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Editorial

As this issue goes to press, the Zero Draft of the UN's *Sustainable Development Guidelines* (SDGs) has just been published to replace the MDGs. The SDGs propose a powerful agenda for change and will apply to all countries, not just those in the developing world. As **Lucy Slack** outlines in her compelling piece on the critical role of local government, It is evident that many of the draft SDGs relate directly to local government and local governance, and will require the involvement of local government in their implementation - water, sanitation, food security. For Habitat III, the next major UN conference after the SDGs are approved, the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, which met in Nairobi on 2 April 2015, advocated for full acknowledgement of local authorities' strategic and delivery role in international policy-making to meet many of the core 21st century challenges.

In this edition we have an exciting range of papers from the Americas, to Africa, India and the Pacific. From the developed world, in Canada, **Joshua Zaato** and **Pierre-André Hudon** look at the administrative and democratic effects of PPP procurement in Greater Ottawa through two case studies of a sports arena and major redevelopment project. From the UK, **Gordon Morris** looks at the politicisation of rural development policy and the implications of closure of the Commission for Rural Communities.

There are two interesting and very different papers from India. In a powerful analysis of budgetary and income figures for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, **Simanti Bandyopadhyay** analyses to examines the potential for local revenue raising, following publication of a major government commission in 2006. Results show a diversification of revenue sources, but political resistance and practical hurdles mean that these remain under-exploited. In tribal regions of Odisha, **Bishnu Mohapatra** examines the potential of decentralised development planning and participatory planning in effective strategy making.

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Three papers look at the role of civil society in local government service delivery. **Md. Shahriar Islam** discusses how community and voluntary organisations and NGOs can broaden the reach of service delivery and the potential of co-production of services with local government to extend outreach. **Norbert Musekiwa** and **Kudzai Chatiza** look at the increasingly powerful role that residents' associations in Zimbabwe are playing in advocacy for improved services, and in direct service delivery.

Two papers focus on the role of local government in small island states. **Paul Pounder**, argues that in Barbados the role of Constituency Councils in promoting community entrepreneurship has not yet been realised. From Papua New Guinea, **Benjamin Barcson** argues that local government reforms introduced in 1995 have hindered rather than facilitated the effectiveness of lower tiers of government.

There is a growing field of local government scholarship on local government in Ghana, and a groundswell of concern about the missed opportunities of property-rating in bolstering local government finance, which four papers in this issue address. **Abdulai Kuyini** discusses the pros and cons of decentralisation and dangers of fragmentation of service provision that decentralisation can bring. **Dadson Awunyo-Vitor**, **Eric Oduro Osae**, and **Sterling Donani** analyse the problems of property rate default, and **Elias Kuusaana** looks at Wa Municipality to argue that property tax could be increased to generate up to 30% of local government revenues. Finally, **Samuel Biitir** and **John Assiamah** look at the potential of ICT applications to improve property-rate collection. The theme of property rating is also taken up by **Paul Fish** in his paper on experience of property rating in Sierra Leone and Malawi.

Alex Thottunkel and **Sibi Kuppathanath** look at ICT applications in local government, and the transformation to local government front office functions that computerisation in Kerala can bring. **Sandra Singh** in her book review looks at the crucial issue of Trinidad and Tobago's women in local government elections.