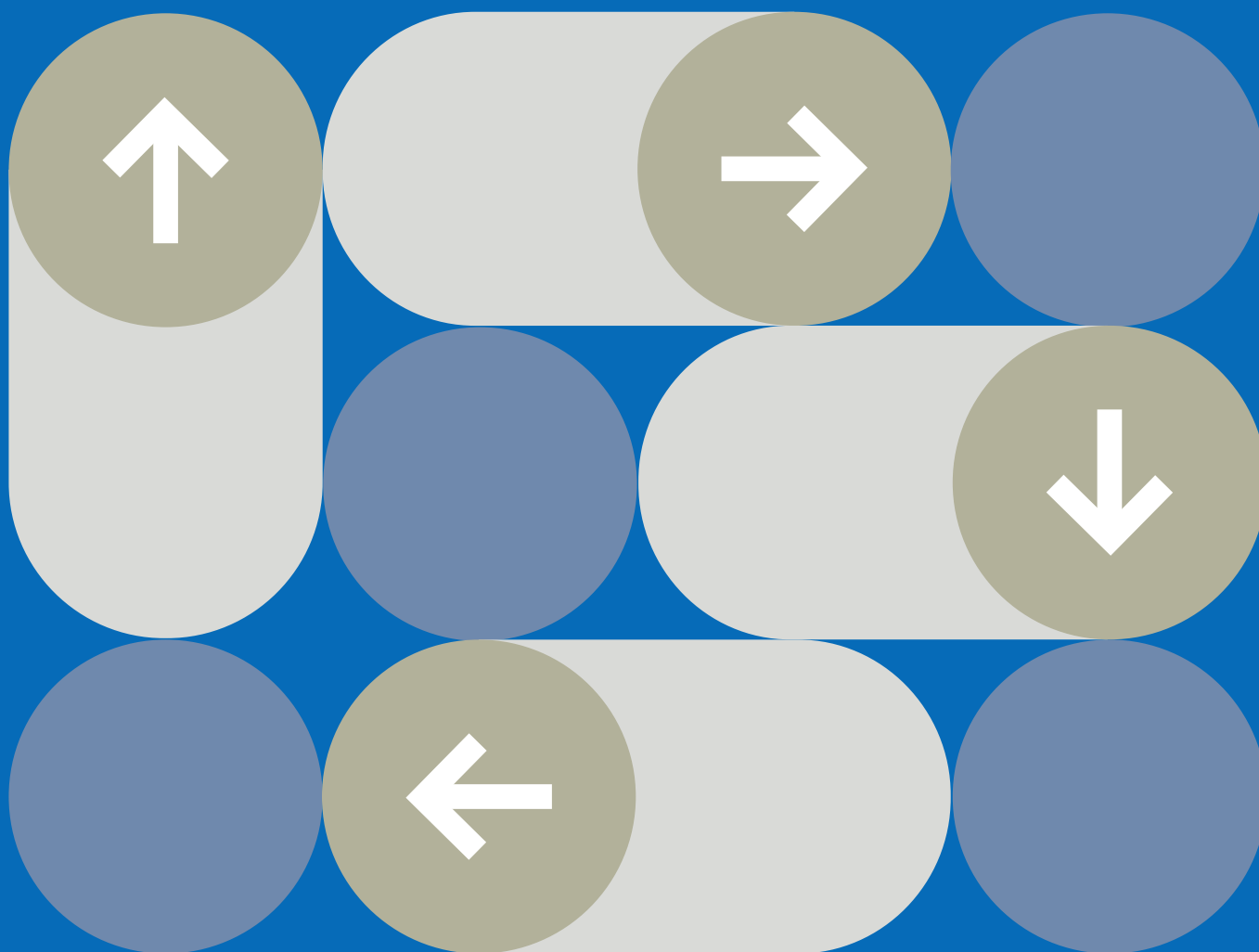




Toolkit to Strengthen Multi-Level Governance in Crisis-Affected Settings



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Executive Summary

In our interconnected world, global challenges increasingly impact local and community levels, necessitating comprehensive governance responses to renew and strengthen the relationships between states and societies. In this context, UNDP recognizes the importance of multi-level governance (MLG) in effectively supporting sustainable and resilient development that aligns with the realities and priorities of programme countries.

MLG encompasses both cooperative and competitive negotiation, coordination and exercise of public authority by state and non-state actors through modern and traditional institutions operating within and across global, regional, national, and local levels. Its relevance is especially pronounced in crisis settings, where government capacities are often weakened, and social contracts may be fragile. By fostering collaborative solutions and integrating diverse perspectives and resources, MLG can enhance resilience and promote more networked ways of working, enabling more effective and adaptive responses to complex challenges.

This toolkit serves as a comprehensive resource for UNDP practitioners in Country Offices and their partners to enhance MLG practices. It provides recommendations, insights, and real-life examples to help users navigate, analyse, and implement effective MLG systems.

Beginning with foundational principles and approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness in complex and volatile contexts, the toolkit addresses key challenges in MLG implementation. These challenges include utilising and building stakeholder capacity, establishing and maintaining

accountability and legitimacy, and navigating the complexities of relationships among stakeholders across various governance levels.

At this stage, the toolkit provides entry points for practitioners to access relevant information, adapt it to their specific contexts, and apply insights effectively. It features reflective questions, practical examples, and a variety of applicable tools, including the MLG system map, extended persona, quick win generator, collaboration starter, governance mechanisms prototyping, and MLG process map. It further details these tools, which are grounded in principles of social innovation, human-centred design, and digital innovation, offering step-by-step guidance for their application.

Finally, to support inclusive and effective programming by leveraging MLG ecosystems, the toolkit concludes by outlining key next steps for its operationalisation. These steps include comprehensive testing, refinement and updating of tools, capacity building, including through learning by doing, and the development of an accessible, dynamic digital platform for MLG tools. This platform would evolve with ongoing contributions from practitioners, ensuring it remains relevant and effective.

Acronyms

CO	Country Office
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSWG	Community Security Working Groups
HCD	Human-centred design
JAP	Joint Action Plans
MLG	Multi-level governance
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
RPP	Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme
RSS	Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region
SIGOB	Management Systems for Governance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TAP	Territorial Action Plans
TWP	Thinking and working politically
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

01.

Introduction to the Multi-Level Governance Toolkit

1.1. Harnessing Multi-Level Governance Tools to Support People-centred Governance in Fragile and Crisis-Affected Settings

In our interconnected world, marked by a constant flux and uncertainty, global changes increasingly impact local dynamics. This is evident in challenges such as environmental degradation, climate change, and disaster risks; access to land and resources; demographic shifts and migration; systemic injustice or lack of access to justice; socio-economic inequalities; civil unrest or conflicts; and pandemics.

To effectively address these issues, it is essential to engage multiple levels of governance, thereby renewing and strengthening relationships between states and societies, as well as between people and the planet.

Local governance systems – whether in urban or rural settings – are at the forefront of tackling these challenges. They serve as the primary interface between citizens and authorities, facilitating daily interactions between the state

and society. This role becomes even more crucial in crisis-affected environments, where recent crisis responses – such as those to the Covid-19 pandemic – have tested traditional power structures. Crises disrupt not only the dynamics between national and sub-national levels of governance but also affect interactions with supra-national and community tiers.

The socio-economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the growing importance of governance at various levels. As central governments struggled – and in some cases became nearly paralysed – regional and local governments stepped into vital roles. In decentralised political systems, for example, these authorities were instrumental in implementing pandemic response measures, while municipal health workers have led efforts in service delivery, contact tracing, and data collection. The effectiveness of health sector governance often relied on the coordination and coherence among national and sub-national institutions.

To empower development partners in supporting sustainable and resilient development that aligns with the realities and priorities of programme countries, **UNDP prioritises the design of new instruments that systematically harness the multi-level governance (MLG) dynamics.** This focus is especially crucial in crisis settings, where government capacities may be weakened and social contracts fragile. Local governance

systems offer a unique advantage due to their proximity to citizens, enabling them to play a vital role in reinforcing social contracts and fostering community cohesion. However, effective governance cannot rely solely on local efforts; it requires coordination and engagement across multiple levels to tackle complex challenges. Therefore, strengthening MLG approaches is essential.

1.2. Rationale for MLG Programming and Tools

A renewed and systematic focus on MLG has the potential to spur a shift in policy and programme support toward more networked ways of working,

recognizing that the boundaries between 'local', 'national', 'regional', and 'global' levels are now much more fluid than in the past.

Box 1: Multi-Level Governance

There is no universally accepted definition of MLG, nor should there be, as the concept adapts to various contexts and institutional frameworks. However, MLG can be characterized by two key features:

1. **Coordination and Policy Negotiation:** It involves both vertical and horizontal dimensions of coordination and policy negotiation
2. **Inclusive Participation:** It engages both government and non-government participants in the governance process.

In its publication *Multi-Level Governance in Crisis-Affected Settings: A Lessons Learned Review*, UNDP offers the following definition of MLG:

Multi-level governance refers to both the cooperative and competitive negotiation, coordination and exercise of public authority by state and non-state actors, through modern and traditional institutions that operate within and across global, national, regional and local levels.

As detailed in the [Forging Resilient Social Contracts](#) paper, published by the UNDP Oslo Governance Center (2018) and based on research and policy dialogue across 11 countries,¹ the rise of mixed and hybrid systems underscores this trend. Hybridity has become integral to state-society relations and development processes globally, manifesting not only in everyday life but also in the structures and institutions that shape societal

organization. Citizens, for example, often relate to two or more systems, navigating and negotiating their often-contradictory obligations in a strategic manner.

As the term suggests, the MLG concept encompasses a range of state and non-state actors located at various levels, including sub-national, national, regional and global

1 Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Cyprus, Nepal, Somalia, South Sudan, South Africa, Tunisia, Yemen and Zimbabwe

(supranational). The challenge is to ensure these diverse governance levels align and collaborate on setting collective priorities and designing policies and programmes that reflect and address the needs of local communities. Systematically supporting MLG can enhance the effectiveness of people-centred elements within both existing and new governance models and programmes. Achieving this requires new methods and power-sharing incentives that can facilitate bottom-up

participation while strengthening links and policy coherence across both vertical and horizontal governance levels. However, this process can be challenging and requires a nuanced understanding of the political economy. Changes in the political settlement may provoke resistance from political elites, particularly regarding the redistribution of power and resources, and could even escalate into violence.

Box 2: **Levels of Governance**

The ‘horizontal’ dimension of MLG refers to arrangements between, typically, regional or local governments and/or other governance actors such as civil society organisations, representatives of population groups, private businesses or other informal authorities. The ‘vertical’ dimension of MLG refers to the linkages between higher and lower tiers of government from local, regional, national or supra-national levels.

While the principle of MLG has often emphasized the importance of decentralization and support for sub-national levels of governance, particularly city governments, this toolkit reflects UNDP’s commitment to leveraging evidence and experiences to strengthen the drivers of transparent, inclusive, and participatory MLG. Such drivers include the dynamic and transparent flow of data, information sharing, policymaking, priority setting, planning, programme development, resource mobilization, financial management incentives (such as public financial management, tax systems, etc.), and decision-making processes across different levels of governance.

While a more detailed conceptual review of MLG can be found in the Lessons Learned Review on MLG (see Box 3), the value of this toolkit for UNDP’s national and local counterparts lies in providing systematic access to practical tools that can help reinforce legitimate, people-centred decision-making and implementation across various governance layers that ‘negotiate’ decisions, which ultimately impact inclusive service delivery, foster trust, and support state-society relations.

Box 3: **Lessons Learned Review on MLG**

UNDP’s *Multi-Level Governance in Crisis-Affected Settings: A Lessons Learned Review* is a companion publication to this MLG Toolkit, both released simultaneously in 2024. The Lessons Learned Review provides key definitions, concepts and practical examples of MLG, along with overall recommendations for addressing governance challenges through an MLG lens in crisis-affected settings.

1.3. Value Proposition of the MLG Toolkit

This toolkit is a resource for practitioners in UNDP Country Offices (COs) as well as their partners to help navigate, analyse, promote, design and implement participatory, inclusive and effective MLG systems and methods.

The toolkit provides guidance and tools for a variety of situations, stakeholder constellations, and stages of crisis recovery and development projects. This may involve, for example, cross-regional coordination aimed at scaling solutions that work, establishing collaboration between local and national authorities in policy implementation, or addressing cross-border issues that require collaboration across different governments, other governance actors and UNDP COs.

For this purpose, the toolkit is fundamentally grounded in insights gained from a comprehensive review of existing programmes that highlight various approaches and aspects of MLG. It operationalizes this knowledge by making it accessible and applicable to users both within and beyond UNDP. Drawing on a vast repository of knowledge, experiences, and proven strategies employed by practitioners at different levels – including those implemented by UNDP COs across all regions – the toolkit makes diverse forms of knowledge explicit and transferable. Its goal is to support practitioners in developing, implementing, and strengthening MLG perspectives in their work while promoting and advancing MLG principles and practices throughout the organization.

In essence, the toolkit serves as a comprehensive repository of knowledge and tools for enhancing MLG practices and is designed around the following principles:

- The toolkit functions as an easy-to-use, open, modular and continuously evolving platform designed to assist UNDP practitioners in integrating MLG principles into their programmes, projects, and policy support.

- It offers recommendations, insights, tools and practical examples based on concrete case studies, organised to meet diverse user needs. This structure ensures that information is accessible, adaptable, and replicable with the appropriate level of customization.

- MLG challenges observed in case research provide entry points for practitioners to find relevant information, adapt it to their contexts, and apply the tools and insights effectively. These challenges represent potential perspectives on MLG and can be expanded with additional viewpoints.

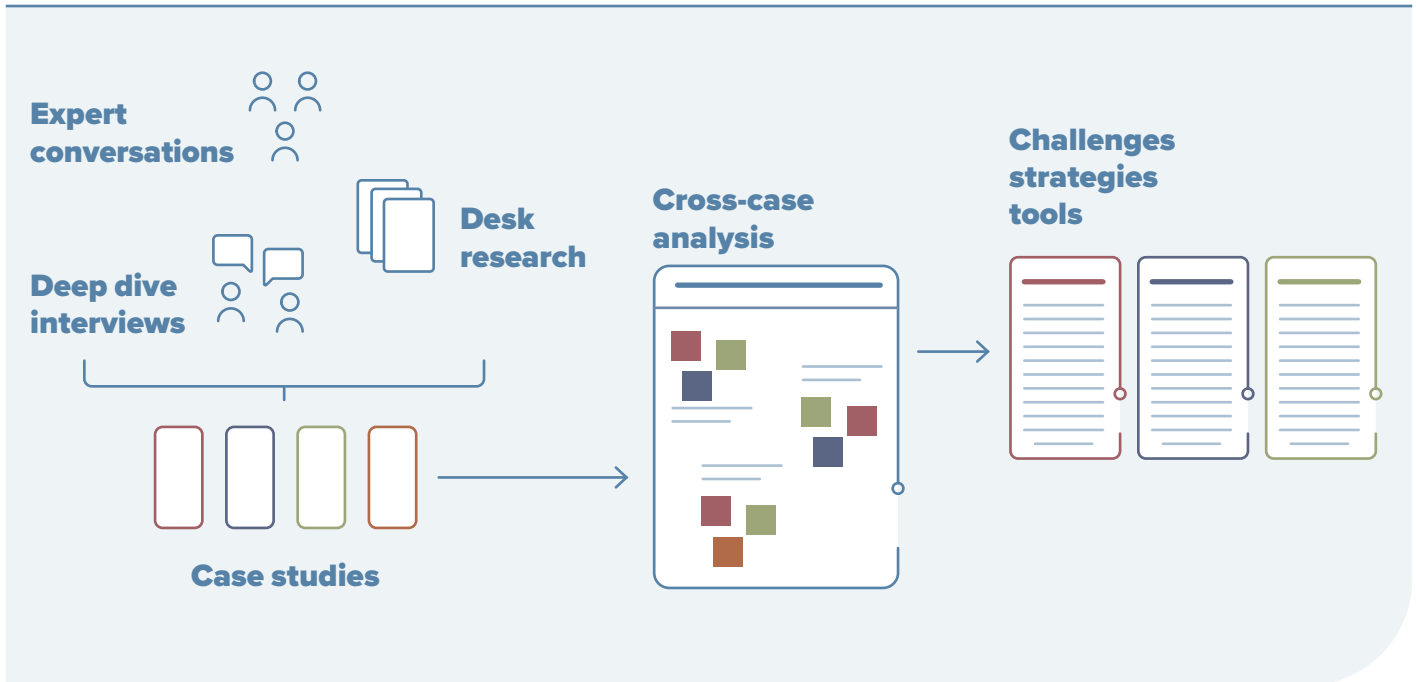
The toolkit aims to support users in:

- (i) Understanding the core principles, challenges and potentials of MLG; (ii) Learning from illustrative examples based on real-world cases; (iii) Identifying and utilizing MLG ecosystems for more inclusive and effective programming; and (iv) Scaling programmes and initiatives across different territories and levels of governance.

Conceptualized as a dynamic knowledge and methodological repository, the toolkit is intended not as a definitive document but as a growing resource for practitioners engaged with MLG. It provides foundational content and structure, to be further enriched with practical knowledge from UNDP's ongoing experiences in partner countries.

1.4. Toolkit Development

Figure 1: From case study research to co-creative development of a toolkit for participatory bottom-up MLG



The primary evidence-base for the toolkit consists of existing literature and five case studies² on MLG approaches in a broad range of crisis-affected contexts. These case studies are based on primary data collection and illustrate entry points, programmatic frameworks, processes, successes, challenges, as well as opportunities. By conducting expert interviews, in-depth conversations with diverse sets of relevant stakeholders, and extensive desk research, these tangible experiences were translated into insights that can provide valuable learning for colleagues across UNDP and development partners. To avoid cultural translation errors and misinterpretations, the research was validated and analysed together with actors from the relevant partner countries.

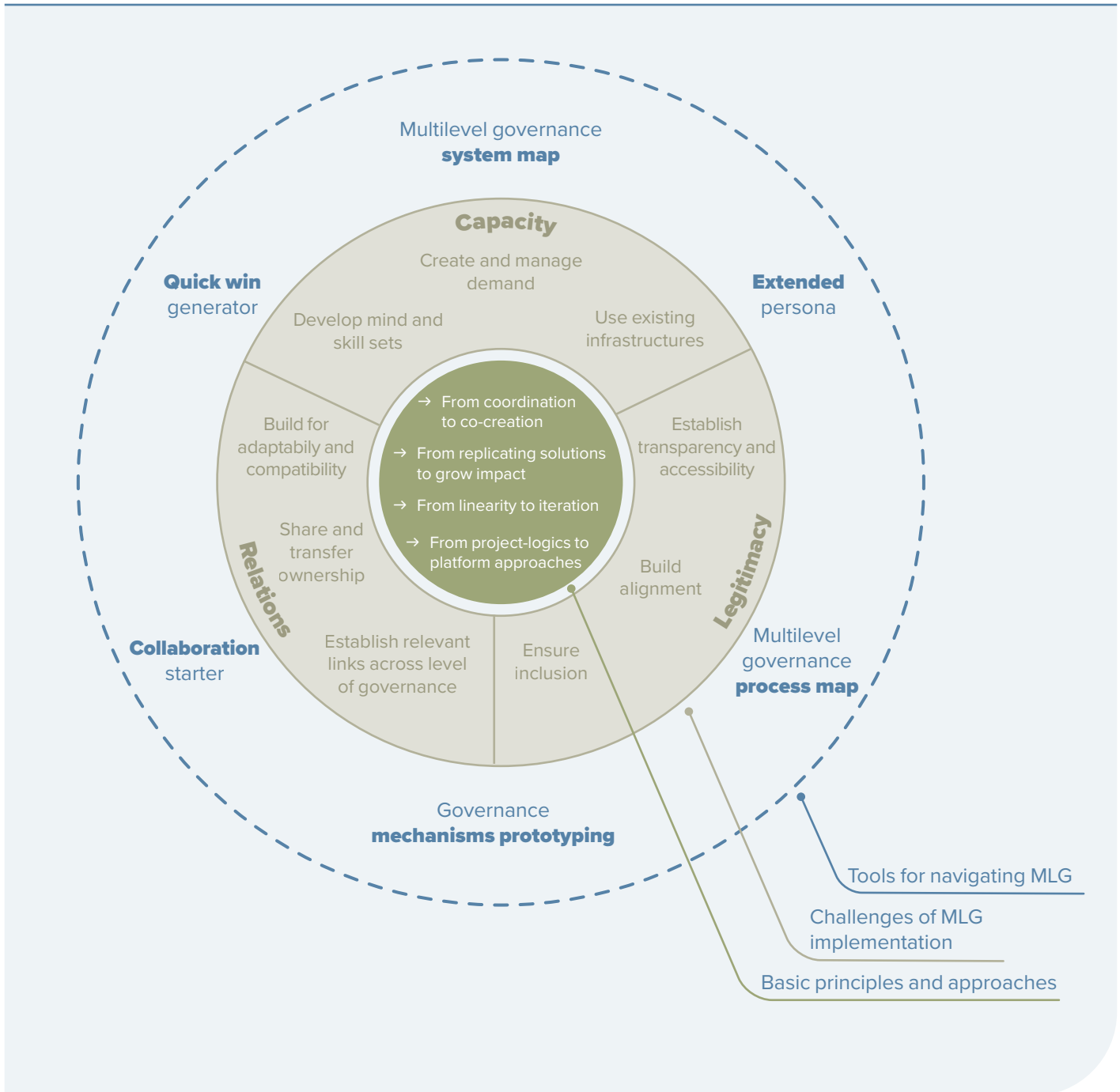
The insights gathered in this process were synthesized and organised into nine categories, each representing key challenges in implementing MLG approaches. These challenges were further complemented with reflective questions, illustrative case study examples, and supplementary information. Building on these insights and identified challenges, an initial set of tools was developed. To ensure its user-centric development, this first prototype of the toolkit was reviewed and tested with experts and users in a co-creation workshop. Feedback led to refinements and enhancements, culminating in the final version of the toolkit, which was reviewed and finalised in collaboration with experts from UNDP's Global Policy Network (GPN).

Box 4: Co-creation

Co-creation is the collaborative development of new solutions together with experts, stakeholders and/or beneficiaries. By involving different stakeholders, the collective knowledge and diverse expertise can be incorporated into the development of a solution. This form of participatory development goes far beyond joint decision-making, as all relevant stakeholders are involved in the entire process of solution development. This makes it easy to create a shared understanding of both the problem and the solution, avoiding the “not-invented here” syndrome, increasing acceptance and ownership of a solution.

1.5. Overview of the Framework and Toolkit

Figure 2: Overview of the Framework



The toolkit is structured according to the framework outlined above and supports practitioners in implementing MLG through three distinct layers. At its core are the underlying *principles and approaches* that foster a relevant mindset. The middle layer provides essential knowledge organised around specific *challenges* to enhance understanding and navigation of MLG. The outer layer offers practical tools to translate this mindset and knowledge into actionable steps.

Basic principles and approaches: In crises, which are often protracted, it is important to ground MLG support in principles and approaches that have proven effective in high-complexity, volatile, and uncertain environments. This section provides initial insights into these foundational elements.

Challenges of MLG Implementation:

Building on this foundation, the *Challenges of MLG Implementation* chapter synthesizes practical knowledge from country case studies. It identifies key challenges encountered in MLG implementation and offers entry points for practitioners to find relevant information, contextualise it, and apply tools and insights effectively. This section includes reflective questions, practical examples, and additional resources to address these challenges.

Tools for Navigating MLG: This section translates the knowledge from the previous sections into a set of practical tools grounded in principles of social innovation, human-centred

design, and digital innovation. These tools are designed to provide straightforward entry points for addressing the challenges identified, offering actionable solutions based on case study research. This initial set of tools can be expanded and refined over time, reflecting an evolving body of knowledge.

While each layer is presented separately within the toolkit for practical reasons, it is essential to recognize that these three layers are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Together, they ensure a comprehensive understanding of MLG and effective navigation of its complexities for practitioners.

02.

Basic Principles and Approaches for MLG

The challenges in crisis-affected settings are complex and often arise from extreme uncertainty. To develop effective solutions and sustain impact in such environments, we need adaptable approaches that enable flexibility in response to change, involve a diverse range of actors to leverage collective action, and create infrastructures to scale proven solutions and impact.

While these requirements are not new, established innovation approaches – such as human-centred design, social innovation, and lean development – offer valuable strategies. The following chapter explores principles and attitudes observed in our case studies and connects them to these established approaches and resources, providing valuable insights into how to support effective, participatory MLG.

Box 5: **Human-Centred Design**

Human-Centred Design (HCD) is a process, and a set of techniques used to create new solutions for the world. Solutions include products, services, environments, organizations, and modes of interaction. The reason this process is called “human-centred” is because it starts with the people we are designing for. The HCD process begins by examining the needs, dreams, and behaviours of the people you want to affect with our solutions, so that you can build deep empathy with them, generate multiple ideas to help solve their problems, and arrive at a solution via rapid prototyping.

Box 6: **Social Innovation**

Social innovation is the process of developing and deploying effective solutions to challenging and often systemic social and environmental issues in support of social progress. Social innovation is not the prerogative or privilege of any organizational form or legal structure. Solutions often require the active collaboration of constituents across government, business, and the nonprofit world.



From Linearity to Iteration

In development cooperation, especially in highly volatile crisis settings, a pre-planned, linear (and often static) approach to policy and programme planning frequently falls short due to the complex and fluid nature of the challenges involved. In addition, evidence shows that impact is strongly influenced by domestic political factors.³

Recognizing that policy development is dynamic – especially in fragile contexts – highlights the need for continuous assessment of the local context, regular reassessment of initial assumptions, and adaptability of programmes based on emerging information and opportunities. An MLG approach can facilitate and leverage collaborative spaces, enabling iterative methods that adapt activities, interventions, and mechanisms to evolving realities. This approach shifts from static capacity-building to dynamic processes that foster rapid and inclusive decision-making and innovation.

An iterative approach involves developing (parts of) a solution in short development loops, testing and validating each cycle to determine whether adaptations are needed (and if so, how).

In this way, methods, approaches or the general direction can be adapted quickly, while the effort required to do so is still relatively low. Such an approach allows to minimize risks and find solutions that are relevant and practical. Unlike traditional approaches that rely on linear and segregated phases of planning and implementation, iterative approaches provide flexibility and responsiveness.

In the context of MLG, iterative approaches can be beneficial at various levels. Engaging in iterative build-test-learn loops allows activities, interventions and mechanisms to be swiftly adapted to changes in the environment (e.g. changing needs, emerging problems and crises), thus maintaining legitimacy and effectiveness. Involving diverse stakeholders in these processes fosters participatory learning, builds valuable knowledge and skills across stakeholders, and enhances understanding, acceptance, transparency, and ownership. By using build-test-learn loops, activities at various stages of maturity and across different governance levels can be better coordinated, ensuring that insights inform actions at all levels.

More information:

- Ann Mei Chang: [Lean Impact - How to Innovate for Radically Greater Social Good \(2018\)](#)
- Anika Horn: [The Lean Startup for Social Entrepreneurs - Designing programs and products together with beneficiaries, not just for them \(2018\)](#)
- [Thinking and Working Politically \(TWP\) Community of Practice](#)

3 TWP Community of Practice: The case for thinking and working politically - The implications of 'doing development differently'



From Coordination to Co-creation

Transformative change cannot be achieved by governments alone; it requires openness and collaboration with businesses and civil society. Effective collaboration is crucial for crafting collective, context-sensitive and impactful responses to societal problems and crises. Simple coordination among actors, without a shared mission or common goal, often fails to secure the necessary ownership and buy-in from diverse

stakeholders across governance levels, which is essential for developing solutions that are both effective and sustainable. MLG can create spaces where decision-making extends beyond mere coordination to the co-creation of solutions. By involving diverse stakeholders early in the process, MLG enhances the quality of outcomes and fosters ownership, which is vital for the sustainable integration of solutions.

Box 7: Collaboration

Collaboration is a collective activity that is often used interchangeably with other terms such as cooperation and coordination. While all the three concepts refer to collective activity aimed at a shared pursuit, they have different connotations. In coordination, the benefit of working together is not critical, but each part needs to know what, when, and how to do what needs to be done. Cooperation defines a process where all stakeholders recognize the benefit of working together and are willing to engage in collective efforts, provided individual aims and autonomy will not be sacrificed. Collaboration represents another level of collective action where stakeholders have a common mission or shared goal, work together to find solutions that will benefit all of them.

Co-creative methods and approaches, drawn from fields such as agile development and design thinking, offer structured frameworks for involving various stakeholders in the development and design of solutions from beginning to end. Furthermore, these methods not only support consensus-building but also guide the collaborative identification of effective solutions to complex problems.

From an MLG perspective, effective collaboration across different levels of governance is essential for developing impactful solutions. Co-creation involving diverse representatives from civil society, various government levels,

and the private sector is crucial for citizen-centric governance. This approach ensures that stakeholders are engaged not only in point-in-time decisions but throughout the entire process of developing policies and programs. Fostering and cultivating co-creative approaches can enhance shared understanding of priorities and solutions, generate ownership, and establish credibility. Moreover, co-creation aligns closely with human-centred design principles, as constantly involving beneficiaries throughout the development process ensures that proposed solutions address the actual needs and realities of target groups, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and impact of the initiatives.

→ More information:

- IDEO: [The Field Guide to Human Centered Design](#)
- Michael Lerwick, Patrick Link, Larry Leifer: [The Design Thinking Playbook - Mindful Digital Transformation of Teams, Products, Services, Businesses and Ecosystems](#) (2017)



Many international development solutions fail to move beyond the pilot phase due to funding constraints, insufficient understanding of political economy, lack of robust evidence for scaling, and capacity issues in implementation. Additionally, contextual differences and inadequate stakeholder engagement can hinder the transition to broader impact, limiting long-term benefits. To address these challenges, it is crucial for international development actors to prioritize the mainstreaming of scaling efforts across various stakeholders and operational dimensions. Effective scaling requires embedding solutions into existing workflows, relationships, and mindsets of actors across multiple governance levels to drive positive change. Scaling – meaning expanding the positive impacts of a solution or innovation on people and/or the environment – often involves navigating complex relationships and ensuring legitimacy across different stakeholder groups within an ever-evolving ecosystem. Scaling strategies should be approached as a governance challenge, benefitting from involvement of those who will be affected by the solution. Engaging stakeholders

in defining scaling strategies ensures that these strategies are both organizationally feasible and collectively acceptable, balancing benefits and trade-offs.

Well-designed MLG systems can offer an effective infrastructure for governing the interests of those impacted by a solution while facilitating replication and scaling. These systems support horizontal collaboration and governance mechanisms, enabling proven solutions to be adapted or replicated in different geographies or for diverse target groups. Furthermore, a horizontal governance mechanism can bring diverse local stakeholders together and mobilize communities in a way that changes relationships, cultural values and beliefs. Additionally, systematizing and institutionalizing governance mechanisms across vertical levels, on the other hand, can serve as an entry point to adapt policies or even scale solutions with a view to broader reforms and transitions. Platform approaches (see below) can integrate a range of solutions to address multiple leverage points within a larger system, stimulating widespread change.

→ **More information:**

- UNDP: [Strategy to scale social innovation for development](#) - A hands-on report for UNDP Accelerator Labs to enable context-specific scaling of social innovation to achieve the SDGs (2020)
- Robert McLean, John Gargani: [Scaling Impact - Innovation for the public good](#) (2019)



From Project Logics to Systemic Transformation

Development work has traditionally been guided by project logics that address specific problems in a linear manner, often organized within rigid vertical management structures and aimed at predefined and formalized outcomes. These approaches frequently fall short in addressing the complexities of transformative change within intricate systems. Recognizing this limitation, UNDP has prioritized shifting away from traditional project-based methods towards strategies that foster systemic transformation.⁴ Expanding its role from a policy advisor to governments to a facilitator of large-scale, open innovation platforms, UNDP aims to enhance partnerships and engage a broader range of actors to trigger systemic transformation.⁵ MLG approaches can both support and benefit from these innovation platforms, which bring together diverse stakeholders, including relevant national and local networks across public, private, and civil sectors. By fostering collaboration through interconnected activities and actions, these platforms can effectively address complex challenges and drive meaningful change.

Central to these innovation platforms is the establishment of long-lasting infrastructures that unite diverse actors across various governance levels, facilitating the development of a portfolio of interconnected solutions.

Such an infrastructure ideally equips initiatives with the necessary resources for effective ways of working (i.e. experimentation and prototyping, co-creation, ethnographic research, etc.), appropriate financial tools (e.g. locally focused investment funds) and an ecosystem where stakeholders can collaborate, build relationships, and access relevant information, enabling them to sustainably develop and scale the collective efforts transcending the limitations of individual projects (such as timeframes, funding, objectives, etc.). Digital solutions often play a crucial role in enhancing information access and promoting participation and co-creation within these platforms.

MLG approaches can serve as the foundation for these innovation platforms, bringing together actors from various levels of government, civil society, and the private sector to establish and sustain infrastructure tailored to the local context. These platforms can vary in form and scale, and can be applied at local, regional, or national levels. By actively inviting contributions from diverse actors at different levels in shaping the agenda and developing possible solutions, these platform approaches address critical issues of ownership and engagement, providing effective answers to complex challenges.

→ More information:

- La Caixa Banking Foundation: Platforms that trigger innovation - a new approach for international development (2018)
- minds & makers: Learnings Report - Implementing social innovation and bottom-up approaches within UNDP - [Learnings from social innovation platforms in Pakistan and Indonesia](#) (2021)

⁴ To assist development partners in managing systems transformation in complex development spaces, UNDP employs a portfolio approach. In 2024, UNDP adopted its [Portfolio Policy](#), which introduces a portfolio as a delivery instrument aimed at contributing to one or more country programme outcomes while engaging multiple implementing partners to address system-level challenges and achieve strategic development results.

⁵ United Nations Development Programme Strategic Plan 2022–2025 - Phase 1: Landscape Paper

03.

Challenges of MLG Implementation

Challenges are central consideration when promoting, implementing, and sustaining an MLG approach. Most of the challenges highlighted in this toolkit are predominantly cross-cutting and should be considered throughout the entire

programmatic and policy support process. They serve as both a demand-driven and problem-focused entry point to the practical knowledge repository and the tools developed within the toolkit.

3.1. Utilize and Build CAPACITY for MLG Implementation

The challenges, strategies and case examples in this section focus on building the capacities needed for successful MLG to take place. This section emphasises the need to develop the ability to understand, manage, and shape demand for MLG; cultivate the mindsets and skills required for its adoption; and leverage existing infrastructures, including relationships, methods, processes, know-how, etc.

The capacity issues are explored through the following key challenges:

- A** **Creating and managing demand;**
- B** **Developing the necessary mindsets and skill sets; and**
- C** **Utilizing existing infrastructures, networks and efforts.**

How can we build the capacity of governance actors to understand, generate and manage demand for participation across both horizontal and vertical levels of governance among diverse stakeholders?

Successfully establishing and fostering new approaches hinges on the willingness of relevant actors to engage. This is even more important for an approach like MLG, which, by its nature, requires collaboration beyond traditional government representatives to include civil society and private sector actors who are not necessarily each other's regular counterparts or have already-established channels of interaction. In turn, this collaboration is dependent on a robust stakeholder demand for participation, which must be understood, nurtured, managed, adapted and sustained throughout the process, as needs, interests, and engagement levels evolve. Building demand for participatory bottom-up MLG is particularly relevant in crisis-affected settings where social cohesion and trust among different actors may be low.

To create an appetite for MLG processes, it is important to craft a compelling value proposition that clearly articulates the benefits of the approach for each stakeholder involved. Introducing MLG approaches in traditional project settings can often feel overwhelming to stakeholders. To mitigate this, it is effective to align MLG with existing mental models⁶ and established approaches, initially introducing a lightweight version of MLG and promptly demonstrating its positive outcomes and impacts. Creating demand for MLG also involves anticipating how solutions will be delivered and monitored once stakeholders are ready and willing to engage, thereby avoiding frustration and disappointment. Central to this approach is a dynamic understanding of demand, which allows actors to continuously adapt and respond to evolving needs and interests.



Insights

In many contexts, actors are not accustomed to participatory approaches and collaboration across both vertical and horizontal levels of governance. To address this, it is crucial to invest time and resources into initial activities that stimulate demand (e.g., through fostering relationships, crafting a compelling value proposition for relevant stakeholders, and providing early evidence of the benefits of the approach), as well as monitor changes in demand throughout the programme.

Creating and managing demand for MLG approaches involves several key considerations:

→ **Ongoing learning:** Continuously learning about possible changes in stakeholder demand is vital. This helps maintain a clear

value proposition and generate buy-in, not just during early-stage relationship-building but throughout the program as needs and interests evolve.

→ **Addressing mental models:** Efficient communication and successful interventions depend on understanding (and addressing) existing mental models, values, and established practices. This ensures that participatory approaches are effectively introduced and embraced.

→ **Early tangible results:** Ensuring that first experiences of participatory governance processes rapidly lead to tangible results can increase stakeholder interest and support. Identifying opportunities for “small wins” that require minimal investment

⁶ Refers to existing mental models, concepts, and understandings regarding certain approaches, formats, or mechanisms that are already familiar to actors and to which new approaches can link. For example, the concept of Community Security Working Groups in Ukraine refers to the familiar instrument of the working group but establishes a new MLG approach that brings together diverse local actors in a co-creative environment. See also Case Example Creating demand and developing capacity for MLG by implementing local Community Security Working Groups in Ukraine further below in this section.

(budget, partnerships, etc.) but contribute to the broader goal of systemic change (i.e., by linking to the portfolio's goals) can demonstrate the value of participatory approaches to local communities and other stakeholders.

- **Creating dialogue spaces:** Quick, positive changes at the local level can sometimes be achieved by simply creating spaces for equal-footing dialogue among stakeholders who do not typically engage with each other. This can boost demand of local populations for participatory mechanisms.
- **Incremental introduction:** Introducing lightweight, participatory approaches gradually can create stakeholder appetite

for more sophisticated approaches, avoiding scepticism and resistance. Carefully staged rollouts of novel approaches can foster acceptance and engagement.

- **Planning for change:** Stakeholder landscapes are dynamic, and changes can affect processes. It is important to anticipate and plan for these changes to minimize disruptions and maintain momentum.

In summary, establishing and managing demand across levels of governance require building relationships, developing a compelling value proposition, and demonstrating early benefits. Adapting to evolving stakeholder needs and interests throughout the process is essential for sustaining engagement and support.



Reflective Questions

Stakeholder mapping and interests

- Who are the key decision-makers (formal and informal) at various levels of governance that need to be involved in addressing the underlying policy problem?
- Who are the influential change makers that could help promote and support MLG approaches?
- Who are the relevant actors who might be hard to convince or have conflicting interests?
- What are the existing needs, mental models, values and established practices of these actors, and how can we learn about them?
- What are the potential benefits and value propositions that might motivate the actors to engage meaningfully and participate?
- How are these incentives or disincentives likely to influence the behaviour of key decision-makers regarding the given policy problem?

Lightweight participatory approaches

- What experiences of collaboration among government, civil society and businesses already exist in the context of your programme?

- What could be an adequate initial step for a participatory MLG approach in the context of your programme that does not overburden actors?
- What 'behind-the-scenes' negotiations or power dynamics might undermine participatory processes, and how can these be addressed or mitigated?

Quick wins

- What are small, easily manageable activities that can effectively demonstrate an MLG approach and contribute to programming objectives?
- What activities can be implemented without significant investments to deliver quick results, showcasing potential pathways forward to local communities and key decision-makers at various levels of governance?

Peer learning

- What are tangible examples of successful MLG approaches that are relevant to the context of your intervention or programme?
- What is the best way to create an appetite for adoption? For instance, could organizing a field visit to showcase the benefits firsthand be an effective method?



Case Examples

Creating demand and building capacity for MLG through Local Community Security Working Groups in Ukraine (2016-2021)

In response to the conflict that erupted in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and the ongoing decentralization reforms, the Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme (RPP) was launched in 2016 to address priority needs. To enhance community security and social cohesion, the programme established Community Security Working Groups (CSWG), bringing together diverse government and non-governmental actors to tackle local issues, foster participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability, and build trust in local security providers. Embedded into the MLG system, the CSWGs ensure that local interests are represented at regional and national levels, thereby improving public safety and security in the conflict-affected areas of Donetsk and Luhansk.

In the initial phase of implementation, the CSWGs focused on relatively easy-to-solve problems to deliver quick, tangible results such as installing street lighting to increase public safety. This approach allowed the CSWGs to showcase their impact to both citizens and local authorities, who had limited prior experience with participatory methods. At the same time, UNDP CO provided training to CSWG members in various areas (e.g. research methodologies to develop community profiles, advocacy for representing local interests at higher levels of government). This training aimed to empower CSWG members to address increasingly complex issues related to community security and social cohesion, thereby enhancing their ability to develop and implement effective solutions.



Tools

The following tools from the Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can be used to address the challenges outlined:

#Multi-Level Governance System Map

This tool helps identify and select key actors within an MLG system for the creation of personas and/or value propositions, enabling clear communication of the benefits of the programme or approach, fostering enthusiasm and support for MLG processes.

#Extended Persona

This tool analyses and captures the goals, gains and pains of various actors. With this information,

a value proposition can be developed, to clearly convey the benefits of the programme or approach, helping to generate interest and engagement in MLG processes.

#Quick Win Generator

This tool assists in identifying and implementing easy-to-execute demonstrator projects (quick-wins). These serve as initial evidence of the effectiveness of MLG approaches, helping to build stakeholder confidence and create demand for further engagement.

→ More information:

- [Community mobilisation - UNDP approach towards community security and social cohesion - Guidebook for community mobilizers, UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme - Page 12 - 36](#)

How can we encourage, enable and capacitate actors across governance levels to participate in MLG?

Implementing MLG approaches requires a shift in both practices and perspectives from all involved actors. Furthermore, it often entails significant behavioural changes, such as altering power dynamics, redefining roles and reshaping relationships. To facilitate this transition and foster active participation across all governance levels, actors need support in developing the necessary mindsets and capabilities. For instance, citizens need to be empowered to engage actively in problem-solving and advocacy, while activists should be encouraged to formalize their efforts and join forces for broader impact. Government representatives need to understand

how redistributing power can help achieve their objectives more effectively. Given the diverse cultural, contextual, and skill variations across communities, regions and countries, it is paramount for development practitioners to have a deep understanding of the local context. Building capacity and changing mindsets is a long-term investment that should be approached incrementally to avoid overwhelming participants. This process should be viewed as a collective effort, where individuals not only build their own skills but also learn from and with each other, gradually developing and adapting mental models allowing for changes to happen.



Insights

To enable effective MLG approaches, it is critical to prioritize early support and capacity-building for stakeholders. Given capacity-building is a long-term process, it should be integrated into the early planning stages of any programme.

For effective capacity-building, the following considerations are relevant:

- **Diverse skill levels and attitudes:** Skills and attitudes vary significantly across countries, communities, and government levels. Therefore, an individualized assessments are needed to inform capacity-building measures.
- **Key capacities:** Essential capacities may include event organisation (management), the ability to articulate and communicate collectively identified needs to the right interlocutors (advocacy), and systematic follow-up on decisions (accountability).
- **Continuous learning:** Activities should be designed to allow for ongoing, collective learning. An iterative approach, such as build-test-learn cycles, helps in continuously assessing what strategies are effective and which are not.

→ **Mindsets and attitudes:** Capacity-building should extend beyond skill development to also address mindsets, attitudes, and mental models. Promoting various methods such as peer learning, on-the-job coaching, and mentoring, can support these broader changes.

→ **Networking and platforms:** Forming networks or platforms enable the actors to exchange experience, gain hands-on knowledge, and motivate and support each other in the implementation.

In summary, capacity-building is essential for strengthening MLG approaches. To generate impact, it must be tailored to programme goals and the needs of the actors involved. By addressing both skills and attitudes, and leveraging various methods of learning and support, capacity building can effectively foster MLG processes.



Reflective Questions

Skill Level and Mindset

- What are the current mindsets and skill levels of relevant actors across various governance levels, including government, civil society and private businesses?
- How do the roles of these actors need to change to enable MLG more effectively?
- What skills and mindset do the actors need for this change?
- What skills and mindsets are needed to empower citizens to actively participate in problem-solving and advocate for their interests?
- What skills and mindsets are needed to enable civil society actors to initiate change by collaborating with government and private businesses?
- What skills and mindsets are needed to allow government representatives to distribute power and involve diverse stakeholders?
- What political barriers might impede changing skills and mindsets, who has influence over these constraints, and what actions might overcome or mitigate them?

- What incentives could be leveraged to help develop the necessary skills and mindsets to enable MLG?
- What existing capacity-building activities can we leverage or build upon?

Collective learning

- How can we foster collective learning by incorporating iterative approaches into MLG programming, allowing for continuous learning about what works and what does not through build-test-learn loops?

Peer learning

- What are good practices and examples of MLG that address your policy issue or social challenge? How have other programmes and country offices addressed similar challenges?
- How can you build an infrastructure for exchanging ideas and peer learning related to MLG approaches?
- What existing networks and formats can we utilise to facilitate exchange and peer learning for MLG approaches?



Case Examples

Establishment of a youth CSO network to enhance governance and develop solutions in Lake Chad (2018-2023)

In the Lake Chad Basin region, deep-seated structural development challenges – including lack of basic infrastructure and services, corruption, and erosion of trust in security forces – are compounded by demographic pressures on natural resources. This situation has created fertile ground for radicalization amid persistent religious conflicts, particularly in Nigeria. Since 2009, the region has suffered unprecedented extremist violence under the Boko Haram insurgency, which has spread to Cameroon, Chad and Niger, causing widespread destruction of basic infrastructure, healthcare and education facilities, and agricultural assets. To address these challenges and support the Regional Strategy for

the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region (RSS), UNDP and its partners have focused on enhancing participatory governance at multiple levels – transnational/cross-border, national, regional and local. A key initiative involved the establishment of a youth CSO network aimed at building capacity for effective governance participation and solution development. The initiative began with capacity-building for youth CSO staff, focusing on leadership skills, advocacy techniques, and organizational management. Following this, the network held subsequent meetings to craft a shared vision for youth involvement, with a particular emphasis

on including women and girls. This vision has enabled young people in the Lake Chad Basin to present a unified voice at the Governors' Forum, a platform for cross-border collaboration. With their enhanced skills and coordination, the youth organizations within this network develop concrete project proposals to address

cross-border issues such as drug trafficking and smuggling. The training and collaborative efforts have significantly boosted their ability to participate actively in governance processes, advocate for youth needs, and become effective partners in project planning and implementation.

Establishing a network for peer-learning and exchange visits to enhance collective learning in Ukraine (2016-2021)

To amplify the impact of local CSWGs in eastern Ukraine, a dedicated network for peer-learning and exchange was established. The network aimed to enhance the organizational capacity of CSWGs by facilitating mutual learning among practitioners from various communities. By fostering partnerships and promoting collaborative initiatives, the network enabled communities to work together on joint initiatives and projects. One of the key strategies involved organising exchange visits, allowing diverse stakeholders to directly experience the function and impact of CSWGs. These visits proved to be a powerful tool for fostering acceptance and

understanding of CSWG approach, generating demand and facilitating scaling. Additionally, the exchange visits engaged higher-level government stakeholders in addressing local issues, thereby strengthening the approach's relevance and effectiveness. The network's success lies in its ability to provide a platform for meaningful exchange, while translating abstract challenges into tangible, real-world examples. This hands-on approach not only enhanced understanding but also demonstrated the practical benefits of the CSWG model, contributing to its broader acceptance and implementation.

Tools

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, are particularly useful for addressing the challenges outlined:

#Extended Persona

The persona tool helps in crafting needs-based capacity-building programmes essential for effective MLG approaches. By capturing the current mindsets and skill sets of actors, this tool enables the identification of gaps in capacities.

It then provides insights into the specific knowledge and skills that need to be developed, ensuring that capacity-building efforts are targeted and effective.

C Using Existing Infrastructures, Networks and Efforts

How can we identify, connect and leverage existing infrastructures (such as established relationships, networks, governance mechanisms, and related know-how) for MLG to avoid redundancy and alienation of stakeholders?

Existing infrastructures such as established relationships, networks, governance mechanisms, and expertise at both national and sub-national levels provide essential capacities for MLG and should not be overlooked. Instead of starting from scratch, integrating and building upon existing resources can prevent stakeholder alienation and duplication of efforts. To foster a sustainable ecosystem for MLG, it is crucial to carefully assess and integrate current initiatives. This approach not only helps build trust but also capitalises on existing potentials and utilizes opportunities efficiently, which is especially valuable in emergency situations where time and resources are limited. Furthermore, evaluating the impact of these infrastructures ensures that their

integration does not lead to exclusion, grievances, or conflicts. Understanding the current ecosystem thoroughly allows for the cultivation of new relationships and the effective use of established networks and governance mechanisms. This not only facilitates easier buy-in and reduces bureaucratic hurdles but also bridges trust gaps and enhances the overall effectiveness of MLG initiatives.

Insights

Building on existing relationships, networks, governance mechanisms, and solutions across governance levels is crucial to avoid duplication and devaluation of ongoing activities, while also fostering trust and leveraging available resources and opportunities.

To identify and utilise relevant existing infrastructures, the following aspects are important:

→ **Mapping and analysing resources:** Begin by identifying and mapping relevant relationships, networks, and governance mechanisms. This process should involve key stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of the existing resources and understand how to adapt or repurpose current efforts to meet new needs.

→ **Leveraging established structures:** Utilize existing governance structures (such as forums or councils) to facilitate collaboration across levels of governance. This approach reduces the time and effort required to set up new mechanisms, which is particularly valuable in emergency situations with limited resources. When establishing new mechanisms, building on familiar concepts can help avoid alienating stakeholders.⁷

→ **Conflict-sensitive review:** Conduct a conflict-sensitive review to assess which existing MLG relationships, networks, and mechanisms are productive and inclusive. This helps ensure that integrating these components does not lead to exclusion, grievances, or conflict.

7 I.e., in Ukraine, the already existing format of working groups was used to establish CSWGs as inclusive, citizen-centred advisory bodies in local communities to solve security issues.

- **Engaging CSOs:** CSOs often provide crucial infrastructure for reaching and supporting diverse populations, particularly vulnerable target groups. Their pre-existing community structures often enjoy trust and knowledge generated over long periods of time and can help with mobilizing communities, especially in crisis situations where trust between government and citizens may be low.
- **Sustaining and scaling solutions:** Existing infrastructures can support the sustainability and scaling of solutions. CSOs can play an

important role in replicating and expanding interventions by sharing experiences and identifying potential partners. Larger networks of CSOs can facilitate the scaling of successful approaches to new regions.

In summary, leveraging existing infrastructures – such as relationships, networks, governance mechanisms, and solutions – can enhance MLG approaches by increasing efficiency, building trust, avoiding redundancy, and supporting the scaling and sustainability of efforts.



Reflective Questions

Identify existing infrastructure

- What existing relationships, networks, governance mechanisms, and solutions across governance levels can we build upon to enhance MLG?
- What are the positive and negative impacts of these existing infrastructures? Do they promote collaboration, inclusivity, transparency, and accountability?
- Which existing concepts or approaches can be adapted or utilized to enhance MLG?

Using established governance mechanisms

- What established governance mechanisms can we connect to, integrate, or adapt to avoid alienation and disruption?
- What are the potential benefits and barriers of using these identified mechanisms for our objectives?
- What incentives or disincentives could be employed to successfully leverage these established governance mechanisms?

Involving hard-to-reach target groups

- What challenges exist in engaging target groups (especially vulnerable populations) and ensuring their meaningful participation?
- How can we form partnerships with actors (e.g. CSOs), to effectively reach and involve these target groups?

Scaling efforts

- Which existing networks can we utilise to find partners for knowledge exchange and solution dissemination?
- What local infrastructures can be leveraged to provide solutions to citizens?
- What constraints and incentive structures need to be addressed or potentially leveraged when using existing networks and infrastructures to enhance MLG? The tools presented here are inspired by methods and processes from the fields of social innovation, human-centred design and digital innovation, and have been developed against the backdrop of the insights and challenges compiled in the MLG case study research.



Case Examples

Finding a bottom-up approach to represent local interest at the regional level in Ukraine (2016-2021)

In the context of community security in Ukraine, there was a notable gap in mechanisms for collaboration between local and regional levels of governance. While attempts to develop a bottom-up approach have faced challenges, they have also generated promising ideas through discussions among regional authorities, CSWG representatives, and UNDP. The best option was to adapt and leverage existing mechanisms rather than creating new ones from scratch. Recognising

the diverse organisational structures of different regions, it was clear that tailored approaches were necessary. The most practical solution identified for implementing a regional coordination mechanism was to leverage the existing governance frameworks – such as regional citizen councils – by integrating a “community safety” committees composed of representatives from the CSWGs.

Leveraging CSO networks to mobilize citizens in areas of Tunisia where state is absent and mistrusted (2017-2023)

In the wake of the Tunisian Revolution of December 2010 and January 2011, the transition to democratic governance and decentralization has been marred by persistent mistrust in public institutions and significant social inequalities. As part of a broader portfolio on SDG 16 and grounded in a human rights-based approach, UNDP, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Ministry of Justice, has focused on improving access to justice and rebuilding trust in the justice system, particularly in the governorates of Medenine and Tataouine in southern and southeastern Tunisia. Five selected CSOs implemented various activities aimed at empowering and supporting marginalized groups, including women, youth, and individuals with disabilities. Their efforts included sensitization

campaigns to raise awareness about rights and access to justice, training women ‘ambassadors’ to reach vulnerable women in remote areas, providing legal support, advocating for the needs of persons with disabilities, and facilitating the reintegration of former inmates. These CSOs served as crucial intermediaries between regional and local levels, establishing connections with target communities and local administrations. To enhance their outreach, one CSO strategically utilized its informal network of local actors and organizations to bridge gaps with previously unconnected target groups. By leveraging these local intermediaries, the CSO successfully built trust and engaged a broader audience in its sensitization events, exceeding initial expectations and fostering greater community participation.



Tools

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can be effective in addressing the challenges outlined:

#Multi-level Governance System Map

This tool helps identify and map existing structures (governance mechanisms, CSO networks, etc.) across various levels of governance. By understanding these existing infrastructures, we can repurpose and enhance them to improve links and collaboration between actors, thereby expanding and strengthening the MLG system.

#Governance Mechanisms Prototyping

This tool allows for the identification and evaluation of existing governance mechanisms to determine their suitability for adaptation and repurposing. By assessing their potential, we can modify and develop these mechanisms to better support and facilitate the implementation of MLG approaches.

3.2. Create and Maintain LEGITIMACY of MLG Efforts

The challenges, strategies, and case studies presented in this section address the issues of accountability and legitimacy of MLG activities and corresponding efforts that aim at establishing trust, promoting participation, avoiding stakeholder disengagement, and ultimately strengthening the social contract and social cohesion.

The following sections will delve into these legitimacy issues, focusing on the following key challenges:

- A** **Establishing transparency and accessibility;**
- B** **Ensuring inclusion and active participation; and**
- C** **Enhancing alignment.**

A **Establishing Transparency and Accessibility**

How can we ensure that all relevant information (objectives, processes, expected outcomes, roles etc.) is both accessible and comprehensible to all stakeholders?

Successful collaboration across vertical and horizontal levels of government relies on transparent, careful communication and shared understanding to build trust and ensure legitimacy. Objectives, processes, and expected outcomes must be clear and coherent for all relevant stakeholders. Involving stakeholders in co-creative development processes can further enhance transparent and accessible information

flows, keeping people informed and engaged. Digital tools increasingly facilitate and simplify collaboration by providing easy access to information, deliberation and decision-making processes, thereby promoting participation and accountability. Ensuring open, barrier-free access (e.g. using simple language, open formats, protected spaces) is crucial at the local level and for including a broad segment of the population.

To strengthen the legitimacy of MLG, objectives, processes, and expected outcomes need to be communicated transparently, coherently and in ways that are easy to understand for all relevant stakeholders across various governance levels.

For transparent communication to be effective, the following initial considerations are pivotal:

- **Open and multi-platform communication:** Ensure transparency and effective information flows by utilizing diverse communication platforms to reach stakeholders, establish and retain legitimacy.
- **Understanding stakeholder needs:** Assess the needs, preferences and routines of stakeholders to establish information flows that are accessible and comprehensible to everyone.
- **Shared goals and agreements:** Engage in a collective learning process to establish

shared goals and agreements, using an iterative, participatory approach to ensure all perspectives are considered and a common understanding is achieved.

- **Stakeholder involvement:** Include stakeholders in the research and co-creation of development activities to foster collective learning and maintain intact information flows.
- **Digital solutions:** While digital tools can amplify access and simplify participation, ensure that target groups lacking the necessary skills and/or infrastructure are not excluded, to prevent reinforcing digital divides and other inequalities.

In summary, achieving transparency and accessibility involves comprehensible information, building mutual trust, and using adequate communication channels. Open, multi-platform communication can ensure the necessary transparency and effective information flows to establish and maintain legitimacy.

 **Reflective Questions****Access to information**

- What information do national, regional and local stakeholders (state and non-state actors) need to understand and advance objectives, processes, expected outcomes, roles etc. across multiple levels of governance?
- Do stakeholders possess the necessary capacity (technical, structural and organizational) to capture the information?
- In what formats should information be disseminated to effectively reach different stakeholders?
- Which platforms and channels are best suited for transparent and understandable communication to reach different stakeholders?
- What existing formal and informal communication channels between vertical

and horizontal levels of governance can be used for disseminating information?

- How can we ensure barrier-free access to information for local-level actors, especially vulnerable target groups, through simple language, open formats and protected spaces?
- Are there instances of sensitive information being withheld from the public or inaccurately reported? What are the reasons for this?
- Which stakeholders might feel threatened by increased transparency and accountability, and how can they be encouraged to participate constructively?
- What relationships and incentives can be leveraged to enhance access to and sharing of information?

- How can we ensure trust, privacy, and security when using digital platforms for information sharing?

Enable dialogue

- Who are stakeholders across governance levels that do not engage with each other?
- What are the reasons for the lack of engagement or relationship between these stakeholders?
- What strategies can be employed to initiate dialogue between these stakeholders across governance levels that typically do not interact, to develop effective information flows?

Digital enablers

- What role can digital technologies play in facilitating access to information and promoting inclusion for stakeholders across different levels?

- How can we use digital technologies to improve access to information, while also offering alternatives for target groups with limited connectivity or digital literacy (especially vulnerable target groups)?
- What are the potential impacts of digital technologies on power dynamics, and which stakeholders might view these changes unfavourably and potentially act as a spoiler?

Collective learning to improve shared understanding

- How can we involve relevant national, regional and local stakeholders in our learning processes to allow optimal flow and understanding of information across various levels of governance?



Case Examples

Open and multi-platform communication by the strike committee in Buenaventura, Colombia (2017-2022)

The civic strikes in Buenaventura in 2017 highlighted the city's deep-seated socio-economic issues, including poverty, limited access to basic services, and high rates of violence and displacement, especially affecting the Afro-Colombian majority population. These 22-day strikes, driven by grassroots efforts from local actors, such as the church, indigenous groups, and CSOs, targeted the central government for its neglect of the city's needs. By blockading the port, a vital economic hub, the strikes compelled the government to engage in direct negotiations, leading to the enactment of the Law for Buenaventura and the creation of a strategic fund to address long-standing structural challenges. This grassroots approach bypassed traditional institutional channels, establishing a direct accountability mechanism between local and national levels.

Central to the negotiation process were thematic roundtables, with the strike committee playing a pivotal role in representing the diverse interests of Buenaventura's civil society. The success of the strike committee was partly due to effective communication of their actions and motivations to the population. Local and social media were instrumental in generating momentum, and maintaining active, multi-platform communication was essential for committee's ongoing influence and future sustainability.

Additionally, early challenges in documenting and understanding the agreements reached led to the involvement of the UNDP CO and the regional UNDP Governance Management Project (Sistema de Gestión de la Gobernabilidad, SIGOB). They implemented a digital platform to track progress transparently. Managed by the Ministry of Interior Affairs, this platform was designed to clarify roles and responsibilities across different levels of governance, facilitate coordination, and

monitor the implementation of initiatives outlined in the Law for Buenaventura. By providing a baseline for progress and enabling informed decision-making, this system aimed to bridge

the gap between policy formulation and practical impact, contributing to tangible improvements in Buenaventura's socio-economic landscape.

Tools

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can be used to address the outlined challenges:

#Extended Persona

Personas translate insights or existing knowledge about stakeholder groups into an easy-to-

understand and easy to work with format. Personas can be developed co-creatively and encourage shared learning.

Ensuring Inclusion and Active Participation

How can we ensure participation of all relevant actors across multiple levels of governance to enable inclusive and effective governance outcomes?

Involving all relevant stakeholders in participatory MLG approaches is crucial for representing divergent interests and establishing legitimacy. In crisis-affected areas, where marginalized and vulnerable groups are prevalent, their inclusion is especially important to address their unique challenges and develop effective solutions. Broad participation often results in widely accepted solutions with greater legitimacy, but it can also be resource-intensive and may slow down

the response to urgent issues, such as during emergencies. Additionally, not all stakeholders may be willing or able to participate in every phase of the process. To ensure legitimacy, it is important to strike a balance of power, mandates and inclusive representation within participatory mechanisms. This balance should be designed to be accepted and endorsed by all stakeholders, facilitating effective and equitable governance.

Insights

To deliver broadly accepted solutions with high levels of legitimacy, it is crucial to ensure broad participation of stakeholders across governance levels, including marginalized and vulnerable groups.

To ensure inclusive and active participation, the following considerations are pivotal:

- **Inclusion of diverse stakeholders:** Engaging a broad range of stakeholder in governance mechanisms is essential for addressing their

specific issues and proposing impactful solutions.

- **Building mutual understanding:** MLG approaches often involve a diverse array of actors, necessitating the development of mutual understanding and essential skills.
- **Cultural adaptation:** The effectiveness of inclusive governance mechanisms can be influenced by the prevailing culture of government actors. In less participatory environments, the establishment of inclusive

boards and committees might prove challenging. In such contexts, fostering demand for these approaches must be incorporated into planning.

- **Accessibility:** Ensuring low-barrier access to relevant touchpoints, formats, and mechanisms directly impacts the inclusivity of the process.
- **Flexibility in governance mechanisms:** Governance structures must be adaptable to

accommodate emerging changes (e.g., new actors, funding shifts, evolving objectives, etc.), to maintain inclusion and sustain legitimacy of MLG efforts.

In summary, involving vulnerable target groups in governance mechanisms is key to understanding their needs, empathizing with their problems and developing effective solutions. Inclusion not only drives collective learning and innovation but also enhances programming and policymaking.



Reflective Questions

Demand for inclusion

- What is the prevailing culture of participation among stakeholders, in particular national and local government counterparts, in the context of our programme/initiative?
- How can we provide compelling value propositions to stakeholders to create demand for inclusion and multi-stakeholder participation in crisis settings, particularly at the local level?
- What incentives and disincentives can help explain barriers to inclusion for stakeholders, and/or be leveraged to stimulate inclusion?

Involved actors

- Who is or should be impacted by the programme or policy intervention at different governance levels?
- Do mechanisms exist for consistently identifying their needs and funneling their priorities into decision-making processes at the appropriate governance level?
- Which vulnerable and/or marginalized populations need to be consulted and actively engaged to ensure inclusive participation across different levels of governance?
- How can trust be developed with vulnerable and/or marginalized actors to secure their participation?

- What actors need to be involved to create a balance of power, mandates and representation that is accepted and endorsed by all stakeholders to generate trust and credibility?
- How can we secure acceptance and endorsement of influential stakeholders for the meaningful participation of vulnerable and/or marginalized actors?

Ensure accessibility

- How can we ensure low-barrier accessibility to key touch points, formats, and mechanisms to enhance inclusivity?
- How can we establish barrier-free access to participation through simple language, open formats and protected spaces for local-level actors?

Sustain inclusion

- How can we best track emerging changes (new actors and mechanisms, funding shifts, evolving objectives, etc.) to the MLG system?
- How can we build governance mechanisms flexible enough to adapt to emerging changes, including through built-in feedback loops and learning that ensures inclusion and sustained legitimacy?



Case Examples

Opportunities and limitations of inclusion: CSWGs in eastern Ukraine (2016-2021)

The CSWGs in eastern Ukraine serve as a valuable example of an advisory body that fosters dialogue among local actors to collaboratively assess and address community needs related to security and social cohesion. They demonstrate how direct citizen involvement, particularly from vulnerable populations, is essential for building broad acceptance and support for solutions. By incorporating the interests and needs of diverse community members, CSWGs ensure that various perspectives are considered and addressed. However, the effectiveness of such inclusive measures is significantly influenced by the prevailing political culture at different governance levels. In contexts where local governments are appointed rather than elected, the inclusivity of

CSWGs can be compromised. In some instances, these groups consist primarily of representatives from local government departments, sidelining civil society actors and representatives from vulnerable populations. In one community facing this challenge, CSOs established a shadow working group based on community mobilisation methodologies. UNDP supported these efforts and facilitated dialogue between the two groups. As the CSWG composed of local authority representatives dissolved, members began joining the CSO-led working group. Although this group was never formalised like other CSWGs, it emerged as a genuine platform for coordination and dialogue within the community.

The strike committee and the FonBuenaventura in Colombia as inclusive MLG systems (2017-2022)

The strike committee in Buenaventura emerged from the convergence of two prior protest movements during the civic strikes. This alliance established a democratic internal process to elect 15 representatives, coordinators, and spokespersons, ensuring that the affiliated population groups and CSOs were well-represented. The committee's structure facilitated an integrative approach, addressing the diverse needs of various groups and leading to successful negotiations. This groundwork paved the way for the enactment of the Law for Buenaventura and the creation of the Fund for the Integral Development of the Special District of Buenaventura (Fondo para el Desarrollo Integral del Distrito Especial de Buenaventura, FonBuenaventura). FonBuenaventura exemplifies an MLG mechanism designed to manage investments with a focus on local needs. It fosters development through targeted financing and investments aimed at addressing Buenaventura's most pressing issues, as outlined in the 10-year Special Plan for Integral Development. This plan prioritizes enhancing well-being and advancing socio-economic, institutional, and environmental

progress. The fund is overseen by a committee of seven members, with five representatives from regional and local levels, ensuring robust representation of local interests. This governance structure balances governmental and local stakeholder interests, showcasing an effective model for inclusive multi-level governance.

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can help to address the identified challenges:

#Multi-Level Governance System Map

This tool facilitates the identification of all actors required for inclusion (e.g., relevant local stakeholders essential for inclusion of a local governance essential for inclusion of a local governance mechanism).

#Governance Mechanisms Prototyping

Using this tool, the design of instruments and mechanism includes all relevant actors, especially representatives of vulnerable target groups, to ensure comprehensive inclusion.

#Multi-Level Governance Process Map

This tool maps key actors involved in various activities throughout the MLG implementation process, allowing for an analysis of their involvement and an assessment of the level of inclusion. Adjustments can then be made to enhance participation if needed.

C Enhancing Alignment

How can we align concepts, goals and approaches with the priorities of relevant stakeholders in order to build strong partnerships?

Meaningful, collaborative partnerships across different levels of governance are characterized by aligned interests and priorities, a mutual understanding of challenges, goals, and approaches, and a shared vocabulary. In addressing social issues, political agendas can sometimes overshadow positive outcomes if there is not a common understanding of the objectives. Tensions may emerge between national and sub-national policy priorities, especially when preferences for change differ. This is particularly relevant in young democracies, where national and local governments may be led by different political parties or come from diverse backgrounds, complicating efforts to align on key issues.

Establishing common ground often requires more than just communication; it demands ongoing and open dialogue, co-creative approaches, and shared decision-making authority among government, civil society, and business representatives. These practices

foster a collective understanding and alignment, enhancing the flow of information and promoting joint ownership of both processes and outcomes. In conflict or crisis situations, where trust between parties may be compromised, neutral actors can serve as a bridge to facilitate dialogue. Furthermore, creating a shared understanding of goals, demands and approaches across stakeholders should be viewed as an iterative process, requiring regular updates and reviews to remain effective.

Stakeholder buy-in is critical across all levels of governance and should be integrated into the planning phase of a programme. This involves strategically selecting entry points for discussions and potential partnerships. For example, it is important to address and align with the needs, agendas, and priorities of relevant stakeholders, whether they are from government, local communities, or UNDP.

Building alignment between stakeholders across multiple levels of governance requires careful consideration of the following:

- **Ensuring coherence:** It is particularly important to ensure coherence across MLG interventions. This involves aligning local implementation teams with overarching – often regional, national or international – goals, objectives and approaches, and vice versa.
- **Shared perspective:** Establishing a shared perspective among relevant actors on problems and root causes is important to reduce conflict potential and build trusted relationships.
- **Understanding of stakeholder needs and interests:** Developing a deep understanding of stakeholder needs, agendas, and priorities

facilitates alignment of goals and approaches, paving the way for meaningful collaboration.

- **Shared goals and agreements:** Creating shared goals/agreements involves a collective learning process that requires an iterative, participatory approach to ensure all perspectives are considered, and a common understanding of meaning is possible.
- **Redistributing power:** Adopting a participatory approach often requires redistributing power, which can be challenging. In cases of mistrust, neutral actors (e.g. CSOs) can act as intermediaries to build trust and create alignment.
- **Policy and programmatic coherence:** Achieving policy and programmatic coherence across governance levels can benefit from local facilitators who connect on-the-ground initiatives with overarching strategies, terminologies at different levels, and long-term plans.

In summary, iteratively building alignment among stakeholders at various governance levels is a prerequisite for creating responsive, collaborative and, ultimately, effective MLG interventions.

 **Reflective Questions****Stakeholder alignment**

- Who are the most important decision-makers (formal and informal) at different governance levels for effective alignment on a particular policy issue?
- Which representatives from government, civil society and businesses need to be involved to ensure the legitimacy of our efforts?
- Who are the important change makers who could help foster dialogue?
- Who are relevant actors that may be hard to convince, have conflicting interests and/or might spoil efforts for alignment?
- What are the key issues and decisions (or lack thereof) that are likely to activate potential spoilers?
- What are the needs, agendas and priorities of these actors?
- What are the most promising entry points for generating buy-in? How can we identify and understand these entry points?

→ What is needed to align local implementation with regional, national and/or international priorities?

Collective learning

- How can we establish and maintain an iterative process that allows for regular reflection and development of a shared understanding of goals and demands?
- What are existing governance mechanisms (councils, forums etc.) that can be used for dialogue and co-creation?

→ How can we establish formats and processes that enable dialogue and co-creation to jointly develop goals, concepts and approaches?

→ What incentives and disincentives for action might shape newly established formats and processes intended to address the policy issue under consideration?

Bridging trust

→ Who are potential mediators who could serve as trust bridges between actors with diverging interests or a lack of mutual trust, in order to foster alignment?



Case Examples

Alignment of agreements in Buenaventura, Colombia (2017-2022)

Synthesizing and documenting agreements developed to address local problems in Buenaventura proved challenging due to varying interpretations and views, complicating coordinated and targeted implementation. To tackle this, UNDP in Colombia, along with the regional UNDP SIGOB programme, initiated a more flexible and transparent digital system for recording problems and solutions. They conducted field research through grassroots, evidence-based approach, engaging both key stakeholders and citizens to incorporate a broad range of perspectives into the development agenda. All the collected data was entered into

the digital platform to establish a baseline for monitoring progress. The system was designed to clarify roles and responsibilities within MLG, identify roadmaps for every critical path, establish appropriate methods for verifying task completion, and present diverse levels of data and information. For the system to remain effective, it required regular updates and a clear, consistent communication of its purpose and anticipated outcomes. This approach aimed to foster inclusion and trust throughout the consultation process, ensuring that the system is not perceived as merely an administrative process.



Tools

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can help to address the identified challenges:

#Multi-Level Governance System Map

The map can be used as a co-creative tool for a dialogue between different stakeholders to jointly identify important elements and foster a common understanding of the MLG system.

#Extended Persona

Personas help make information about actors in an MLG system more tangible and foster empathy for different actors or target groups. This approach aids in creating a shared understanding of goals, requirements, and roles.

#Quick Win Generator

This tool helps identify and connect quick wins to broader goals and activities, ensuring that initial, simple interventions contribute effectively to overarching objectives.

#Collaboration Starter

This tool facilitates discussions among stakeholders about goals, needs, challenges, and interests. It helps create a shared understanding, define areas for collaboration, and develop joint strategies and actions.

#Multi-Level Governance Process Map

The map visualizes complex programs and contexts, enhancing communication, promoting mutual understanding, and helping to align processes, interventions, and approaches.

3.3. Establish and Develop RELATIONS among MLG Instances

The challenges, strategies, and case studies in this section address the critical need to establish, understand and strengthen relationships between stakeholders at various levels of governance to create an effective MLG system. This task is particularly daunting in fragile contexts, which often feature weak governance structures, tenuous relationships between key actors, and/or frequent changes of interlocutors and counterparts. This section focuses on establishing MLG connections⁸ between local and higher levels of governance; adapting these connections to evolving environments, including those impacted by conflict or other types of crisis; and sharing and transferring ownership to ensure the sustainability of efforts.

The following challenges will be explored in detail:

- A** **Establishing relevant links across levels of governance;**
- B** **Building for adaptability and compatibility; and**
- C** **Sharing and transferring ownership.**

A Establishing Relevant Links Across Levels of Governance

How can we establish effective MLG constellations that align local and higher-level governance in a way that is both appropriate and impactful within a given context?

Local communities often play a crucial role in responding to emergencies and crises. However, many problems at the local level require support from higher levels of government to be effectively addressed. Conversely, high-level strategies and policies must incorporate local perspectives, interests, and needs to ensure they are relevant and implementable. Effective cross-level collaboration is essential for effective distribution of power and mandates, enabling

the optimal flow of information, establishing accountability, building trust, and empowering local action. Identifying and establishing effective links between different governance levels can be challenging, particularly in terms of ensuring that these connections are both contextually relevant and effective. Adopting the principle of subsidiarity can help by ensuring decisions are made as close to the citizens as possible, leading to more context-sensitive and impactful solutions.

⁸ An instance of MLG refers to a specific actor configuration or governance mechanism that includes actors across governance levels. It can occur in any type of political system. Instances of MLG can be isolated elements or a part of larger MLG systems.

To enable local communities to respond effectively to crises and emergencies, it is crucial to establish well-functioning vertical and horizontal linkages and collaborative mechanisms that involve relevant actors across different levels of governance.

In this context, the following points should be considered:

- Building relationships requires significant resources and time. Therefore, it is essential to carefully evaluate which relationships are most critical for solving specific problems, particularly in crisis situations where swift action is necessary to provide immediate support to citizens.
- Effective collaboration between actors, both horizontally and vertically, often hinges on the strong personal commitment of key figures (gatekeepers) within the governmental administration. Therefore, it is crucial not only to identify relevant levels and institutions but also to pinpoint individual stakeholders who can drive collaboration.
- Given that contexts, problems and actors are continually evolving, especially in crisis situations, ongoing learning and adaptation are essential to remain responsive to changes.

- Gaining commitment from higher-level government officials can become increasingly difficult as initiatives progress. Therefore, it is important to establish links, information flows and governance mechanisms between different governance levels (especially with the highest relevant level) as early as possible.
- Involving government representatives early can foster greater acceptance and reduce barriers. However, it may also limit opportunities for open experimentation.
- Utilizing existing governance mechanisms, when available, can be more efficient. During a crisis, strategic relationship-building often needs to happen alongside immediate response efforts and support for local populations.

In summary, establishing relationships and collaboration mechanisms requires careful planning and early initiation. Attracting the right government levels and key individuals is essential for addressing policy issues effectively and empowering local action. Leveraging existing governance mechanisms can enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

 **Reflective Questions****Stakeholder and target groups**

- Who are the relevant stakeholders to be included in the project?
- What are their relevant interests and what incentives/disincentives will influence their desire to work across governance levels?
- How can we gain access to important communities?
- Which stakeholder groups are typically overlooked and what factors need to be

leveraged or mitigated to strengthen their engagement and consideration of their perspectives?

Governance level

- Are the relevant policy issues being discussed and developed at the appropriate governance levels? If not, why not? What incentives could be leveraged to make this more likely?
- What are the highest-tier stakeholders we need to include to create legitimacy and buy-in across governance levels and throughout

the project? What are their incentives or disincentives for engaging and how can we encourage their participation?

- Who are the central figures and gatekeepers across the stakeholder landscape, and how can we make sure to include them in the process?
- Do different governance levels possess adequate capacities to effectively engage in a given initiative?

Existing and missing infrastructures

- What are already existing and functioning mechanisms for cross-level collaboration that could be leveraged to address a given policy issue?

- What are missing links and much needed governance mechanisms that are lacking?

Mechanisms for cross-level collaboration

- What are the responsibilities and tasks of collaboration mechanisms across levels of governance?
- Which actors make up the mechanisms and what are their interests in participating?
- What are the mechanisms' modalities of operation?
- What incentives and disincentives shape mechanisms (existing or new) and should therefore be leveraged or mitigated to enable cross-level collaboration?



Case Examples

Establishing a cross-border coordination mechanism while solving the most urgent problems at local levels in the Lake Chad Basin (2018-2023)

In the Lake Chad Basin region, efforts to implement the RSS were initiated at various levels and paces to enable a holistic and sustainable approach. Immediate stabilization was achieved in 15 municipalities through the creation of Joint Action Plans (JAPs), which outlined measures to provide basic security, infrastructure, and

services. At the regional level, Territorial Action Plans (TAPs) were developed to operationalize and scale up the RSS implementation. These TAPs were harmonised and coordinated across borders among the eight regions through the Governors' Forum, a cross-border coordination mechanism.

Establishing a governance mechanism between national government and local groups to integrate citizen demands in policy design in Buenaventura, Colombia (2017-2022)

In Buenaventura, a direct, locally based problem-solving mechanism was established to facilitate collaboration between the government and the community, bypassing local and regional government bodies. This mechanism introduced roundtables as a novel forum for direct dialogue between national and local stakeholders, complementing traditional governmental interaction. With new rules, a broader range

of actors, and specific goals derived from a shared overarching objective, these roundtables created an environment conducive to negotiating technical and political agreements. These agreements contributed to the formulation of the Law for Buenaventura, thereby exerting nationwide influence and affecting budget allocation processes.

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can help address the outlined challenges:

#Multi-level Governance System Map

This tool helps explore existing and missing links between actors to identify opportunities and problems in an MLG system that need to be solved. The map can also be used to draft a first system prototype to address the identified challenges.

#Extended Persona

Roles, mandates, and existing relationships with other actors can be analysed to identify relevant actors to act as a link between different levels of government.

#Collaboration Starter

This tool helps identify shared interests between actors across governance levels, to foster links between levels of governance.

#Governance Mechanisms Prototyping

By defining governance mechanisms that involve actors across governance levels (e.g., representatives from different government levels, civil society and businesses), links between these levels are established to allow flows of information and collaboration.

#Multi-level Governance Process Map

This tool enables the visualization of key activities across various levels of governance (local, regional, national and supra-national) and facilitates the analysis and planning of cross-level interventions.

→ **More information:**

→ [ODD16 - Mécanismes de Gouvernance - Version validée par le Comité de pilotage](#)

B Building for Adaptability and Compatibility

How can we establish, change or navigate organizational structures, institutional logics and funding schemes of MLG approaches to accommodate changing environments and contexts?

In crisis and emergency situations, rapid and ongoing contextual changes are common, driven by external factors and the evolving nature of problem-solving, which impacts people's behaviour, institutional functions, and governance structures. Critical infrastructures for MLG – including governance mechanisms, tools, technologies, networks, and relationships – must be adaptable to these dynamic environments. That said, these infrastructures should not only address current problems but also be designed to handle

future, potentially unforeseen challenges. Flexible and modular infrastructures enhance the long-term viability of MLG mechanisms. The ever-changing environment often necessitates innovative approaches (as outlined in Chapter 2). For example, portfolio or platform approaches that do not follow a linear project logic can offer adaptable solutions tailored to evolving contexts within the MLG ecosystem. To support such innovative or experimental approaches, increased flexibility in funding, planning, and reporting is essential.

MLG infrastructures must be built in a way that allows them to respond to changing conditions. This means that the individual elements of the infrastructure (such as funding, governance mechanisms, relationships, solutions, etc.) must be adaptable – for example by adjusting project goals and objectives or modifying the membership of governance mechanisms.

When building adaptable MLG infrastructures, the following lessons should be considered:

- **Embrace iterative processes:** Navigating complex contexts often requires iterative cycles of building, testing, and learning, rather than comprehensive upfront planning. Regular evaluation and reflection at various levels of a program are essential to recognize and adapt to changing conditions effectively.
- **Overcome linear constraints:** Planning and/or designing for flexibility and adaptability is challenging due to the linear nature of many established mechanisms for managing, evaluating, and funding programs. Practitioners need to translate iterative approaches into fundable and manageable projects, while maintaining the interconnectedness of the broader portfolio.
- **Build resilient support structures:** Non-linear approaches in international development are often supported by senior staff who create spaces for experimentation. To ensure sustainable innovation, more resilient support structures are needed that provide

stability beyond the discretion of individual senior managers and/or top-tier government officials.

- **Foster self-organisation:** Incorporating elements of self-organization can enhance the flexibility of MLG infrastructures. For instance, in Buenaventura (Colombia), roundtables divided problems into themes and delegated decision-making to groups that could make decisions independently, thereby increasing flexibility and efficiency in developing agreements between local population groups and national authorities.
- **Design for system-wide adaptability:** Adaptability should not be targeted at individual MLG instances but also at the design of the MLG system itself. Adopting and further developing portfolio and platform approaches can create more flexible MLG systems, leading to development interventions that are contextually sound, effective, and sustained by a shared sense of ownership.

In sum, iterative approaches are crucial for building adaptive MLG infrastructures. These approaches often conflict with traditional programme management practices, necessitating more flexible funding, management, reporting schemes, as well as resilient support structures. Portfolio and platform approaches can foster flexible and adaptable MLG systems.

 **Reflective Questions****Nonlinear approaches**

- How can we integrate agile political economy analysis, on a continuing basis, into programme design and implementation?
- What are useful build-test-learn loops at the various programme levels to enable continuous learning?

- How can we translate nonlinear interventions into fundable and manageable projects?
- How can we establish new approaches like portfolios and platforms that also allow for more flexible MLG solutions?

Dynamic evaluation

- Which monitoring and evaluation tools will help (a) initially identify potential risks, (b) detect early changes in the project environment, and (c) inform adaptive management during implementation?

Flexible funding

- What funding instruments allow for maximum flexibility?

- How do we demonstrate the value of this flexibility to donors and relevant UNDP units?

Flexible Organizations

- How do we introduce aspects of self-organization to increase the flexibility and adaptability of infrastructures?
- How do we help design governance mechanisms that are flexible and open to new/changing actors?



Case Examples

Grant support programmes as flexible local funding instruments in Ukraine (2016-2021)

Idea competitions or challenges prizes are effective tools for driving social innovation in all kinds of contexts. In the conflict-affected areas of Luhansk and Donetsk, Ukraine, local grant support programmes were integrated with participatory budgeting mechanisms. This approach enabled citizens to vote on the ideas they wish to see funded and implemented, with resources

allocated to address pressing local challenges. This flexible mechanism allowed for adjustments to changing local conditions. Furthermore, it transformed the funding programme into a means of strengthening local initiatives and problem-solving, enhancing citizen participation in budgetary decisions and fostering transparency and trust.

Lacking adaptability of the strike committee in Buenaventura, Colombia (2017-2022)

The strike committee of Buenaventura is a good example of a governance mechanism that fosters collaboration across governance levels. It was established as a democratic system to elect representatives, coordinators, and spokespersons, to liaise above and below the structure of the central committee. This structure managed to deliver good results in terms of negotiation, offering a holistic approach

to addressing community needs. However, the committee's long-term effectiveness was compromised, as it did not recognize the importance of including new actors (e.g. youth representatives) and periodically reviewing and adapting its agenda. This oversight led to a decline in the engagement of associated organizations.



Tools

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can help address the outlined challenges:

#Quick Win Generator

The interventions developed with this tool can be used as a test base for solutions that are still easy to adapt and thus can form an initial adaptable infrastructure for MLG.

#Collaboration Starter

The tool can be used throughout a development process to iteratively capture changing objectives and adapt strategies and interventions.

#Multi-level Governance Process Map

Mapping and analysing existing activities enable collaborative learning and adaptation of processes and MLG approaches.

How can we foster the transfer and sharing of ownership and responsibility throughout the crisis response, recovery, and development process, using MLG approaches to ensure process sustainability beyond project boundaries?

Traditional project models often constrain sustainability by imposing top-down efforts that rely on stable institutional factors such as budgets, staffing, and priorities. Consequently, many projects have limited lifespans, ending abruptly due to donor withdrawal or shift in programming focus. In contrast, MLG approaches can significantly improve the sustainability of initiatives by involving a diverse array of stakeholders (e.g. across different levels of government, development partners, but also local communities). This inclusive involvement fosters greater ownership and adopting of solutions, thereby enhancing the longevity and impact of the efforts beyond the immediate project timeline. This approach can create additional layers of confidence and continuity by facilitating widespread adoption (and shared responsibility) for problem definitions, process designs, and proposed solutions. Participatory design or

co-creation (as outlined in Chapter 2) offer relevant methods for fostering shared ownership, which is crucial for achieving successful and sustainable outcomes. Engaging stakeholders and distributing responsibilities and investments across activities can strengthen relationships, build trust, reduce barriers, and open pathways for implementation and scaling of solutions. It can also render initiatives more resilient and prevent the process from disintegrating if individual partners end their engagement. Notwithstanding, the successful coordination of such stakeholder constellations relies on the presence of supportive infrastructures (including mental models, capacities, funding, tools). Moreover, the role of UNDP in co-developing solutions must be carefully managed. If UNDP's involvement is perceived as too dominant, it could undermine local ownership and adoption of the solutions.

 **Insights**

MLG approaches have the potential to foster ownership and adoption of solutions by ensuring consistent participation from various stakeholders across different governance levels.

To facilitate the transfer and sharing of ownership in MLG setups, the following considerations are relevant:

- **Integrate ownership and exit strategies early on:** Programmes using MLG approaches should incorporate questions about ownership, the future role of UNDP and other development partners, and concrete exit strategies from the outset. This proactive approach enables practitioners to implement and advocate for relevant measures early, manage resources (footprint, bandwidth, staff capacities, etc.) efficiently, and build

stakeholder relationships across governance levels, development partners, and local communities.

- **Leverage participatory approaches:** Distributing responsibility and investment throughout the process and among various stakeholders can enhance confidence, continuity and commitment. Co-creating solutions with relevant stakeholders and target groups improves result quality and mitigates the “not-invented-here-syndrome”.
- **Assess and build capacity:** Ownership involves not only understanding and willingness but also the necessary skills, capital, and capacities. Local actors and communities, as essential stakeholders, often lack systemic capacities. Identifying existing capacities and determining the

needs of different stakeholder groups are crucial for enabling effective engagement in development, implementation, and sustainability of solutions.

- **Promote continuous and collective learning:** Shared ownership requires ongoing, collective learning. Whether identifying pressing community issues or reflecting on solutions during testing, a participatory MLG approach that fosters collective sense-making is vital for effective collaboration.
- **Facilitate impact scaling:** Ownership is key to scaling impact. Whether institutionalizing solutions politically or replicating them regionally, scaling impact is always based on collective action, which works more efficiently if ownership is transferred correctly. While external actors like UNDP are often needed

to initiate change, reducing dependency over time ensures sustainability even after funding and other support mechanisms end.

- **Adopt a facilitator role:** Following contemporary innovation platform approaches, UNDP should act as a facilitator that empowers different actors to start, implement, and sustain initiatives and solutions, while minimizing dependency on external support (also see Chapter 2).

In summary, addressing ownership and adoption of solutions should start in early phases of a programme with clear exit strategies. MLG frameworks support shared ownership by enabling participatory and co-creative processes, building stakeholder capacities, and fostering collective learning.



Reflective Questions

Stakeholder participation

- Which actors need to be involved, informed and convinced throughout the development process to make the initiative successful, including through adoption of key strategic decisions?
- What are the interests, concerns, incentives and disincentives of these actors, that affect the likelihood of success?
- Which groups or individuals must be brought on board to generate the needed trust and credibility in the most relevant communities and other stakeholder groups?
- What are the interests, concerns, incentives and disincentives of these groups, that affect the success of trust-building interventions?

Roles and mandates

- Is ownership and investment in the project evenly distributed across relevant governance levels?
- How can programmatic action avoid excessive, and possibly paralyzing, dependence on one or few individual partners and rather stimulate broad-based alliances?

Scalability

- What is the ecosystem within which programmatic actions and solutions are developed?
- What are potential pathways for implementing and scaling solutions? Who are the relevant actors within these pathways?
- What capacity or resource constraints may limit scalability?
- What political and policy considerations may limit scalability? How can these be overcome through understanding stakeholder interests, incentives and disincentives for action?

Capacities

- What are the existing capacities (especially on the local level) for taking over ownership for initiatives and solutions?
- Which capacities need to be built to increase independence of initiatives?

Role of UNDP

- What are strategies and approaches to reduce the role of external development partners like UNDP?

- Are the exit strategy/ies for UNDP and other international development partners sufficiently clear and communicated?
- What shifts in power, mechanisms of accountability and realignment of interests

need to be actioned before UNDP can withdraw? What happens if this does not occur by the project end?



Case Examples

Strategy development as a participatory process at regional and transnational levels in the Lake Chad Basin region (2018-2023)

In the Lake Chad Basin region, the development of TAPs for implementing the RSS serves as a model for regional and transnational participation. Governors are tasked with designing and implementing the TAPs, ensuring their alignment with local and national development plans, as well as harmonisation with TAPs from neighbouring regions. This approach fosters regional ownership and commitment. The process of preparing TAPs,

supported by UNDP, was highly participatory. It involved a diverse array of stakeholders (local communities, ministry delegates, mayors, traditional leaders, CSOs, humanitarian agencies etc.) through “pillar working groups”. These groups played a crucial role in adapting and operationalising the RSS pillars within the regional and local contexts.

User surveys as a tool of MLG to foster ownership in Tunisia (2017-2023)

In Tunisia, UNDP conducted surveys at the start and end of project to gauge users’ perceptions of the justice system. The results revealed persistently low trust and identified key factors contributing to this sentiment. The Ministry of Justice acknowledged the report’s significance in shaping a new strategic vision and action plan for justice sector reform. A distinctive aspect of the survey was the Ministry of Justice’s involvement throughout the process, despite challenges like staff turnover. Rather than collaborating with a traditional statistics institute, the project partnered with the Centre of Judiciary and Judicial Studies. This allowed legal experts to collect data directly from justice users and prison inmates, fostering dialogue between service providers and users and supporting a bottom-up approach to citizen-centred policymaking. This survey design exemplifies the role of multi-level governance when effectively executed. Engaging a government institution throughout the survey process ensures ownership of the results, facilitating the integration of user perspectives into policymaking. Involving legal public servants

in data collection enhances the process’s ability to generate dialogue and build trust, bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up governance. This approach not only provides valuable insights for policy formulation but also strengthens relationships between stakeholders and deepens understanding of users’ realities. By connecting decision-makers with citizens, the survey plays a crucial role in advancing effective governance practices at multiple levels.

The following tools from Chapter 4, *Tools for Navigating MLG*, can be used to address the outlined challenges:

#Quick Win Generator

This tool allows to involve diverse actors (e.g. local community representatives) in developing interventions co-creatively. It can foster trust, lower barriers, and open pathways for implementation.

#Governance Mechanisms Prototyping

This tool allows to develop governance mechanisms in co-creative setups and to involve experts and authorities, enabling direct buy-in.

#Multi-Level Governance Process Map

This tool can be used in dialogue with stakeholders, allowing to plan involvement in the process and create buy-in.

→ **More information:**

- [Ia Caixa Banking Foundation: Platforms that trigger innovation – a new approach for international development \(2018\)](#)

04.

Tools for Navigating MLG

The tools presented here are inspired by methods and processes from the fields of social innovation, human-centred design and digital innovation, and have been developed against the backdrop of the insights and challenges compiled in the MLG case study research.

The featured tools provide pragmatic and easy-to-use methods for practitioners to address the identified MLG challenges. Moreover, the tools were designed to be applicable at different stages of programme development and can be used for both co-creative setups involving different

stakeholders as well as for purely internal use, for example to inform programmatic design and implementation support.

In conclusion, there are many ways to use the tools and populate them with information. The quality of the information, including the degree to which political dynamics are considered, will largely determine the quality of the results that can be achieved with the tools. To ensure the quality of information and results, the following approaches can be helpful in facilitating tool use:



Focus on Collective Learning

The central goal of using these tools should be collective and continuous learning. This means that the information you use for the tools and the results you achieve through the tools should be questioned and tested constantly. It is perfectly okay to work with hypothetical assumptions if you are aware of them and your goal is to validate them. The bottom line is that you should

constantly go through larger and smaller learning loops where you collect information, test it and adapt accordingly. Ensure that relevant stakeholders are involved in this learning process or that they manage such learning processes themselves, with the support of UNDP as needed, to enhance understanding and ownership.



Promote Participation and Co-Creation

The tools are designed for co-creative processes where results are developed collaboratively with diverse stakeholders with the support of a facilitator. To maximize the effectiveness of co-creation, it is important to ensure all stakeholders, including vulnerable groups, have ample opportunities to voice their perspectives and that their input is clearly understood by everyone involved. While consensus is important, it is equally valuable to consider and document

divergent viewpoints. Large workshops with all stakeholders may not always be effective, as they can lead to dilution of individual perspectives or discourage open expression, often reinforcing existing hierarchies. Smaller, focused work sessions or bilateral discussions can be a more effective, providing a more intimate setting where all participants feel comfortable sharing their views and contributing to the dialogue.

Box 8: Politically Smart MLG

The tools also aim to generate ‘politically smart’ MLG insights to inform programme development and implementation. To do this, they draw from Political Economy Analysis, which focuses on understanding the main actors and the power they hold in a given system, along with their incentives and disincentives to act, the ways that these actors bargain for outcomes, and the wider contextual factors that shape the outcomes. This form of political analysis has become increasingly important in governance – and other development – programming, as learning has shown that purely technical programming often fails given the lack of engagement with political realities. Political economy analysis, in turn, helps policymakers and practitioners understand the ‘rules of the game’ that reproduce the status quo or drive change in a system. This is a critical precondition for identifying what changes are possible in an MLG system and how best to go about delivering them.



Be People- and Impact-centred

The primary objective of all MLG measures is to achieve positive impact for the affected populations. The tools employed should align with this goal, emphasizing the importance of addressing the core problems and achieving the desired impacts. It is crucial that the problems to be solved and the impact goals are clearly defined and shared among key stakeholders and

validated with the target groups who are directly affected. When using these tools, conflict may arise between differing perspectives or during decision-making processes. In such cases, it is beneficial to refer to the underlying problem or impact goal. This focus ensures that decisions are impact-oriented rather than interest-driven.

4.1. Tool #01: Multi-Level Governance System Map

Difficulty level: Moderate

Participants: Project team, stakeholders, experts

Objective

→ To map the status of an MLG system (actors, roles, relationships, etc.).

→ To identify missing links, barriers, dependencies and/or power dynamics between actors, map existing infrastructures, such as existing governance mechanisms, detecting important gatekeepers and critics.

Description

The MLG System Map is a living document that is utilised throughout the various phases of a programme. It serves multiple purposes, including analysing existing systems, prototyping new governance elements, and monitoring newly implemented governance structures. The map visually represents a range of actors, institutions, and infrastructures (government entities, civil society organisations, businesses, and UNDP) across different governance levels

(local, sub-national, national and supranational). It delineates both existing and potential relationships between these actors, highlighting both existing and missing links. It also provides a detailed analysis and documentation of the most relevant governance mechanisms, offering a comprehensive overview of the system's structure and its interactions.

How the tool addresses the identified challenges

#demand: The most important actors within the MLG system can be identified and selected to create personas and/or value propositions. This helps to clearly communicate the benefits of the programme or approach and build enthusiasm for engaging in MLG processes.

#existing structures: Existing structures (governance mechanisms, CSO networks, etc.) can be identified across various governance levels and repurposed to enhance links and collaboration among actors, thereby expanding and strengthening the MLG system.

#cross-level links: Existing and missing links between actors can be explored to identify opportunities and challenges within the MLG system. The map can also be used to draft an initial system prototype that addresses these identified issues.

#alignment: The map can be used as a co-creative tool to facilitate dialogue among different stakeholders. This helps to collaboratively identify and agree on important elements of the MLG system, fostering a shared understanding and alignment.

#inclusion: All actors required for inclusion can be identified (e.g., relevant local stakeholders, to ensure comprehensive participation in local governance mechanisms) to enhance the effectiveness of the MLG system.

○○○ How it works

Step 1

Define the scope

Define the scope (problem, challenge, policy issue etc.) of your analysis of the MLG system. Take note of identified political risks and constraints.

Step 2

Identify actors

Identify relevant stakeholders related to the defined scope. These are actors who have some influence on the problem, challenge, or policy issue (people affected by the problem, institutions responsible for a particular policy issue, etc.). Think of actors from different sectors (civil society, government, business) and assign them to the respective governance levels (supranational, national, regional, local). Look out for informal actors (e.g., informal community leaders, important gatekeepers, social influencers, etc.). Add important existing governance mechanisms (e.g. committees, councils, forums, etc.). Do not forget to map UNDP instances as well.

Step 3

Define relationships and power dynamics

Indicate the influence of an actor by the size of the circle you draw for it. Define the relationships between the actors by drawing arrows according to the legend on the tool. Describe the values that are exchanged between the actors, e.g. resources, money, information, etc. Add incentives for actors to engage with each other and barriers to mutual collaboration (especially for government actors).

For a deeper insight into the attitudes of key actors, it is recommended to combine this tool with the **Extended Persona** tool.

Step 4

Describe governance mechanisms

Select the most relevant governance mechanisms and describe them in more detail using the templates in the lower part of the tool.

Step 5

Identify problems and opportunities

Identify problems and opportunities (e.g., non-existing or broken relationships between actors, missing or non-functioning governance mechanisms) and highlight them in the map. Use your reflection to identify entry points for UNDP and describe its role in intervening in the system.



Helpful extension of the tool

Step 6

Detect special actors

Highlight specific stakeholders, such as key gatekeepers you need to carefully engage or critics you need to convince.

Step 7

Add potential actors and mechanisms

Map existing actors, mechanisms and/or funds etc. that are not involved yet but could add value to improve the MLG system.

Step 8

Ideate governance mechanisms

Add ideas for new governance mechanisms that could help to overcome problems or leverage opportunities.



Cross-references

This tool can be combined with the **Extended Persona** tool. The *Multi-level Governance System Map* helps to identify key actors within the MLG system. Personas can be created for key

stakeholders, e.g. to define a value proposition to better convince these stakeholders, or to define a future role and think about the skills and capacities required for it, etc.

Multilevel Governance System Map

1 Problem / Challenge

What is the problem or challenge? Please formulate the problem or challenge from the beneficiaries' perspective!

Map Elements

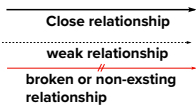
2 Actors

Types of actors (government, civic society, business, governance mechanisms, UNDP) on different governance levels



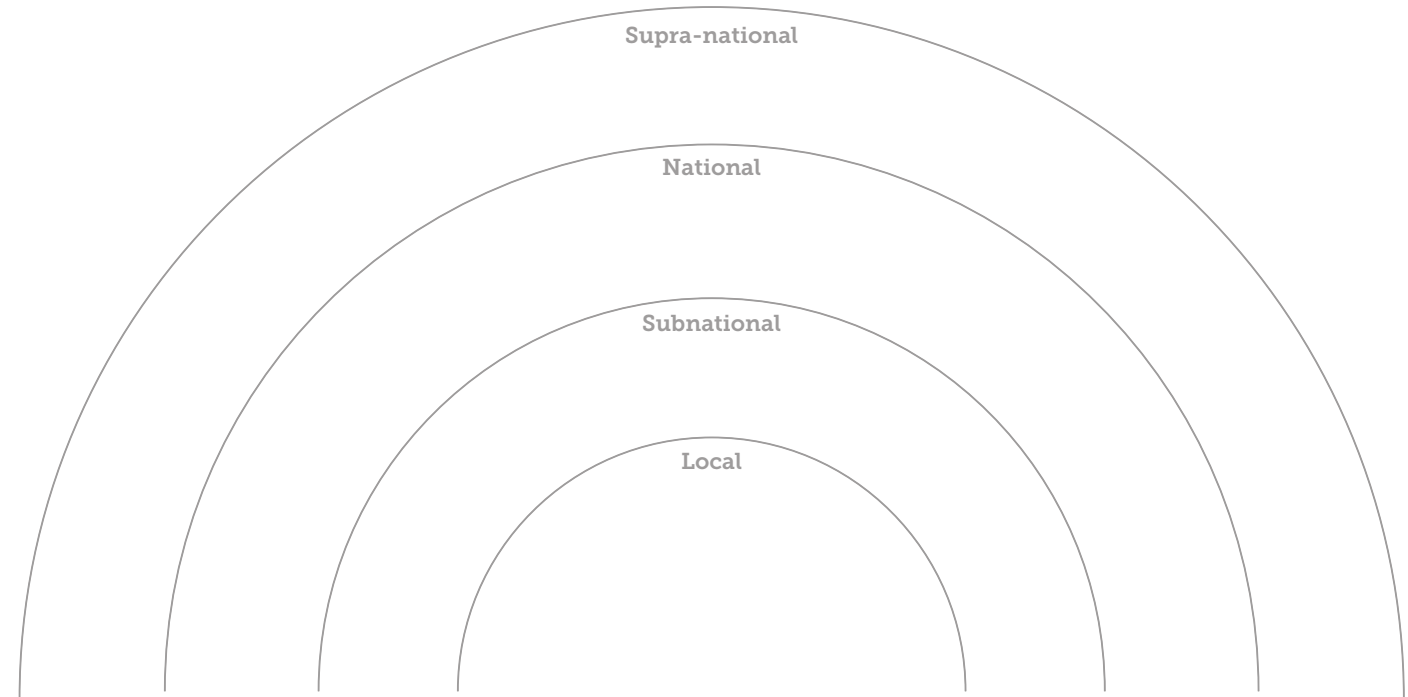
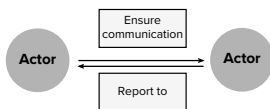
3 Relationships

Type: e.g. close relationship, weak relationship, broken relationship



3 Power Dynamics

Which values are exchanged between the actors, e.g. resources, money, information etc.



4 Governance Mechanisms

Name / description

Responsibilities & tasks

Actor composition

Name / description

Responsibilities & tasks

Actor composition

Name / description

Responsibilities & tasks

Actor composition

Name / description

Responsibilities & tasks

Actor composition

Name / description

Responsibilities & tasks

Actor composition

4.2. Tool #02: Extended Persona

Difficulty level: Easy

Participants: Project team, experts

Objective

→ To understand and continuously update the needs and perspectives of important actors.

→ To make information about actors tangible, to develop need-based value propositions, arguments and solutions for this target group.

Description

The extended persona is a tool designed to offer a comprehensive profile of relevant actors within the MLG system, enabling a deeper understanding and empathy towards their perspectives. Unlike traditional personas, the extended persona collects additional, context-specific information crucial for MLG, such as roles, mandates, existing relationships, gaps in capabilities, preferred communication channels, needs, deal breakers, etc. This tool can be tailored to fit specific scenarios, such as capacity-building

initiatives, by focusing on the most pertinent information for that particular application. It can be used to transform research findings into a practical and actionable format for various stakeholders, facilitating the collection of existing knowledge and allowing for hypothetical scenario planning. Its versatility makes it particularly valuable in co-creative environments, where it can help to align stakeholders' understanding and foster collaboration.

Personas

Personas are archetypal representations of target group, crafted from qualitative insights to bring abstract study findings into a more tangible form. They focus on the motivations, needs, and behaviours of real people, making these elements central to a project's design and development. Although personas themselves are fictional constructs, they reflect genuine motivations and

behaviours. This realism allows them to serve as valuable tools for empathy, helping project teams to better understand and relate to their target audiences. Additionally, personas are highly effective in the ideation process, providing inspiration and guiding the creation of solutions that are more aligned with the needs and experiences of the intended users.

How the tool addresses the identified challenges

#demand: The goals, gains and pains of various actors are captured and analysed. Based on this information, a value proposition can be developed to clearly communicate the benefits of the programme or approach, fostering enthusiasm and engagement with MLG processes.

#skills: The existing mindsets and skill sets of actors can be captured and any gaps in capacities can be identified. This way, the persona can also be used to design needs-based capacity-building programmes that support the effective implementation of MLG approaches.

#alignment: Personas help to make information about actors in the MLG system more tangible, fostering empathy and a shared understanding of goals, requirements, and roles. This helps align stakeholders and clarify their contributions to the process.

#cross-level links: Roles, mandates, and existing relationships of actors can be analysed to identify key actors who can serve as links between different levels of government.

#transparency and accessibility: Personas translate insights or existing knowledge about stakeholder groups into an easy-to-understand and easy-to-work-with format. Personas can be co-created, encouraging shared learning.

○○○ How it works

Step 1

Definition of the persona purpose

Define the purpose of the persona. e.g. do you want to develop a persona to create a value proposition for better integration into MLG activities? Do you want to define capacity development to transform roles and behaviours to enable MLG approaches? Do you want to develop a communication strategy to create an optimal flow of information within the MLG system?

Step 2

Gather information

Gather insights about the persona you want to create. Insights can be derived from different sources like existing knowledge, interviews and surveys, workshops etc. Review the information and collect the most relevant insights.

Step 3

Create the persona

Now transfer the collected core insights into the persona template in the form of goals, gains and pains, etc. Make sure that the picture is as consistent as possible without major contradictions. If there are too many contradictions, this points to the need to create another persona. In this case consider if it would help you to create two different personas. Fill in the additional sections depending on the purpose for which the persona is used.

Finally, review the persona you have developed and formulate your value proposition to the persona.

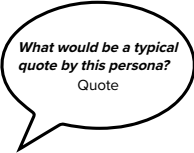













Cross-references

→ This tool can be combined with the **Collaboration Starter**. Actors can fill out personas to clearly define their roles and mandates in relation to the identified topic or problem.

→ This tool can be combined with the **Multi-level Governance System Map**, which helps to identify key actors within the MLG system. Personas can be created for key stakeholders, e.g. to define a value proposition to better convince these stakeholders, or to define a future role and think about the skills and capacities required for it, etc.

Extended Persona

Title Give the persona a descriptive title ...		Goals What are the central tasks and/or problems the persona has to deal with, solve or satisfy? What are the persona's goals?	Pains What frustrates the persona the most? What fears or problems does the persona have? What obstacles must this persona overcome?
Purpose What purpose you want to develop the persona for (e.g. capacity building, communication strategy, value proposition etc.) ...			
Role What are the role, mandate and responsibilities of the persona in the context of the multi-level governance system?  ...		Gains What would make the persona satisfied or even excited? What would be particularly useful for them?	Value Proposition What specific added value do we provide to this very persona with our solution?
Relationships to Relevant Actors What are the persona's core relationships to other relevant actors in the multi-level governance system?  ...			
Additional Information			
Mind- and Skillset What is the existing mind- and skillset of the persona? What capacities are lacking and need to be developed?  ...	Communication Preferences How does the persona communicate? Which communication channels and formats are preferred?  ...	Add your information here ...  ...	Add your information here ...  ...

4.3. Tool #03: Quick Win Generator

Difficulty level: Moderate

Participants: Project team, stakeholders, experts



Objective

→ To identify easy-to-implement interventions that convince actors of the impact that inclusive, bottom-up MLG approaches can have.

→ To build initial, adaptable infrastructures for MLG.



Description

This tool assists in translating broad goals and activities (derived from frameworks such as a Theory of Change, or a needs analysis) into easy-to-implement demonstrator projects known as “quick wins”. These quick wins serve as practical experiments to showcase the benefits of inclusive, bottom-up MLG approaches and validate their impact. By implementing these quick wins, you can foster dialogue and build trust among

stakeholders, while generating interest and demand for these approaches. Connecting quick wins to overarching goals ensures that these initial simple interventions contribute to broader objectives and lay the groundwork for developing more comprehensive infrastructures. This tool can be used in a co-creative setup, enabling the involvement of relevant actors throughout the process.

Box 9: Opportunity Areas

Opportunity areas are needs or insights that are reformulated into generative, solution-oriented impulse questions, usually “How can we...” questions. Opportunity areas do not provide concrete solutions but open a solution space in which diverse ideas can be developed.

Correct:

How can we involve citizens in developing local measures to improve community security?

Wrong:

How can we establish community security working groups to improve community safety?



How the tool addresses the identified challenges

#demand: Easy-to-implement demonstrator projects (quick wins) identified with this tool can create initial evidence in favour of MLG approaches, help to convince stakeholders of the approach and create demand.

#alignment: By connecting quick wins to broader goals and activities, it can be ensured that these initial simple interventions pay off on the overall goals.

#adaptability: Interventions developed with this tool can be used as a test base for solutions that are still easy to adapt and thus can form an initial adaptable infrastructure for MLG.

#ownership: The tool facilitates the involvement of diverse actors (e.g., local community representatives) in co-creating interventions. As such, it can foster trust, lower barriers and open pathways for implementation.

○○○ How it works

Step 1

Define scope

Define the problem/challenge you want to solve. Take note of identified political risks and constraints.

Step 2

Define opportunity areas and solutions

Identify opportunities for impactful solutions that relate to your problem or challenge. Formulate the opportunity areas as “How can we...” questions. If you have researched target group needs, you can use the key findings as a basis for generating opportunity areas. If there is already an existing Theory of Change, you can also use it as a basis for your brainstorming. Conduct a short brainstorming for each opportunity area to ideate solutions. When thinking about solutions, also think about how to minimize political risks, how to shape relationships and incentivize or motivate actors. If you have multiple solutions, vote to determine the best 1-2 solutions per opportunity area.

Step 3

Evaluate solutions

Evaluate the solutions by assigning them to the matrix according to effort and impact. Briefly discuss which criteria you will use to evaluate effort and impact. In particular, you should focus on the political dimension. Solutions that are rated with low effort and high impact are potential quick wins.

Step 4

Develop quick wins

Select the 2-3 most promising solutions with quick win potential and create a concrete intervention for them using the template. The easiest way is to first develop the description of the solution and then add the aspects about target groups, actors and impact. Visualization is an additional important layer of information and often helps to concretize a solution. A concise title makes the solution easy to communicate.



Cross-references

→ This tool can also be combined with the **Collaboration Starter** to identify quick wins for first joint activities.

→ This tool can also be combined with the **Extended Persona**. A persona allows one to empathize with a target group or actor and to think and design solutions from their perspective.

Multilevel Governance Toolkit

Quick Win Generator

1 Problem / Challenge

What is the problem or challenge? Please formulate the problem or challenge from the beneficiaries' perspective

Describe the problem or challenge...

2 Solutions

Opportunity area

How might we ...?

Solutions

Opportunity area

How might we ...?

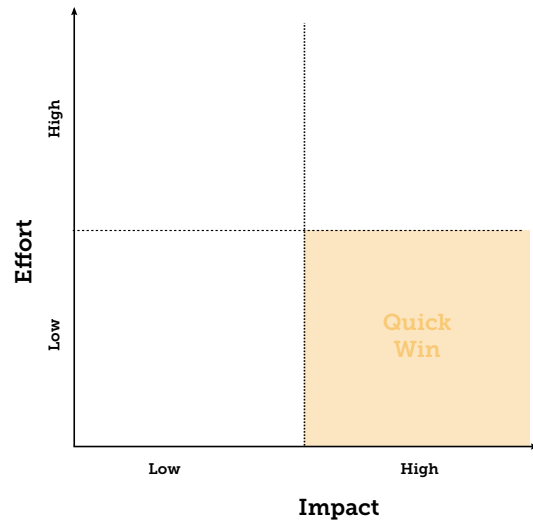
Solutions

Opportunity area

How might we ...?

Solutions

3 Evaluation



4 Quick Wins

Title <i>What is the name of your idea?</i>		Visualization Please paint, draw or sketch your idea.	
Description Please describe the core of your idea in 2-3 sentences.			
Target Group <i>Who benefits directly from your idea?</i>	Actors <i>Which actors do you need to provide your solution?</i>	Impact <i>What social problem does your idea have a positive effect on? What can change in long-term in society through your actions?</i>	
<i>Added value for target group: What benefit is created for the target group? Which problem of the target group is solved?</i>	<i>Added value for actors: What benefits is created for the actors? What interest of the actors is addressed?</i>		

Title <i>What is the name of your idea?</i>		Visualization Please paint, draw or sketch your idea.	
Description Please describe the core of your idea in 2-3 sentences.			
Target Group <i>Who benefits directly from your idea?</i>	Actors <i>Which actors do you need to provide your solution?</i>	Impact <i>What social problem does your idea have a positive effect on? What can change in long-term in society through your actions?</i>	
<i>Added value for target group: What benefit is created for the target group? Which problem of the target group is solved?</i>	<i>Added value for actors: What benefits is created for the actors? What interest of the actors is addressed?</i>		

4.4. Tool #04: Collaboration Starter

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Participants: Project team, actors across governance level

Objective

→ To align goals, needs, challenges, and interests among actors across governance levels to define areas of collaboration and responsibilities.

→ To establish joint projects or interventions for collaboration with relevant actors.

Description

This tool helps to pinpoint common goals, needs, challenges and interests of different stakeholders, to define overlaps. Based on these overlaps, the tool helps to define collaboration areas and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each actor. This tool can be a general starting point to foster cross-level collaboration within an MLG approach. The results can be used as inputs for the system map or persona, and to develop a shared strategy

or identify MLG interventions. It is particularly effective in co-creative settings where active stakeholder engagement is encouraged, but it can also serve as a valuable analytical instrument. It can be used throughout different phases of development as a community re-briefing mechanism, allowing for ongoing monitoring and adaptation to evolving objectives.

How the tool addresses the identified challenges

#alignment: By discussing goals, needs, challenges and interests among stakeholders, a shared understanding is created, areas of collaboration are defined, and joint strategies and actions are developed.

#cross-level links: Shared interests between actors across governance levels are identified and links between governance levels are fostered.

#adaptability: The tool can be used throughout a development process to iteratively capture changing objectives and adapt strategies and interventions.

How it works

Step 1

Define focus and actors

Discuss and define the problem or challenge that forms the basis of the collaboration and identify political risks and constraints. Then, note down the actors. Make sure to include all relevant stakeholders (e.g. representatives from relevant

government levels, civil society, businesses, development partners). Each actor gets their individual colour code. Add actors and colours if needed.

Step 2

Define goals, challenges, expectations and needs

Each actor notes their goals, challenges, expectations and needs on sticky notes. The focus should also be on political aspects and not only on technical matters. These are placed in the corresponding areas of the map. The results are presented to the group.

Step 3

Identify overlaps

Analyse the results and define shared goals, challenges, expectations and needs. These are potential areas of collaboration. Select the most relevant shared goals, challenges, expectations and needs and position them in the centre area.

Step 4

Develop a mission statement

Develop a mission statement that describes your shared intention based on the shared goals, challenges, expectations, and needs.

Step 5

Define opportunity areas and solutions

Identify opportunities for impactful solutions that relate to your mission statement. Formulate the opportunity areas as “How can we...” questions. Conduct a short brainstorming for each opportunity area to ideate solutions. When thinking about solutions, also think about how to minimize political risks, how to shape relationships and incentivize or motivate actors. If you have multiple solutions, vote to determine the best 1-2 solutions per opportunity area.

Step 6

Create a roadmap and define responsibilities

Identify the key steps to implement the solutions you developed. Create a rough roadmap of activities for each actor to define their role and commitment.



Cross-references

→ This tool can also be combined with the **Extended Persona**. Actors can create personas to clearly define their roles and mandates in relation to the identified topic or problem.

→ This tool can also be combined with the **Quick Win Generator** to identify quick wins for first joint activities.

Collaboration Starter

1 Problem / Challenge

What is the problem or challenge?
Please formulate the problem or challenge from the beneficiaries' perspective!

Describe the problem or challenge...

1 Actors

Who are the actors that want to collaborate?

add actor 1

add actor 2

add actor 3

add actor 4

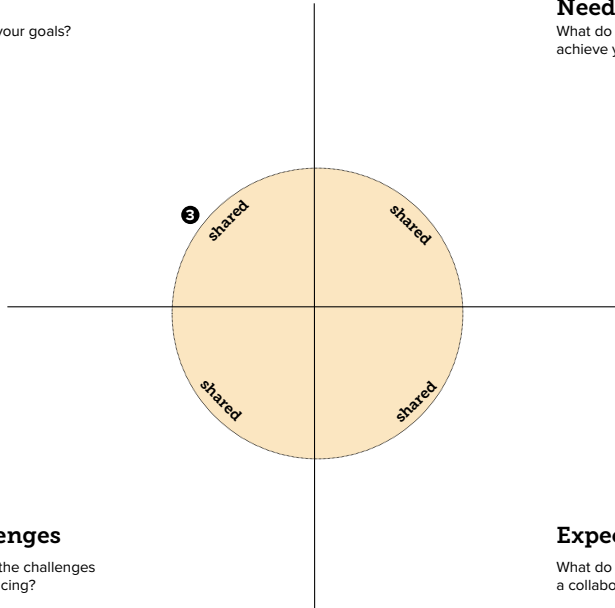
2

Goals

What are your goals?

Needs

What do you need to achieve your goals?



Challenges

What are the challenges you are facing?

Expectations

What do you expect from a collaboration?

4 Mission Statement

What is the overall goal and mission of your intervention?

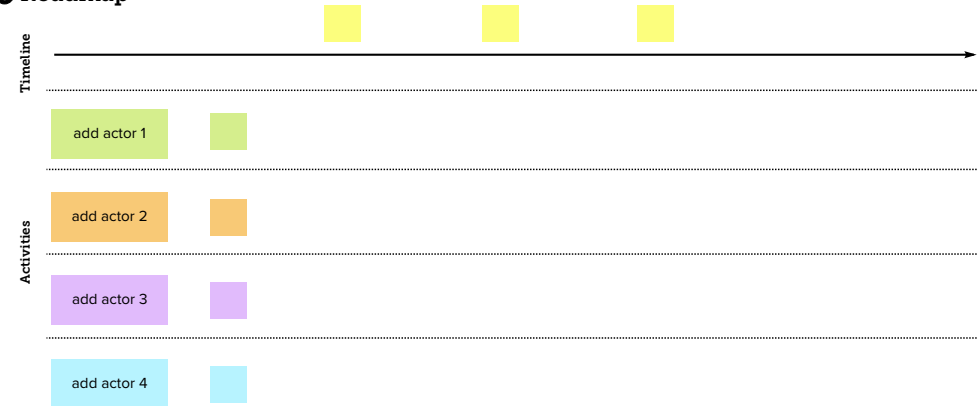
You can use the following format to formulate your mission:

We - (team) -
are currently facing the challenge - (problem) -
and develop solutions for - (target group) -
in order to - (impact) -

5 Solutions

<p>Opportunity area</p> <div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;">How might we ...?</div> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>Solutions</p>	<p>Opportunity area</p> <div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;">How might we ...?</div> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>Solutions</p>	<p>Opportunity area</p> <div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;">How might we ...?</div> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>Solutions</p>
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6 Roadmap



4.5. Tool #05: Governance Mechanisms Prototyping

Difficulty level: Hard

Participants: Project team, authorities, experts

Objective

→ To design governance mechanisms based on existing infrastructures and actors' needs.

→ To involve experts and authorities in the design of governance mechanism to ensure their buy-in and lower barriers for implementation.

Description

This tool facilitates the identification and development of instruments and mechanisms to address missing links and promote collaboration among representatives from different governance levels. Based on the identified needs, it explores existing formats that could potentially be repurposed to address these gaps effectively. The tool helps define the composition, responsibilities,

and operational modalities of the new or adapted mechanisms. This tool is supported by the insights generated through the system map and personas. It can be used in co-creative settings with experts and authorities who are familiar with existing mechanisms. Their input helps evaluate the feasibility, as well as the enabling and inhibiting factors of the proposed mechanisms.

How the tool addresses the identified challenges

#ownership: Because the tool can be used in co-creative setups to involve experts and authorities, the mechanism is jointly developed and can gain buy-in directly.

#cross-level links: By defining governance mechanisms that involve actors across governance levels (e.g. representatives from different government levels, civil society and private businesses) links between these levels are established to allow flows of information and collaboration.

#inclusion: When designed carefully, the instruments and mechanism are composed of all relevant actors, especially representatives of vulnerable groups in order to ensure inclusion.

#existing infrastructures: This tool can be used to identify existing governance mechanisms and assess the potential for repurposing them. Based on this assessment, governance mechanisms can be adapted and further developed to support MLG implementation.

#adaptability: This tool helps address the aspect of flexibility in the design of governance mechanisms and instruments so that they can adapt to external changes through a change in the composition of actors and/or responsibilities.

How it works

Step 1

Define goals and actors

In the first step you collect the basic information that you need to define the governance mechanism. Define the problem or challenge you want to solve with the governance mechanism, note political risks and constraints and identify the actors who are affected.

Step 2

Identify and assess existing infrastructure

Identify existing governance mechanisms that you could use to address the problem or challenge. You can refer to the governance mechanism you identified in your **Multi-level Governance System Map**. Identify the barriers and enablers to using the existing mechanism to assess whether the mechanism has the potential to solve your problem or challenge.

Step 3

Define responsibilities, actor composition and modalities of operation

Define basic parameters of the planned governance mechanism. What is the task or responsibility of the governance mechanism? What actors are part of the governance mechanism? What are the modalities of operation? When thinking about the modalities of operation, you should also think about how to ensure that the mechanism can be adapted to external changes by changing actor composition and/or responsibilities.

Step 4

Define the governance structure

Consider how governance is structured within the mechanism. Define sub-groups, if needed, that cover the necessary areas of responsibility and determine how they relate to each other. Be as descriptive as possible.



Cross-references

→ This tool can be combined with the **Multi-level Governance System Map**. The existing governance mechanism identified in the

map can serve as existing infrastructures to develop adapted or new governance mechanisms.

Governance Mechanisms Prototyping

1 Problem / Challenge

What is the problem or challenge? Please formulate the problem or challenge from the beneficiaries' perspective!

1 Actors

Who are the actors that are affected by the problem or challenge? Who needs to be involved to solve this problem or challenge?

2 Existing Governance Mechanisms

What governance mechanisms exist that encompass similar goals and actors and have the potential to be repurposed into a corresponding governance mechanism? Refer to your "Multi-level Governance System Map" to identify the corresponding governance mechanisms.

<p>Governance Mechanism Position the governance mechanism identified in your "Multi-level Governance System Map" here.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Name / description</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Responsibilities & tasks</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Actor composition</div>	<p>Quick Assessment Conduct a quick feasibility assessment</p> <p>Barriers What are potential barriers for using the existing governance mechanism for your purpose?</p> <p>Enablers What are potential benefits for using the existing governance mechanism for your purpose?</p>
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<p>Governance Mechanism Position the governance mechanism identified in your "Multi-level Governance System Map" here.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Name / description</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Responsibilities & tasks</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Actor composition</div>	<p>Quick Assessment Conduct a quick feasibility assessment</p> <p>Barriers What are potential barriers for using the existing governance mechanism for your purpose?</p> <p>Enablers What are potential benefits for using the existing governance mechanism for your purpose?</p>
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3 Responsibilities & Tasks

What are the responsibilities and tasks of the governance mechanisms?

3 Actor Composition

Which stakeholders need to be involved in the governance mechanism? Consider designing the mechanism inclusively to ensure legitimacy.

3 Modalities of Operation

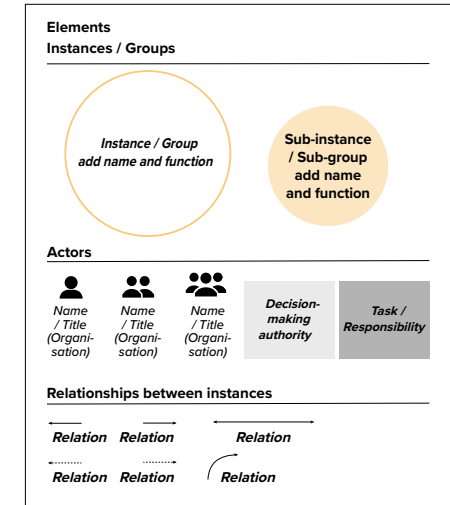
What are the modalities of operation (e.g. at what intervals or in which situations do the actors come together? How are decisions made? How is the mechanism adapted to external changes by changing actor composition and/or responsibilities?

4 Governance Structure

What is the structure of governance that represents the needs and goals of the various actors as well as the needs and goals of the target groups? Which bodies cover the necessary areas of responsibility and how do they relate to each other? Use the elements on the right to design the governance structure of your mechanism!

Title
Please give the governance mechanism a descriptive title!

...



4.6. Tool #06: Multi-Level Governance Process Map

Difficulty level: Moderate

Participants: Project team, experts

Objective

→ To map activities across various governance levels (e.g., regional strategies and local interventions) in order to analyse or plan approaches retrospectively or anticipatively.

→ To reflect on whether these activities effectively address key challenges of MLG.

Description

This tool facilitates the mapping of activities across different governance levels, offering a comprehensive view of key initiatives and their interactions. By visualizing these activities, the tool helps in both analysing past efforts and planning future actions. The tool encourages a reflective approach, promoting planning that is co-creative, iterative and people centred.

This approach helps to address the primary challenges associated with MLG by ensuring that activities are aligned with the needs of stakeholders and the broader governance framework. It can be used within project teams to analyse and plan together, but also in dialogue with stakeholders to ensure their involvement and secure buy-in.

How the tool addresses the identified challenges

#ownership: Using the tool in dialogue with stakeholders allows to plan involvement and foster buy-in.

#cross-level links: The tool allows to analyse and plan cross-level interventions and make the most important activities on different levels of governance (local, regional, national and supra-national) tangible.

#inclusion: Key actors involved in the different activities along the process of MLG implementation can be mapped and their involvement analysed. The level of inclusion can thus be evaluated and improved if necessary.

#adaptability: Mapping and analysing existing activities enables collaborative learning and adaptation of processes and MLG approaches.

#alignment: The map visualizes complex programs and contexts and thus facilitates communication, promotes mutual understanding and helps align processes, interventions and approaches.

How it works

Step 1

Define the scope

Define the scope of the project or programme you want to plan or analyse. The best way to think about the scope is to define a challenge or problem that your programme or project addresses (e.g. community security and social cohesion in Ukraine).

Step 2

Define starting and exit points

First think about the start and end dates of your programme or project. Describe the initial conditions and the criteria for concluding the programme.

Step 3

Collect activities and milestones

Think about the central milestones in your programme or project and collect activities that help to reach these milestones. Also, think about what problems you may face in each step. It is best to represent the activities via a concise headline and a short description. Assign the activities to the different governance levels.

Step 4

Add actors and/or tools

To detail the activities, it can be helpful to add the actors involved and the tools you intend to use. Tools can be on different levels (e.g. certain workshop formats, funding mechanisms, monitoring tools, etc.). Think about how you address the political dimension with the tools in use. Which incentives are used to involve certain stakeholders? How do you deal with broken relationships? After creating a first version of the map, take your time to review it (maybe together with actors involved), tweak and complete it.

Step 5

Analyse Activity Map

Analyse whether the activities meet the key challenges of MLG. You can refer to the challenges and corresponding reflection questions described in the Challenges in Implementing MLG chapter of this toolkit. If you analyse, you should draw lessons learned; if you plan, you should adapt activities as appropriate.



Cross-references

- This tool can be combined with the **Multi-level Governance System Map** tool. Identified actors can be transferred to plan their participation.
- This tool can be combined with the **Governance Mechanisms Prototyping** tool to transfer the implementation of the planned governance mechanism into actionable steps.
- Identified activities from the **Collaboration Starter** and **Quick Win Generator** tools can be integrated into program planning.

Multilevel Governance Process Map

1 Problem / Challenge

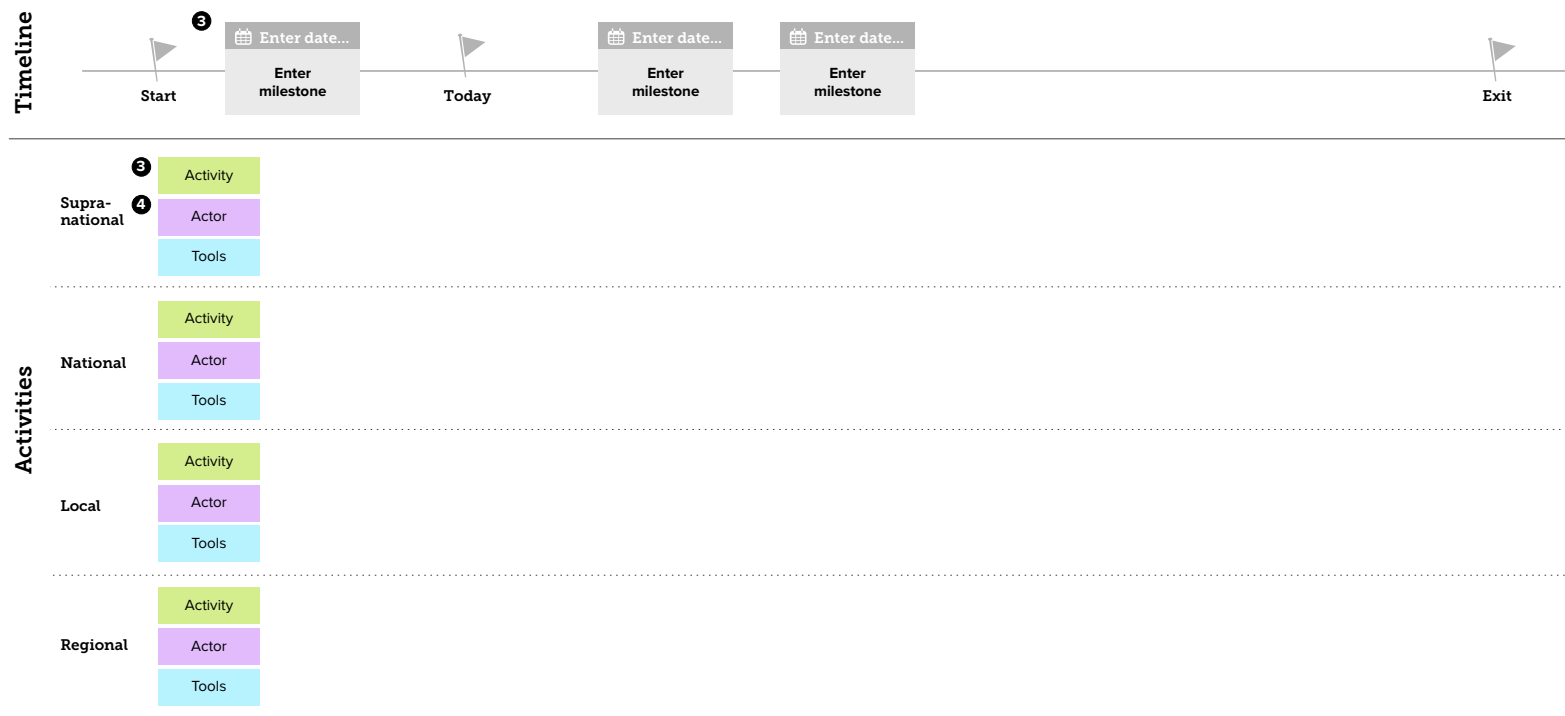
What is the problem or challenge? Please formulate the problem or challenge from the beneficiaries' perspective!

2 Starting Point

What are the conditions at the starting point?

3 Exit Point

What are the conditions for exiting the programme?



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Outlook: Next Steps to Operationalize the MLG Toolkit

This MLG toolkit is a valuable resource for UNDP COs aiming to enhance their programming efforts. By providing a comprehensive suite of tools and guidance, the toolkit supports practitioners and their local partners in navigating, analysing, and implementing participatory, inclusive, and effective MLG systems and methods.

It is particularly beneficial in addressing the diverse scenarios, stakeholder compositions, and project maturity levels in crisis recovery and development initiatives, offering COs the frameworks needed to navigate complex governance challenges.

The toolkit's effectiveness is rooted in extensive knowledge gathered from a review of existing programmes that showcase various MLG approaches and dimensions. By distilling this knowledge into accessible and actionable insights, the toolkit enables practitioners both within and beyond UNDP to effectively adopt MLG principles.

Drawing on a wealth of experience and proven strategies from practitioners globally, including UNDP Country Offices from different regions, the toolkit serves as a repository for advancing MLG practices across UNDP. Its modular, open, and continuously evolving design ensures adaptability to diverse contexts and emerging challenges, while its emphasis on real-world case studies promotes practical learning and application.

Ultimately, the toolkit fosters a collaborative environment where practitioners can share experiences, innovate, and collectively advance MLG principles to achieve more inclusive and effective development outcomes. This version of the toolkit should be seen as adaptable and open to further development opportunities, including the following:

Uptake – testing the MLG toolkit in real-life

contexts: The toolkit is rooted in insights derived from a research phase that involved literature reviews, UNDP strategic planning documents, and case studies from five countries or sub-regions affected by crises. These cases were selected based on guidance from UNDP Global Policy Network advisors. While the development of the toolkit was a co-creative process involving various experts and users, the framework and tools developed remain preliminary until they are tested in real-life settings to validate their practical effectiveness. Therefore, a crucial next step is to conduct comprehensive testing (and, consequently, reiteration) of the toolkit in actual contexts with end users to assess and refine its viability.

Build capacity to leverage the potential

of the MLG toolkit: As highlighted in the toolkit, approaches to a complex issue like MLG involve not only knowledge and tools but also the processes and mindsets necessary for their effective application. To realize its transformative potential, the toolkit must be supported by a capacity-building programme that integrates mindset development, knowledge enhancement, and learning by doing. This program should connect users with practical experience, fostering a deeper understanding and more effective use of the toolkit's resources.

Develop a digital platform for MLG tools

and updated knowledge repository: Currently, the toolkit serves as an initial resource rather than a definitive guide. The next phase of its development could involve creating an accessible, dynamic digital platform that evolves with ongoing contributions from practitioners. This platform would provide comprehensive guidance and support for integrating MLG principles into practice. By offering multiple entry points, the platform would enable users to easily access relevant information, adapt it to their specific contexts, and apply the tools and insights effectively. This approach would foster continuous learning and adaptation, ensuring the toolkit remains a valuable and up-to-date resource for those engaged in MLG efforts.



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