



## ■ In Profile – Jochen Mattern - Former project coordinator of the DeLoG secretariat



Jochen Mattern is the former project coordinator of the DeLoG secretariat. For more than 15 years, he has been working in the field of international development with a special focus on Decentralisation and Local Governance. Amongst others, he worked for UNDP in Guatemala and Zimbabwe.

In 2010, Jochen took over the position as coordinator of the DeLoG secretariat. Jochen left this position recently, but he will continue working with GIZ and is currently heading the sector project forced displacement.

In this interview, Jochen Mattern provides an insight into his experiences, motivation and wishes for the DeLoG network.

---

**DeLoG:** *Jochen, thank you very much for taking time for this interview! First, there is a reason why we are conducting this interview with you. After holding your position as DeLoG coordinator for seven years, you have taken the decision to move on to new tasks and paths. What was your initial motivation to be part of the DeLoG network and has your motivation changed over the years?*

Thanks for this opportunity. Decentralisation and Local Governance (DLG) has indeed accompanied myself along my professional career. Since I started as a GTZ intern to work in Decentralisation projects in El Salvador and Nicaragua, I am convinced - as quoted many times - that development starts from the local level. Particular interesting about the DeLoG network was its composition of bi- and multilateral development partners and the goal to contribute to more harmonisation and development effectiveness amongst them as agreed in the 2005 Paris declaration on aid effectiveness. In the meantime, people think about climate when they hear Paris, but the need for coherent and coordinated approaches towards development interventions is still there. The main incentive for taking up the post as coordinator of the DeLoG secretariat was to combine DLG and harmonization of development partners' approaches. This great opportunity of working together with such a variety of development partners, exchanging experiences and learning from each other kept me inspired along the years.

The first time I participated in a DeLoG annual meeting was in 2010 at the World Bank in Washington. I started to learn that the informal character of the network allows



getting to know the faces behind the organisations. The DeLoG focal points are the living element of the network. This “human” factor is DeLoG’s secret of success.

**DeLoG:** *DeLoG is an informal network which is alive because of its interested and interesting members. Who guarantees the functioning of the Secretariat?*

The sustained support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to the DeLoG secretariat shows that decentralisation is of high importance for Germany. The BMZ continues to provide a platform for exchange and joint learning amongst development partners in the field of DLG. This support provides the essential foundation for the development of the DeLoG network itself. The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) has been co-funding the institutional strengthening of the secretariat since 2013 as well as the “learn4dev” capacity development program. This support sums up to over € 5 Million since the establishment of the network and therefore adds an essential basis to DeLoG besides BMZ’s support. In addition, a majority of DeLoG member organization provided direct financial and in-kind contributions to DeLoG activities.

**DeLoG:** *In the years as DeLoG’s project coordinator, what were major milestones of your work as DeLoG coordinator and for the DeLoG network? Could you explain what the DeLoG/learn4dev capacity development program is?*

The first major milestone was the contribution to and the participation of DeLoG at the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Meeting on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, that resulted in the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Together with UCLG, UNDP, UNCDF and others, DeLoG hosted a side event and launched a study [on Localising the Paris Principles](#). Local Governments now have a seat in the steering committee of the Busan partnership.

Another important milestone was the support to local governments for being recognised as development actors in the post 2015 process. We have been supporting the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments to make evidence based contributions signaling the importance of “Localising the SDGs” to achieve the 2030 Agenda. With its contribution, DeLoG advocated for the recognition of subnational government level as crucial actors for achieving the agreed 17 goals and 169 targets. Local governments have an essential part to play when it comes to achieving the development goals. It is important that sector deconcentration is coherently integrated into a decentralisation reform process. Otherwise, deconcentrated resources in sector ministries get stuck at the central level. Together with the [Urban Institute](#) we collected evidence in 29 countries on the impact of making more resources available to the local public sector. Such a study would not have been possible without the support of various DeLoG members and partners.

DeLoG also contributed to the financing for development process. Local governments are, for the first time, explicitly mentioned in the outcome document, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, e.g. in the context of infrastructure financing. This opens up possibilities for new sources of local financing. DeLoG also contributed to the New Urban Agenda, the outcome document of the Habitat III process. DeLoG hosted a high-level event, on the importance of decentralised political and administrative systems to enable local governments to perform as development actors.



Designing and implementing the [DeLoG/Learn4dev](#) capacity development program has been a major achievement. It started with a first pilot course at the European Union in Brussels in 2011. Since then DeLoG has conducted over a dozen learning events in the field and headquarters of the member organisations. The format allows for a context specific, tailor-made approach that has been applied to in-country, regional and thematic joint learning events. All of these seminars have been hosted and supported by various DeLoG members. The first in-country course for example was held in 2012 in Mozambique. Regional seminars took place in Cameroon, Burkina Faso and the Philippines. We had also events in Vienna, where a focus was put on regional planning in the Western Balkan Region or The Hague where decentralisation was discussed in the context of fragility.

Another great success is the e-learning course. Since 2013, we are conducting an e-learning course on an annual basis and due to the high demand sometimes even twice per year. This sums up to seven e-learning courses over the last years.

### **DeLoG:** *What is on DeLoG's agenda at the moment?*

DeLoG in terms of project has just started into a new three years phase. It has initiated a strategic process to strengthen its institutional set up and to sharpen the objectives and the mode of operation of the network. A strategic support group as a steering and sounding body has been established at last year's annual meeting. The group is almost done finalizing a DeLoG Charta that sets out the goals, mission and the way the network is supposed to function. The Charta will need to be agreed upon by all members.

The overall goal of DeLoG is to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs at the local level. Therefore, it needs a political, legal and fiscal framework to empower local governments as development actors that defines the roles and functions of each level of government. Ideally, these different government levels interact in a manner of co-creation and partnership that enables territorial governance. However, the reality in many countries in the relationship between different government levels are not characterized by cooperation and partnership, but conflict. Just to mention a few: Turkey / Kurdistan, Iraq, Mali or Ukraine. Therefore, issues around multi-level-governance are high on the agenda.

Further the issue of improving and broadening local financing is crucial for the implementation of the SDGs at the local level. Another important field of action is the monitoring of the progress in achieving the Agenda 2030. In this respect the current DeLoG workstreams including decentralisation in fragile contexts, fiscal decentralisation and financing local development and territorial governance are highly relevant for all DeLoG members.

Important DeLoG events next year will be a joint learning event with the UN, EU and SDC on local governance and sustaining peace as well as one with ADB on localizing the SDGs. Not to forget the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting that for the first time is held in The Hague, Netherlands, hosted by the Dutch Association of Local Governments (VNG).



Last but not least, to start and think about how members can jointly design support initiatives to enable local SDG implementation will be on the secretariats to do list.

**DeLoG:** How do you see DeLoG's role in the future?

To tackle the big global challenges, such as preventing conflict and sustaining peace, climate change or urbanization, local government's need to be enabled to play their role as essential development actors in our partner countries. Therefore, coordination amongst development partners as well as strong local governments within an effective multi-level-governance system in the next years are essential for the future of development cooperation. That could be one of DeLoG's future fields of activity.

Obviously, funding and focal point engagement is always an important issue for networks like DeLoG. Thus, a stable and continuous funding as currently provided by BMZ and DEZA is crucial now and in the future.

I will continue work with GIZ and will be involved in DLG issues, so I will closely follow the course DeLoG will take.

**DeLoG:** *We would like to thank you for all your dedication and work for DeLoG and you will surely be missed. All the best for your future steps.*