



The Association for Local Authorities in Namibia

ALAN LED INDABA D DECLARATION AND COMMUNIQUE

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2024

Over four hundred delegates from 46 local authorities' political and administrative leadership, local government associations, civil society, development partners and local government actors from South Africa, Botswana and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and UCLGA SARO, met in Lüderitz from 12 - 15 March 2024 for the first ever ALAN LED Indaba under the theme “ *Promoting Local Economic Development through Inclusive Strategic Planning, Innovation and Diversification of Revenue Streams.*”

This LED Indaba Communique and Declaration is an indication of our unwavering commitment to inspire and advocate for innovation in local economic development ensure that our cities and towns in Namibia are properly capacitated, empowered and recognized as catalysts of local economic growth, employment creation.

We hereby acknowledge the critical role of local governance in fostering sustainable economic growth and development. Through collaborative discussions, expert presentations, and shared experiences, we have gained valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within our regions.

We the participants at the ALAN LED Indaba:

- **Reaffirmed** our commitment to the social and economic development of all the people in our localities through a robust local economic development program through inclusive strategic planning and innovation
- **Recognized** the collaborative partnership by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD) and ALAN with the CLGF which seeks to improve the capacity of local government to plan and implement LED in Namibia. This includes enhancing the enabling policy environment by reviewing the RLED.
- **Welcomed** the opportunity created by the ALAN LED Indaba that provided a unique opportunity to bring together stakeholders in the local economic development for fruitful discussions on the challenges, solutions and opportunities to improve the well-being of our communities and localities through local economic development.
- **Emphasized** the vital role of leadership within local authorities as the governments of proximity to ensure effective local economic development

- **Further recognizing** the Cardiff Consensus on local economic development in the Commonwealth and the The Kigali Declaration on building local resilience across the Commonwealth which emphasize the role of local authorities in providing safe, sustainable, inclusive livelihoods within a context of resilient, diversified local economies.
- **Noted** the significant youth population in Namibia as the recently released preliminary results of the 2023 Housing and Population Census (HPC) by the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) show that 71,1% of the people are under the age of 35 years old and the unique challenges faced by young people in getting employment or entrepreneurial opportunities.
- **Further welcomed** the inputs and expert contributions and recommendations by various presenters at the LED Indaba
- **Acknowledged** the importance of ensuring that women, youth and people with disabilities have access to local economic opportunities, and the need to provide platforms for further networking to ensure that women, youth and people with disabilities are fully involved in economic and political decision making, and welcoming the role of Refela-UCLGA the Network of Local Women Elected in Africa and the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network (ComWLG).
- **Recognized** the key role of subnational government in preparing and coordinating local development strategies that promote economic opportunities, and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda.
- **Mindful** of the common challenges facing the sector, especially following the COVID 19 pandemic, growing inequalities, the urbanisation of poverty and aware of the need to ensure that local economic development strategies are locally owned and reflect local needs and circumstances.

Now therefore we call on national, regional and local government, the private sector, civil society and development partners in Namibia to support and strengthen local government's role in local economic development [LED] to help reduce poverty, and promote shared economic prosperity in Namibia.

Our consensus is that local economic development is a process which brings together different stakeholders in a local area to work together and harness local resources for sustainable economic growth. While we agree that there is no single model for LED, we concur that approaches should reflect local needs and circumstances.

LED should create an enabling environment for business and other stakeholders to work to promote equitable and balanced local economic growth. Pro-poor and inclusive LED enables local government to address poverty, unemployment and social deprivation, including through strategies for promoting youth employment, empowering disadvantaged and marginalized communities, support for skills development, and promotion of gender equity and equality.

Key actions are required to enable local government to play its full role in LED which includes

1. **Strengthening Governance:** We call upon all municipal leaders to commit to transparent, accountable, and participatory governance that creates an enabling environment and empowers citizens and local businesses. This includes providing a clear revised national framework for local economic development. Effective fiscal, political and legal decentralisation, including appropriate constitutional and legal recognition and access to an equitable share of national resources, is essential to maximise local government's effectiveness in local economic development.
2. **Promoting Investment:** We urge the creation of a more enabling environment for investment, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises as key drivers of local economic development.
3. **Enhancing Skills:** We advocate for investment in education and vocational training to equip our workforce with the skills necessary for the jobs of tomorrow. Empowered local governments, with meaningful autonomy and delegated powers to deliver LED, can actively promote and sustain inclusive, locally-owned economic development,
4. **Sustainable Practices:** We encourage the adoption of sustainable urban agriculture principles to integrate sustainable food security practices within our communities, particularly in poultry, piggery, and gardening.
5. **Inclusive Development:** We emphasize the need for gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of marginalized groups in all economic development initiatives.
6. **Leveraging Technology:** We recommend harnessing technology and innovation to improve municipal services and foster a culture of entrepreneurship.
7. **Regional and International Collaboration:** We propose establishing partnerships between municipalities to share best practices and resources for mutual benefit.

Next Steps

Achieving effective LED in Namibia would require actions from a range of different stakeholders, including:

- The Ministry of Urban and Rural Development to finalize the review of the national LED Policy framework and implementation plan and ensure decentralization of appropriate powers, functions and resources, including financial resources, empowering local government to play a leading role in LED. The Local Economic Development Agency (LEDA) in the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development will continue to play a key facilitation and

coordination role in this process, and in assessing and monitoring the impact of LED.

- Local authorities in Namibia should start immediately to plan, develop and implement LED strategies, in partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders at the local level to promote LED. They should develop a strong alliance with the private sector to ensure that LED promotion and actions are well-grounded.
- Organized local and regional government associations like ALAN, NALAO and ARC should continue to play a key role in advocating for local government involvement in LED, operationalizing national frameworks and assessing impact. They are important partners in sharing good practice, capacity development and identifying and leveraging resources for LED.
- CLGF to continue to advocate for LED to be a key responsibility for local government in Namibia and across the Commonwealth among CLGF local government and ministry of local government members; CLGF to advocate for LED within the wider Commonwealth, to generate better understanding and support for local government's role in LED, in line with the Cardiff Consensus on LED.
- ALAN should also continue work in partnership with organizations like CLGF to share good practice and knowledge around LED, including through the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network (CSCN), and promote a greater focus on practical LED research, mentoring and exchange of best practice; and work to strengthen capacity-building and investment for LED through partnerships with national agencies (such as NIPDB) and international development partners (such as the European Union, GIZ and the Commonwealth Secretariate)
- Development partners and other stakeholders should be sensitized to provide resources, support and expertise to improve capacity and enable local governments to deliver effective LED.

We pledge to take these actions forward, working in unity for the prosperity of our communities and the nation at large.

Signed on this 15th Day of March 2024 in Lüderitz

Dr. Samuel !Oe-Amseb
President - ALAN

Comments: