Collaborative governance case study: from intersectoral projects to a whole of society approach in the Western Cape Province

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Context

The Western Cape Province is situated on the south western tip of the African continent and is one of the 9 provinces of South Africa. The current population is estimated to be 6.5 million, 11.3% of the national population. Nearly one-fifth (18.3%) of households in the Province live in informal dwellings, compared to the national average of 13.9%. The Western Cape has experienced rapid urbanisation and population growth from 4.5 million in 2001, to over 6 million in 2017, mainly due to the fact that it is one of the better performing regional economies in South Africa and has the country's best education and health outcomes. Projections are that by 2021 an additional 0.5 million people will have migrated to the Western Cape.

The health of the Western Cape's inhabitants reflects the national "quadruple burden" of disease. Escalating rates of non-communicable diseases account for half of the premature deaths, while HIV/AIDS and TB remain important causes of mortality. In recent years, interpersonal violence has overtaken all other single causes of premature death in men. The Province has the highest rates of gang and drug related crime in the country. Alcohol and substance abuse have been identified as the main contributing factors to domestic violence and child abuse. Based on mounting global evidence, intersectoral action to safe guard the "first 1000 days" of life, starting from conception to the end of the second year, is recognised as important to addressing this complex burden of disease.

The Province faces a number of number of interrelated challenges including a growing population, widening inequalities, unemployment, poverty and increasing needs for and housing, infrastructure and resources.

Problems creating need for a whole of society approach (WoSA)

Increases in multiple interacting and compounding health problems, poor social conditions, rapid urbanisation and migration (as well as the threats of climate change) has created a compelling context for transformation in service provision. Based on the realisation that individual government departments are unable to address this set of interrelated challenges, the provincial government developed a Provincial Strategic Plan (PSP) and five Provincial Strategic Goals (PSGs) in 2015, anchored in the concept of a "Whole of Society" approach. The third Provincial Strategic Goal (PSG 3) aims to "increase wellness, safety and tackle social ills". PSG 3 originally included the "First 1000 Days" initiative as one of its priority projects, to be implemented from 2016 onwards. However, In the process of operationalising the PSGs, an important insight emerged. Despite the recognition of a whole of society approach and the need to work across sectors, the implementation of the PSGs had been organised as a set of vertical projects distributed across the Provincial Government Departments. The first 1000 Days initiative, for example, was identified as a vertical project assigned to the Health Department, alongside six other PSG3 projects assigned to other Government Departments. The conceptualisation of various vertical projects as part of the PSGs resulted in disjointed multi-sectoralism, where Provincial Government Departments implemented interventions alongside each other in the same communities, with a set of parallel project deliverables. The lessons learnt in one geographic "learning site" (referred to as the "better space" initiative), where the PSG 3 team experimented with an integrated spatial service delivery model, across the Provincial Government Departments and the Municipality, led to the re-conceptualisation of the approach. The evaluation of the learning site model revealed the need to get commitment across all the Provincial Government Departments to work more collaboratively and synergistically for local development and provincial development.

Timelines and key features of collaboration

2011
Cape Town Declaration of Wellness – idea of wellness and Whole of Society approach

2014
Provincial Strategic Plan (2014-2019) launched which includes 5 Provincial Strategic Goals

2015
First 1000 Days initiative included as part of the third Provincial Strategic Goal

April 2017
Whole of Society framework approved

December 2017
Phased engagement strategy toolkit

2018
WoSA implementation begins in four learning sites, involving 13 provincial departments, + municipality + community

Since 2017 the Provincial Government has been in the process of defining and implementing a whole of society approach (WoSA) between government departments and across spheres of government (provincial, local), premised on a deliberate design approach ("Maturity framework") of collaboration, learning and adaptive management (supported by shared emerging culture, aligned processes and sharing of resources) (see Figure). The WoSA consists of a short term objective of building relationships of trust between Government Departments and communities towards a long term vision of a positive impact on people's lives. The WoSA is implemented in four geographic area learning sites and is grounded in trying to navigate and develop a shared purpose across government departments, gaining deeper insights into socioeconomic realities in each area and navigating community engagement. Although it is still in the early stages of development, the approach will focus on problems identified through the community entry and engagement process, which will vary depending on the geographical area. Instead of pre-defining a priority (such as First 1000 Days), it is seeking to co-construct priorities in an emergent and iterative manner through wide-spread engagement.

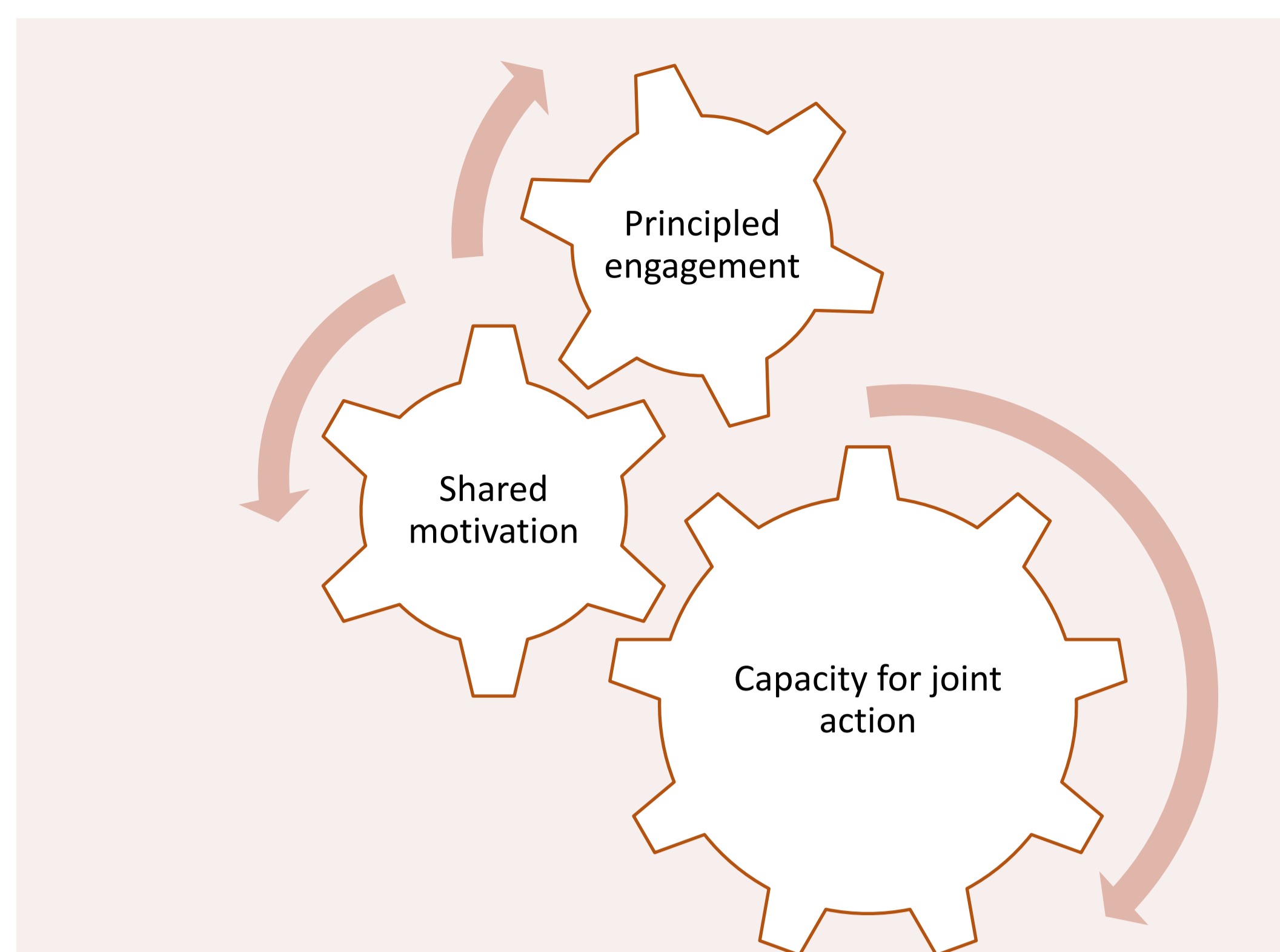### Maturity framework for adaptive management

Source: USAID, 2016

Key players

- The WOSA approach involves thirteen provincial government departments together with the municipality (local government) in four learning sites
- Together these engage local communities
- Designated Heads of Western Cape Government Departments are assigned to lead the WoSA intervention in each of the geographic learning sites in collaboration with the municipality and other key stakeholders
- Provincial transversal WoSA and local WoSA design teams established

Key achievements

- Thirteen provincial departments and the municipality jointly engage with communities in four learning sites
- Spaces created for joint exploration of problems which communities face and for multiple perspectives to be heard and valued
- Mapping of roles (provincial, local, community) and identifying the main partners responsible for service delivery in the learning sites
- Establishment of a common data repository, based on a Spatial Indicator Framework linked to local, provincial and national plans as well as the SDGs
- The beginnings of collective planning in the learning sites : what happens in the local community linked to what happens in the municipality (Integrated Development Plans) and "transversally" across provincial departments (Provincial Strategic Plans), in an integrated manner
- WoSA has "authorised" people to solve problems collectively
- Joint problem solving, learning and reflection leading to a growing sense of inter-connectedness

Collaborative governance regime*

Drivers		*Uncertainty:* Collective uncertainty about how to address the complex challenges facing the province (quadruple burden of disease, socio economic conditions, climate changes, increasing migration and urbanization), within the context of the need to address the social determinants of health. *Leadership for innovation:* WoSA endorsed by Provincial management and political leadership. Designated heads of provincial government departments lead whole of society interventions in geographic areas with the support from an interdepartmental technical committee.
Collaborative dynamics	Principled engagement	Provincial and local government officials and other stakeholders have spent time with each other in an effort to understand each other's mandates and roles. For example, local socio economic analyses have facilitated reflection sessions between players. There is an emphasis on having representation from all relevant sectors and thinking about how government officials can engage with the community. A football team analogy has been used to visualize how the WoSA team works together and the roles of each government department: The strikers are the Department of Health and the Department of Education (supported by the Department of Culture and Sport and the Department of Social Development). The midfield consisting of the Department of Transport and Public Works is responsible for infrastructure, the Department of Community Safety that promotes safe neighbourhoods, the Department of Human Settlements that provides for housing, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Economic Development which provide economic opportunities and employment. The defense is the Department of the Premier that ensures policy alignment and co-ordinates with the national government, the Department of Local Government that links the team with Municipalities and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning that co-ordinates spatial planning and safeguards the natural environment. The Provincial Treasury is the goalkeeper which ensures financial security.
	Shared motivation	A commitment to understanding each other's roles, interests, mandates and realities has enabled partners to start looking at problems jointly from different perspectives which encourages cycles of joint problem-solving, learning and reflection. Mapping each other's roles has also allowed partners to feel interconnected, which forms a basis for collaboration.
	Capacity for joint action	Procedural and institutional arrangements established, such as the provincial transversal WoSA and local WoSA design teams in each of the geographic areas. A toolkit to assist heads of government departments through the implementation process has been developed. The goal is to ensure easy alignment and adaptation across existing structures/strategies such as the Integrated Development Plans of Municipalities, the Provincial Strategic Plan, the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (Figure below). Progress in the collaboration between partners is monitored through the Maturity Framework for Adaptive Management referred to above through stages from "not yet present to "institutionalised "

*Based on: Emerson K, Nabatchi T, Balogh S. An integrative framework for collaborative governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. 2012; 22(1):1 -29
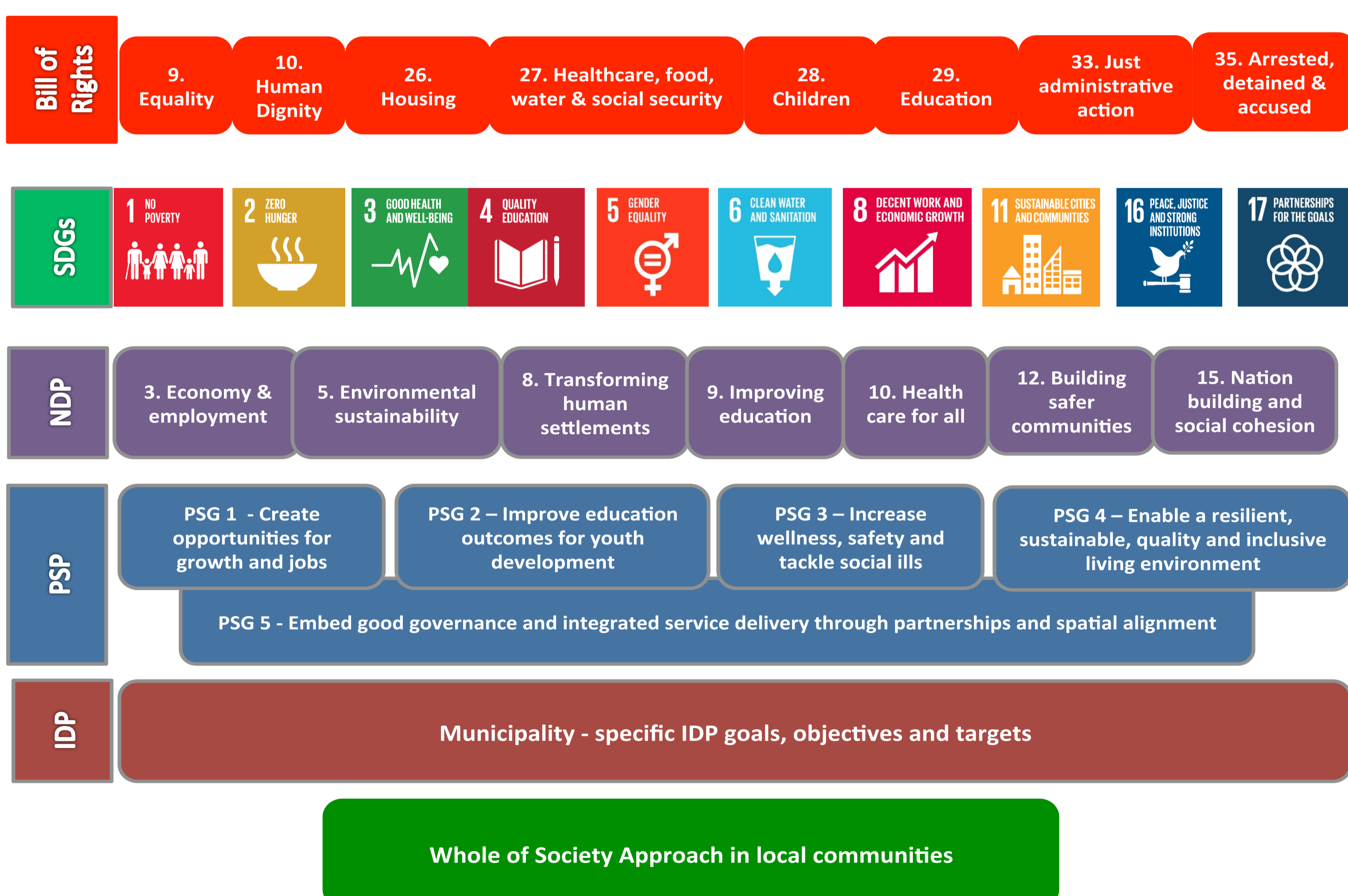
Key lessons for collaborative governance

- Meaningful intersectoral action emerges from processes of principled engagement and the development of shared motivations, rather than multi-sectoral 'projects' such as First 1000 Days
- This involves navigating the tensions between top-down policy and planning frameworks and bottom-up emergence and problem definition; and between short term deliverables and investing in building collaboration and learning.
- There must be recognition of the intensive processes involved: it takes time and resources to strengthen the capability to collaborate; relationships and networks need to be built.
- Learning must be intentional: systems and frameworks (such as the Maturity Framework) allow learning to be monitored over time
- Recognise achievements in small steps (such as developing common understanding of roles)
- Be mindful of challenges/threats such as the required monitoring and reporting of individual mandates of departments.

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