cities that are willing to work in close partnership with WHO and each other on urban health development.

Capacity for Sustainability Management

Programmes and campaigns can be effective vehicles to initiate, direct and support development. Performance towards sustainability, however, requires long-term, persistent implementation of action plans and the move from 'waves' of activities to routines. The pursuit of the Local Agenda 21 must become part of an unquestioned, regular municipal routine de-coupled from changing political majorities. This requires strategies for anchoring principles and criteria in municipal decision-making, and appropriate information and controlling instruments in municipal management.

The *Earth Charter* and the *Melbourne Principles* provide such principles and criteria for conscious decision making. *Eco-Procurement* and *Eco-Investment* are practices that orient municipal routines towards agreed sustainability goals.

ecoBudget® is a mechanism established parallel to financial budgeting that ensures the ongoing control of environmental quality and the use of natural resources through the annual setting of targets, controlling and reporting. *Triple Bottom Line* reporting provides information on social, economic and environmental performance and supports the accountability of municipal decision makers and managers.

ICLEI is committed to support capacity building of municipalities to introduce and apply sustainability management.

Johannesburg Call

At the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, leaders and representatives of local government from across the globe adopted the Johannesburg Call.

They acknowledged "that ours is not an equal, fair or just world. ... We recognise that without political commitment, nothing will be achieved. We therefore pledge our unwavering commitment to eradicating poverty, correcting the imbalances between the developed and developing world and fundamentally reshaping our world. We also commit ourselves to developing very practical, realistic Action Plans and to implement them through Local Action 21 programs to realise these goals. ... The time to act is now. Let us not lose this opportunity; there may not be another."

ICLEI continues to encourage all local authorities to engage in Local Agenda 21 processes and involve citizens and stakeholders in sustainable development planning to jointly agree on a vision, goals and a local action plan towards sustainability.

ICLEI encourages all local authorities to continue their efforts once a Local Agenda 21 has been agreed, and to resist possible 'LA21 fatigue'. ICLEI encourages local authorities, citizens and stakeholders to engage in Local Action 21 strategies aimed at:

- removing barriers to local sustainability,
- generating global benefits from local action, and
- ensuring unwavering implementation of sustainable development.

ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organizations that have made a commitment to sustainable development.

http://www.iclei-europe.org/fileadmin/user_upload/479.pdf

ICLEI is not only an association, but also a movement of local governments dedicated to sustainability - and as such enhances and promotes Local Action 21 among local governments and partners. The themes of ICLEI's world wide work are directly derived from the Local Action 21 mandate. This mandate defines three areas for action:

1. Creating sustainable communities and cities by achieving Viable Local Economies, Just and Peaceful Communities, Eco-efficient Cities and Resilient Communities and Cities

2. Protecting global common goods, namely, Climate and Air, Water, Soil and Land, Biodiversity, and Health

3. Ensuring unwavering implementation, effective monitoring and continual improvement of sustainable development in the way the above issues are addressed.

<http://www.iclei-europe.org/>