

22 April 2020

To all CLGF Members – April Update II: Managing change under COVID-19

Dear CLGF Member,

Local government across the Commonwealth is on the frontline of dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 in their communities. Everywhere we see local government leaders working tirelessly to mitigate the risks to their citizens – whether that is by raising awareness; ensuring good hygiene in markets; keeping key services such as waste collection, schools, clinics, and water running; or providing poor relief, refuges, and food parcels. Importantly we are also seeing local government – often through the local government association - increasingly involved in national planning for COVID-19. SALGA (the South Africa Local Government Association) is represented in the High Command Council in South Africa; in Uganda, Chairpersons and Mayors are part of District Taskforces; and the Mayor of London is attending the Government's COBRA emergency planning meetings – all to ensure that the needs of local communities, and the contributions that local government can make to dealing with the pandemic, are reflected in what is a fast-moving crisis situation.

In this immediate crisis situation, where it can, CLGF is working to support its members directly. It is sharing experiences and lessons on managing the pandemic via its website, engaging directly with the membership on how it can most effectively support local government's vital work, and where it can, also diverting existing project funds to support COVID-19 initiatives.

The organisation is working hard to ensure that, where safe and sensible to do so, project activities continue to take place. Sometimes these may look and feel different. For example, we are working with partners in Botswana to deliver key LED training online instead of through a face-to-face session; and, on the plus side, working in this way will allow us to also bring colleagues from Zambia to participate in the same training. However, realistically much of our work cannot be done online – many of our partners are understandably focusing solely on dealing with the crisis, and so much of what local government does is about convening and working closely with people. Our teams across all of our regions (Asia, Caribbean, East Africa, Pacific, Southern Africa, West Africa) are working with our development partners to reschedule and reshape our projects to make sure that resources are maintained and can be utilised in line with the new realities. Many of our projects have a strong focus on local economic development and we are very aware of the economic impact that COVID-19 is having everywhere. We will be working with our project partners to ensure that, as soon as they can, our partners will be ready with strategies to provide the right support to their communities to take account of this, to help their economies to recover, and to grow again in an inclusive and equitable way.

In addition, we are using the time in lockdown to strengthen our advocacy work on behalf of our members, particularly with respect to urging the Commonwealth to work with us to ensure that the needs of cities and human settlements are reflected more meaningfully in Commonwealth policy and action. The COVID-19 crisis has only served to further underline the critical role of city and local governments in ensuring inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable places for people to live and work (SDG11). We value the work that our members are doing right now in the eye of the storm, but we also look forward to continuing to work closely with you in the future to support the recovery process, and to further strengthen local government's role as a key partner in national development.

Stay safe and our thoughts are with you.

Yours sincerely,



Lucy Slack
Deputy Secretary-General

Commonwealth Local Government Forum

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Patrons: ■ HE President Yoweri Museveni, Uganda; ■ Rt Hon Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator;
■ Rt Hon Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Tuvalu; ■ HE President John Dramani Mahama, Ghana