

Building Partnerships of SDGs Localization among Local Governments: The Case of Republic of Korea

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< Research Team >

KDI (Korea Development Institute)

Won-Kyu Shin(Main researcher), Ho-Kyung Bang, Woo-Yong Jung,
Jeong-Woo Koo

MOIS (Ministry of the Interior and Safety)

Woong-Joe Ko, Tack-Jin Nam, Hyun-Joo Oh, Sung-Soo Hong

UNPOG (UN Project Office on Governance)

Chae-Gun Chung, Heon-Jun Kim, Seok-Ho Yoon

Abstract

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1. Background and Purpose of the Study

☐ Background of the Study

- In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly set the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the target which the global community has to achieve by 2030, succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- Unlike the framework of the MDGs, the framework of the SDGs highlights the role of local actors including the participation of all related stakeholders such as communities as well as the central government and the process called “SDGs Localization”.
- Although local governments in South Korea are one of the actors engaging in international development cooperation (or official development assistance; ODA) under the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation and their scale of cooperative projects has grown, they also have faced difficulty in increasing the scale or carrying out the projects more efficiently and systematically due to restrictions on financial resources, manpower, and legal systems.
- In order for South Korea to be more active in participation in international efforts to realize the global values including giving developing countries assistance with implementing the SDGs, it is necessary to enhance international development cooperation at local government level as well as central government level and to undertake systematic studies on the enhancement.

☐ Purpose of the Study

- The purpose of this study is to summarize the domestic and global discussions and trends related to the localization of the SDGs and to establish the grounds for the necessity for enhancement of international development cooperation projects by local governments to support the localization of the SDGs in developing countries, thereby improving the awareness of the relevant public officials and citizens.
- In addition, this study is to enhance the status and contribution level of local governments in the global community, such as improving the effectiveness of their diplomatic efforts, by proposing the methods for systematic cooperation among the central government, local governments, and ODA execution agencies (or international organizations) to make sure that local governments in South Korea are able to effectively assist local governments of developing countries in implementing the SDGs.

☐ Scope and Methods of the Study

- This report is to deal with specific proposals for the system of cooperation with the central government adopted by local governments in South Korea to implement development cooperation projects on local governments of developing countries under the SDGs framework (global implementation of the SDGs).
- Specifically, first, this report is to define the concept of and need for the localization of the SDGs by analyzing the reference documents and materials related to the localization produced domestically and overseas and to stress the necessity of why local governments of South Korea should be active in assisting developing countries with the localization of the SDGs.
- Second, this report is to appreciate policy implications for international development policies of South Korea's local governments and establishment of a system for cooperation with the central government of South Korea by analyzing the present condition of international development cooperation by South Korea's local governments and the cases of assistance by developed countries' local governments with implementation of localizing the SDGs for developing countries.
- Third, this report is to analyze the difficulties and problems related to the incorporation of cooperation projects by South Korea's local governments into the

SDGs framework through the surveys of and interviews with the people related to international development cooperation projects by South Korean local governments, thereby proposing policy alternatives concerning development of the governance for global implementation of the SDGs by local governments including a system to systematically assist developing countries' local government in implementing the SDGs and supervision and assistance activities.

2. Concept of the Localization of the SDGs and Significance of Local Governments

☐ Need for and Concept of the Localization of the SDGs

- The concept of the localization of the SDGs has originated from the lesson where the MDGs were less effective due to insufficient participation of communities in the implementation and assessment of the goals.
- In this backdrop, the UN emphasized voluntary participation in the SDGs by communities to achieve the goals of development and cooperation at the global level when announcing the SDGs in 2015. That is, the UN stressed that, though the goals in the SDGs are global and universal, the implementation of the SDGs should be done in local context and all 17 goals of the SDGs require the responsibility and role of local governments (UNDP, 2016).
- In this study, after discussions in domestic and global context, the concept of the localization of the SDGs is defined as the process by which, in accordance with a nation's plan to implement the SDGs, a local government devises and carries out the plan to implement SDGs in local context, plays a key role in the whole process of selecting assessment indicators, monitoring, and assessing, and becomes the foundation for implementation of the SDGs at the domestic and global levels.

☐ Importance of a Local Government in Assisting Developing Countries with Implementing the SDGs

- A local government is able to provide some lower-level programs which the local community requires at the regional level and offer the unique aids imbued with the

characteristics and values of the local government, different with those of the central government (Im So-jin and Jeong Sang-hee, 2017).

- The role of local governments in implementing the SDGs is very important as urban areas lead the local economy as seen in the fact that over 50% of the world population resides in cities and urban areas account for one quarter of the global GDP (UNDESA, 2015).
- In particular, Goal 11 of the SDGs (sustainable cities and communities) is directly related to local governments and, out of the 169 targets of the SDGs, 103 targets (61%) are related to cities and require actions at the local level (Greene and Meixell, 2017).

3. Necessity for Enhancement of International Development Cooperation (global implementation of the SDGs) projects by South Korea's Local Governments

The purpose of this chapter is to review the necessity for active participation in assisting developing countries with implementing the SDGs through enhancement of international development cooperation projects by South Korea's local governments from the perspective of moral obligation and from the practical perspective.

□ Necessity out of Moral Obligation

- As part of the global community and in line with enhancement of international development cooperation projects by the central government, local governments in South Korea can build up South Korea's international reputation by boosting international development cooperation projects at the level of local communities and promote the pride of local residents by making a contribution to the global community.
- As of 2016, South Korea's official development assistance (ODA) amounted to about 2.19 trillion KRW (3.5 trillion in 2019), which ranks 16th among 29 members of OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). However, the ODA by South Korea's local governments accounted for less than 1% of the total (about 16 billion KRW, 0.75%).

- As one of the key agencies for implementation of international development cooperation projects under the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation, a local government shall join the international community in a concerted effort to eradicate poverty in developing nations and promote sustainable development, and play an active role therefor (Articles 2 and 5 of the Act*).
- * (Article 2) The term "implementing agencies" means central administrative agencies, local governments and public institutions which conduct projects related to international development cooperation.
- (Article 5) (2) The State, etc. shall join the international community in a concerted effort to eradicate poverty in developing nations and promote sustainable development, and play an active role therefor.
- Therefore, a local government should aim at achieving the SDGs agreed upon by the global community at the global level and, in line with the master plan for international development cooperation set by the state, to actively participate in international development cooperation projects suitable for local characteristics.

☐ Necessity out of Practicalities

- While teaching and offering the know-how about local development to local governments of developing countries, international development cooperation by a local government in South Korea can contribute to the local economy by giving more opportunity for expanding into overseas markets to participating companies and creating relevant jobs (in terms of balanced national development).
- A local government in South Korea can enhance its globalization capacity by accumulating the knowledge and experience in relevant areas through implementation of international development cooperation projects.
- A South Korean local government's contribution to development of developing countries by assisting a local government of a developing country with local development and dissemination of the South Korean local government's development models to the government of the developing country would lead to promotion of the South Korean local government's reputation and brand power, helping the local government develop into an internationally renowned one.

4. Analysis into the Present Condition of International Development Cooperation by Local Governments in South Korea

☐ Present Condition of International Development Cooperation by Local Governments in South Korea

- The total expenditure on ODA by local governments in South Korea went up about 8.5 times from 1.9 billion KRW in 2006 to 16 billion KRW in 2016 but that accounted for only 0.75% of South Korea's total expenditure on ODA.
- As of 2016, 13 major local governments in South Korea carried out 29 projects. However, the ODA projects conducted by the top 4 local governments (Gyeongsangbuk-do, Incheon, Seoul, and Gyeonggi-do) accounted for 85% of the total, showing severe regional imbalance.
- The projects implemented by local governments are mainly short-term and bland ones such as invitation programs for training developing countries' public officials and dispatching volunteers for a short time. Most of the recipient countries are Asian countries like Cambodia, Mongolia, and Indonesia.
- Except for Seoul, most of the local government do not have a bureau in charge of ODA affairs and one public official from the bureau in charge of international cooperation affairs deals with the affairs.

☐ Connection between a Local Government's Project and the SDGs and Major Obstacles to the Connection

- According to a survey of the public officials in charge of international development cooperation projects from 17 major local governments, 65% of the respondents said that they were not fully aware of the SDGs and 11 out of 17 local governments said that the detailed goals and implementation methods for international development cooperation projects did not include the matters related to the SDGs.
- The survey showed that the obstacles the local governments were facing in terms of global implementation of the SDGs were lack of understanding and consensus about

the SDGs, lack of the guidelines for applying the SDGs to international development cooperation projects, and difficulty in acquiring financial resources due to insufficient legal grounds.

- And the survey also indicated that what local governments wanted from the central governments were financial support, knowledge sharing and consultation, and demand survey on recipient countries and what they wanted from international organizations were advice and consultation and joint projects with international organizations.

5. Cases of International Development Cooperation by Overseas Local Governments

□ Characteristics of International Development Cooperation by Local Governments in Developed Countries

- Canada is the country whose local government are rapidly increasing their share in the total international development cooperation of the nation; this increase is led by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), a consultative body of local governments.
- Spain is the country whose local governments have the largest share in the total ODA of the nation; local governments themselves are carrying out international development cooperation projects in connection with the SDGs while accommodating to the tide of change in the global community.
- Germany is the country whose local governments are providing the largest aid in the world. In order to prevent problems arising from its fragmented systems for implementation, Germany is doing the best to ensure information exchange and maintain policy consistency by operating various consultative bodies such as the consultative body between the federal government and local governments and the council for governors.
- Local governments in Japan are promoting international development cooperation projects by utilizing the network and budget of the Japan International Cooperation

Agency (JICA) and the JICA are providing budget support to local governments after a public contest and review of their proposals for international development cooperation projects.

- As the United States is a federal state, each federal government autonomously establishes sisterhood relationship with local governments of the world and actively engages in exchange and cooperation projects as part of people-to-people diplomacy.

☐ Implications Arising from the Above Cases for South Korea

- The case of Canada needs to be seriously considered when enhancing the functions and roles of the consultative bodies among local governments including the Governors Associations of Korea.
- The case of Spain has an implication for South Korea's major local governments carrying out relatively large-scale projects as the Spanish local governments are conducting international development cooperation projects while maintaining active connection with the SDGs.
- The case of German local governments has a significant implication as they are preemptively responding to the problems arising from fragmentation through connection with the central government and their efforts for coordination among local governments.
- The case of Japan's JICA is applicable to major local governments in South Korea who are willing to carry out international development cooperation projects but have insufficient budget and expertise.
- The case of the United States has an implication for South Korea's local governments that they can utilize their existing relationship with local governments of developing countries as the asset to localize the SDGs and to effectively conduct international development cooperation projects.

6. Effective International Development Cooperation by Local Government for Assisting Developing Countries in Localizing the SDGs

☐ (At the Local Government Level) Establishment of the Plans to Implement the SDGs

- It is necessary to establish the SDGs implementation plans which reflects the unique characteristics of local governments by appropriately utilizing the construction methods for SDGs such as integration and connection, parallel execution, sequential substitution, and project discovery and expansion.
- The projects currently underway should be connected in line with the purpose of the SDGs and the economic cooperation projects being emphasized under the SDGs framework should gradually expand through sequential substitution or discovery of new projects.

☐ (At the Local Government Level) Improvement of the Governance for Implementation of the SDGs

- After the establishment of the plans to implement the SDGs, it is necessary to build the control center (dedicated to the SDGs) which can flexibly and consistently plan and manage the relevant projects.
- The Head of the Planning and Coordination Bureau in a local government should be in charge of domestic implementation of the SDGs and then apply the SDGs framework to the overall business of the organization. And the bureau in charge of domestic implementation of the SDGs and the bureau in charge of global implementation in a local government should collaborate in making and implementing the comprehensive SDGs plans for the local government.
- Or a local government should establish a separate secretariat to deal with the SDGs (managed by a chief of a bureau or an office). The secretariat should serve as a project supervisor to carry out the following tasks: planning, coordinating, implementing, monitoring, and assessing domestic and global implementation plans.

□ (At the Local Government Level) Enhancing the Leadership of Heads of Local Governments and Improving the Awareness of Local Residents

- In order for local governments to effectively assist developing countries in implementing the SDGs, it is necessary for local government to fully understand the SDGs and share their values. For this purpose, it is of utmost importance to enhance the leadership of heads of local governments and to improve the awareness of public officials in local governments.
- The support from local residents is the most important thing to be considered when a local government is promoting international development cooperation projects. Therefore, in order for local residents to understand and sympathize with international development cooperation projects, it is necessary for a local government to publicize the projects' achievements online and offline.

□ (At the Central Government Level) Amendment to Relevant Legislation to Obtain Financial Resources Related to International Development Cooperation

- In order to provide financial and institutional support for international development cooperation projects by local governments, the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation should be amended or project implementation plans should include special provisions about financial support for local governments.
 - Instead of thinking that local governments' international development cooperation projects lack content, a tolerant approach to innovation strategies for the projects while stressing the importance of balanced national development is required for each local government to make its own unique brand of innovation.
- The current relevant legislation to assist local governments in implementing international development cooperation projects including financial and general assistance fails to properly reflect the development which has been made so far (such as increasing share of developing countries in international cooperation) or is nonexistent, hindering local governments from securing financial resources of their own or from enhancing their capacity for assistance. Therefore, the central government should establish the legal foundation for assisting local government in implementing international development cooperation projects through amendment to the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation or promotion of the

enactment of the Globalization Support Act for Local Governments (by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety).

- According to Article 17 (1) of the Local Finance Act, a local government may make a donation or provide a subsidy to an individual or organization only when a provision of an act or a bylaw concerning the donation or subsidy exists. However, no provision concerning financial support for international development cooperation projects exists and therefore each local government should establish relevant provisions as the legal grounds for the projects.
- In addition, the Globalization Support Act for Local Governments (draft) promoted by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety requires supplementation and improvement.
 - It is necessary to differentiate the meaning of 'international development cooperation' from that of ordinary international cooperation and exchange in the Globalization Support Act for Local Governments (draft) by utilizing the Article 2 of the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation.
 - Policy consistency should be improved by clarifying the relationship with the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation at Article 4 of the draft Act (Relationship with Other Acts).
 - Article 10 of the draft Act (Establishment, etc. of the Comprehensive System to Provide Information on Globalization) should differentiate international development cooperation projects with other international exchange and ordinary activities to attract investment and provide detailed methods to share the information on the projects with the ODA Korea, thereby helping local governments minimizing confusion or work duplication caused by the Act.

□ (At the Central Government Level) Methods to Attract Financial Resources for Local Governments' International Development Cooperation Projects including Financial Support by the Central Government

- As of today, most of the international development cooperation projects by local governments are funded by themselves. As a result, the projects concentrate on tangible but short-term projects with no connection with the central government's policies.
- Though local governments should be encouraged to implement international development cooperation projects within their own budget, it should be taken into

consideration that a certain part of the total budget for international development cooperation projects of the central government may be allocated to local governments.

- The allocation could be done directly (in the form of government subsidies) or indirectly (through an agency providing aid). What should be kept in mind is that such an indirect allocation could be swayed by the attention paid and the strategies taken by the agency. And the central government should also invest public money in specialized projects unique to each local government to make sure bold and innovative attempts (venturing) are made for the projects.
- In order to make sure that local governments should have a sense of ownership in carrying out international development cooperation projects, they should be allowed to spend their budget independently. And active support by the agency providing aid or the relevant government agency (the Ministry of the Interior and Safety) to smoothly conduct the projects is desirable in terms of the localization of the SDGs, decentralization, and balanced national development.

□ (At the Central Government Level) Establishment of the Partnership for International Development Cooperation (Global Implementation of the Localization of the SDGs)

- It is necessary to establish a one-stop support system at the national level or the level of the consultative body of local governments so that local governments can identify and participate in various international development cooperation projects.
- As of today, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (International Cooperation Division) has emphasized management of present condition, statistics, and achievements for integrated management of local governments' international development cooperation projects. However, it is necessary for the Ministry to strengthen its capacity for comprehensive assistance (coordination), emphasizing its role as a substantive supporter rather than a manager.
- As the ministry in charge of providing diplomatic support for local governments and sharing the experience of administrative development in the sector of public administration, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety should draw up and provide the guidelines for integrating local governments' manuals on international development cooperation projects and the SDGs with local governments' international development cooperation projects.

- The consultative body among local governments should consider expansion of support including consultation for local governments' international development cooperation projects by enhancing the capacity owned by the Governors Associations of Korea for supporting international exchange.
- The policy council for domestic and global implementation of the localization of the SDGs by the central and local governments (led by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety) should be established as the consultative body whose meetings are held routinely to share the information related to international development cooperation projects between relevant government agencies and local governments, facilitate cooperation, and maintain policy consistency.
- It is necessary to establish cooperative partnership, which meets the characteristics of each local government, with the relevant organizations such as international organizations, international development cooperation centers at each region, universities and research institutes and to promote joint projects (or support cooperative partnership for this purpose at the level of the Ministry of the Interior and Safety).
- It is necessary for the central government to co-host international conferences related to the localization of the SDGs with international organizations, present best practices at various international conferences, assist local governments with inviting public officials from developing countries to excellent administrative examples in South Korea, and expand local community programs such as education and promotion of international development cooperation projects for local residents and public officials.
- * As of today, six centers are established (in Gyeonggi-do, Incheon, Gangwon-do, Daegu, Jeollabuk-do, and Jeonju) through the tripartite agreement among the KOICA, local governments, and universities on business cooperation and the centers are in place to promote local governments' international development cooperation projects.

※ Systems for Domestic and Global Implementation of the Localization of the SDGs and for Cooperative Partnership (between the Central and Local Governments)

Classification		Approach (role)		Supporting (budget) agency	
		Domestic implementation	Overseas implementation	Domestic implementation	Overseas implementation
Law/ System	Central	K-SDGs The Sustainable Development Act	The Globalization Support Act (Global development cooperation)	Ministry of the Interior and Safety* (Deputy Ministry for Planning & Coordination)	Ministry of the Interior and Safety* (Director General for Policy Planning / Director General for International Administrative Cooperation)
	Local	KL-SDGs Bylaws concerning sustainable development (establishment and operation)	Bylaws of local governments on international cooperation (Global development cooperation)	Heads of local governments Planning & Coordination Bureau	In charge of international cooperation / trade
Implement ation	Central	Local self-government and decentralization Government innovation	Ministry of the Interior and Safety* (Chief of International Cooperation Division)	Ministry of the Interior and Safety*	Ministry of the Interior and Safety* (The Ministry of Economy and Finance / The Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
	Local	Local governments: administration + companies + citizens		Sustainable development committee / Council of local governments, etc.	
Monitoring and Assessme nt	Central	Assessment by the central government	Secondary assessment (meta evaluation)	Ministry of the Interior and Safety*	Ministry of the Interior and Safety* (The Office for Government Policy Coordination)
	Local	Sustainable development committee / Council of local governments, etc. (Displaying achievements indicators)		Ministry of the Interior and Safety* The Office for Government Policy Coordination (The Ministry of Economy and Finance: Free of charge / The Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Paid)	

Note: The Ministry of the Interior and Safety serves as the “capstone” which provides overall assistance for local governments in implementing the localization of the SDGs through operation of the policy council and the comprehensive information system, supports the partnership for domestic and global implementation of the localization of the SDGs by local governments, and lays the foundation for the support.

☐ (At the Central Government Level) Establishment of the Platform to Match the Development Cooperation Supply by Local Governments and the Development Cooperation Demand by Developing Countries

- Each local government needs to build a platform where the areas which the local government has comparative advantage in terms of development cooperation projects (development supply) and the areas which local governments of developing countries require for development cooperation (development demand) can be matched.
- The website of the Governors Associations of Korea (or the International Cooperation Center for Local Administration under the Ministry of the Interior and Safety), which is in charge of supporting local governments' globalization efforts, can be utilized to build an online platform where comparative advantage of each local government in terms of the 17 SDGs is introduced and to publicize the advantage to local governments in developing countries interested in adoption of relevant policies (e.g.: Transport in Seoul, environment in Incheon, seafood industry in Chungcheongnam-do, and agriculture in Jeollanam-do).
- International organizations in South Korea can build an offline platform where the cases mentioned above can be introduced as administrative innovation by South Korean local governments and as best practices of implementing the SDGs to the global community through various international conferences and seminars in which public officials from developing countries participate.

☐ Methods to Improve Awareness of the Localization of the SDGs among the Public

- In order to raise awareness of international development cooperation by local governments and of the localization of the SDGs among the public, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety needs to hold workshops in which relevant public officials including the heads of local governments participate and to provide education programs which enhances the capacity of the public officials from local governments for international development cooperation projects.
- The central government needs to assist local governments with raising awareness of international development cooperation projects among local residents in order to obtain their consent and support.

- In order to select best practices of public administration, the central government should encourage local governments to identify best practices of domestic and global implementation of the localization of the SDGs and, in line with this, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety should support the identification efforts.
- A cooperation project which assists the public officials from developing countries residing in South Korea with finding out best practices of each local government's implementation of the localization of the SDGs (so-called KL-SDGs Explorer) is an innovative idea required to generate the demand for international development cooperation.
- The Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the Governors Associations of Korea, and international organizations should jointly host the forums, workshops, and seminars where the government, the academia, non-governmental organizations, and companies participate in order to share best practices of local governments and garner support from local residents continuously.

※ The Roles of the Main Actors Participating in the Partnership to Assist Local Governments with Implementing the SDGs in Developing Countries

Main actors of the partnership	Roles
Ministry of the Interior and Safety (at the level of the central government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing the legal grounds for obtaining financial resources to carry out international development cooperation projects by local governments (amendment to the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation or enactment of the Globalization Support Act for Local Governments) - Preparing the manuals on international development cooperation projects for local governments - Establishing and operating the policy council for international development cooperation between the central and local governments - Providing education programs including workshops to improve the capacity of the relevant public officials in local governments - Hosting the forums on international development cooperation to raise awareness among public officials in local governments and citizens with the Governors Associations of Korea and international organizations
Office for Government Policy Coordination KOICA/EDCF (Other government agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a public contest over local governments that will implement international development cooperation projects targeting developing countries and providing financial support for the local governments - Expanding the coverage of cooperation programs targeting local communities between international development cooperation centers and local governments at each region

Main actors of the partnership	Roles
Governors Associations of Korea (or establishing a separate center called International Cooperation Support Center)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building an online platform to introduce excellent administrative examples of each local government in terms of the 17 SDGs (utilizing existing websites) - Establishing a one-stop system to assist local governments with international development cooperation projects including consulting services - Hosting the forums on international development cooperation to raise awareness among public officials in local governments and citizens with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety and international organizations
International organizations in South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introducing best practices of implementing the SDGs by local governments at international conferences and seminars where public officials from developing countries participate (utilizing the cases mentioned at the online platform) - Hosting the forums on international development cooperation to raise awareness among public officials in local governments and citizens with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety and the Governors Associations of Korea
Local governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discovering excellent administrative examples with comparative advantage which can be introduced to local governments in developing countries - Establishing cooperative partnership with the relevant organizations such as universities and research institutes, international organizations, and international development cooperation centers at each region to promote joint projects on distribution of best practices of implementing the SDGs in local governments (Co-hosting international conferences, introducing cases at the conferences, assisting local governments with inviting public officials from developing countries to excellent administrative examples, etc.) - Promoting the achievements of international development cooperation projects online and offline to local residents