

# SDGs Learning Module 3: Reporting to national & local reviews

# SDGs Learning Module 3: Reporting to national & local reviews

June 2019

The Role of Local Government Associations  
in the Voluntary National Review elaboration process



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*



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# Presentation

In 2015 the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations. Since then, the awareness of this set of universal goals and the localizing process amongst local and regional governments (LRGs) has greatly increased.

Following the valuable lessons learned from the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era, UCLG, UNDP and UN-Habitat have made a great effort to reach LRGs and foster their engagement in the achievement of the SDGs. Within this process, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP and UN-Habitat have drawn up a roadmap for localizing the SDGs. The Training Modules dedicated to the SDGs implemented by UCLG, UNDP and UN-Habitat and the provincial council of Barcelona constitute in-depth approaches to help motivate and empower local and regional governments and their partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which has proved very successful so far.

Each year, a group of countries submit their **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)** to the UN High-Level Political Forum to present their progress in achieving the SDGs. Countries must submit at least 2 VNRs between 2015 and 2030, in which the participation of LRGs is essential. The Associations of LRGs (LRGAs) play an especially important role in this, as they must ensure that LRGs are appropriately considered within the national reporting process and, at the same time, provide sufficient support to monitor their efforts.

Last year, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), with the support of its regional sections and the Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) working group, made an important contribution by both helping members to get connected to the VNR process and to prepare their own input on the progress of LRGs towards achieving the SDGs. This resulted in the UCLG report “National and Subnational Governments on the way towards the Localization of the SDGs”.

Further to the work of associations, many individual local or regional governments have started to align the SDGs and are also carrying out reviews. Modelled on the Voluntary National Review (VNR), which all countries are invited to present to the United Nations, these Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) are useful at the local, national and global levels and reflect on successes and challenges in a more immediate way. The Annex contains examples of reviews and of LRGs participation in national reviews.

### Objective of Module 3

The objective of Module 3 is to enhance the involvement of LRGAs in the preparation of national VNRs and to help them to make their own reports on the involvement of LRGs in the pursuit of localizing of the SDGs and global agendas, as well as to support local governments in the reporting exercise. These actions will serve as key inputs to support their involvement in the national and global process and contribute to the report that is to be presented to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The following Chapters look into the different elements that need to be taken into account by LRGAs for them to perform the reporting task appropriately.

Local governments and LRGAs will not be alone in the challenge of the reporting task. The lessons learned by their peers in other cities and countries should help to improve their reporting. Peer learning between LRGAs and virtual learning sessions will be prepared by the CIB and the UCLG learning team to make sure that no association is left behind. In addition, the UCLG research team will continuously observe and provide support for the LRGAs, ensuring that their results will be seen in VNRs and at the global scale.

This document includes contents (theory and examples) submitted by LRGAs and LGs via VNRs or VLRs which will be needed by the associations and local or regional government groups for the learning sessions. The annex to chapter 7 is planned to encourage further sharing of examples for better comprehension and to support the local communities from all over the world in their participation within the SDG agenda.

### The backgrounds of those attending the course & the reading material

Anyone attending this course on Module 3 needs a good knowledge of the 2030 Agenda and the localization process. Before starting Module 3, we recommend participants to read the following texts:

- ↳ *Learning Module 1: Localizing the SDGs / Introduction*
- ↳ *Learning Module 2: The SDGs as the roadmap for the planning process at the territorial level*
- ↳ *Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at the Subnational Level*
- ↳ *The Sustainable Development Goals: What Local Governments Need to Know*
- ↳ *National and Subnational Governments on the way towards the Localization of the SDGs*
- ↳ *HLPF Sustainable Development Platform*
- ↳ *Proposal for common, voluntary reporting guidelines for the VNRs*

### Complementary documents

- ↳ *From MDGs to Sustainable Development for All: Lessons from 15 Years of Practice*
- ↳ *Local and Regional Voices on the Global Stage: our Post-2015 Journey*
- ↳ *Getting started with the SDGs in Cities: a Guide for Local Stakeholders*



- ↳ *Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Dialogues on Implementation*
- ↳ *Delivering the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Opportunities at the National and Local Levels*
- ↳ *UCLG's GOLD reports*
- ↳ *Local and Regional Government Report to the 2018 HLPF (July 2018, UCLG, Global Taskforce)*

### **Target audience**

This training session, or Module 3, seeks to develop the capacities of LRGAs at the political and technical levels. This may also be interesting to regional governments. Being aware of the huge differences that might exist between the LRGAs participating in this module, in terms of competences, territorial scope, composition etc., Module 3 seeks to be precise, but broad enough to include and reflect all kinds of LRGAs and LGS.

### **Methodology**

Module 3 has been conceived as an online training module that will offer you information to help better manage the SDG reporting process. The document is divided into 6 Chapters:

**Chapter 1: The role of LRGAs in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Short introduction**

**Chapter 2: The SDG reporting and localization process**

**Chapter 3: The participation of LRGs in the reporting process**

**Chapter 4: Collecting local results and views, drafting the LRGAs' own review, and aiming to achieve a global impact**

**Chapter 5: The Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)**

**Chapter 6: Sharing the results**

Each of these chapters and Annex 2 is designed as an independent learning module. The different contents, which are more practical than theoretical, are flexible and adaptable to the realities, needs and aspirations of the attendees and also to the political, economic, social and cultural environments of their respective territories.

At the same time, the chapters also present real case studies and best practices from different regions of the world with the main aim of offering a more practical view, based on success stories. They should also serve as a way to encourage LRGAs to embark on development projects and decentralized co-operation experiences, along the lines indicated by the roadmap.

### **Practical exercises**

In the module, the facilitator will find ideas for practical exercises that will make it easier for attendees to acquire the required knowledge. The main exercise: ***Your roadmap to reporting*** is divided into **5 steps** and distributed throughout the module. The goal of creating a roadmap is to help the trainees understand their role in reporting and to give them an overview of the entire

process. For the exercise to give tangible results, it is necessary to make sure that trainees consider a concrete local reality and specific stakeholders and processes etc. For this reason, the exercises should be done separately for every territory. If there is only one participant from a particular territory, they should work individually. If there are more people from the same city or region, they can work in **groups of 2 or 3**.

**Your roadmap to reporting is divided into 5 steps, as follows:**

1. Your role in the reporting process
2. Involving Stakeholders
3. What data should be collected?
4. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)
5. Sharing the results

According to the duration of the training session and the needs of each group, it is possible to choose to work only on specific steps rather than go through the entire set of exercises included in Your roadmap to reporting.

As an annex to the module, there is a gamified exercise about building a narrative around SDG reporting. This offers a more playful learning experience which can be used either as an icebreaker, at the beginning of the training session, or at the end, when talking about VLRs.

In the module, it will also be possible to find ideas for some additional exercises, such as writing letters or drafting a report.

Please note that to run a training session, it will be necessary to have such materials as a flipchart, sheets of paper and post-it notes.

### **Glossary**

**CSO** – Civil Society Organization

**ECOSOC** – United Nations Economic and Social Council

**HLPF** – UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

**LRG** – Local and Regional Government

**LRGA** – Local and Regional Government Association

**MDG** – Millennium Development Goal

**SDG** – Sustainable Development Goal

**UCLG** – United Cities and Local Governments

**UNDP** – United Nations Development Programme

**UN-Habitat** – United Nations Human Settlements Programme

**VLR** – Voluntary Local Review

**VNR** – Voluntary National Review

**CEMR** – Council of European Municipalities and Regions

**OECD** – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development



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# Chapter 1: The role of LRGAs in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Short introduction



Lecture



15 min



Slides 1-7

**This module enriches the central tasks of LRGAs by connecting them to the reporting of the global agenda. What can LRGAs do in this sense?**

## **Raising awareness**

LRGs may be unaware of their role in the 2030 Agenda or may fear that they are too small or lack the necessary knowledge or capacity (human, technical or financial resources) to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Based on this, LRGAs could carry out campaigns to help LRGs raise awareness and to help citizens understand their role in: 1) the implementation of the SDGs in their territories; and 2) the definition and evaluation of national and territorial strategies (including participation in the VNR).

## **Advocacy**

LRGAs have an important role to play in facilitating the participation of LRGs in the development of national SDG strategies to ensure that they reflect and respond to local circumstances, needs and priorities, following a bottom-up approach. To achieve this, LRGAs must gather data, knowledge and experience from their LRGs, but also from their territorial stakeholders and put together a consolidated political message based on this content. If LRGs have a sense of ownership of the SDGs and a part to play in determining their roles and responsibilities, their involvement in implementation will be greater.

## **Support for implementation**

LRGAs can promote the exchange of best practices among their members, identifying policy challenges that have an impact on the localization of the SDGs and they can make recommendations for improvements. They can also foster decentralized cooperation and cooperation towards achieving more effective development. They are important for promoting the effective implementation of decentralization and can forge links with key sectoral ministries and also local government agencies to foster collaboration in the task of localization.

### **Monitoring, evaluation and reporting**

LRGAs play a key role in promoting the participation of LRGs and other stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs at the national level, helping them with data collection, monitoring and assessment at the local level and with pooling efforts and resources to ensure local achievements are incorporated in national reports. This is directly related to the role of LRGAs in advocacy: they should work, through advocacy actions, to help national government to ensure that national monitoring systems also include local realities. Reinforcing local capacities in this field should also be a priority of LRGAs.

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## Chapter 2: The SDG reporting and localization process



Lecture



20 min



Slides 8-13

### Why is reporting key?

Reporting is essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in as much as it provides key information, feedback and learning mechanisms at every stage of implementation and also scope for inclusiveness and ensuring the broadest possible range of participation. Through reporting, all stakeholders (including LRGs) can learn from each other's experiences while they share their own. In this way, they can contribute to the improvement of all these other stakeholders in a collaborative manner.

Reporting by LRGs could help to strengthen coordinating bodies at the highest levels of government. Many reviews have also highlighted how coordinating matters with subnational tiers of government is essential for ensuring cohesive policy and the effective implementation of the SDGs.

Reporting also serves as a way to be more transparent and accountable, both to the organism itself and to citizens and stakeholders. It also helps to foster ownership and improve coordination with other stakeholders who are also contributing to the 2030 Agenda.

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda encourages member states to *"conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven"* (paragraph 79). These national reviews are expected to serve as the basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of UN ECOSOC. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

The aim of the VNR is to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and government institutions and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships in order to facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

VNR countries are expected to submit comprehensive written reports that are to be made available via the VNR database. In addition, each VNR country shall also provide main messages summarizing their key findings. These main messages shall also be posted via the VNR database. In 2019, 42 countries will conduct voluntary national reviews at the HLPF (see box with the list of countries below).



The ↪ *HLPF Voluntary National Review* website will provide information about the countries participating in the voluntary national reviews of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in order to answer the questions posed above. It is possible to filter this information using certain keywords, such as “local government”. For those countries whose national governments have not yet completed and published their reviews, other sources of information will have to be used.

### **What has been done so far?**

As implementation advances, the scope of the national reviews at the HLPF is expected to become increasingly broader and to take into account many country-specific circumstances. Governments are expected to report on the actions and measures taken in order to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs and, wherever possible, to provide information on the progress being made. This means that attention may still focus on the baselines, strategies, and policies that are being put into place to facilitate implementation, but that it is also expected that countries will begin to share information about their progress and accomplishments, and also about any gaps found and lessons learned, relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

A total of 22 countries submitted VNRs in 2016. This number increased to 44 in 2017 and to 46 in 2018. This demonstrates the commitment of countries worldwide to reporting on and contributing to a process that implies teaching and learning from peers.

### **The coming years**

A total of 49 countries have announced their intention to present VNRs during HLPF 2019.

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The countries that are going to present VNRs in 2019 are: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Congo (Republic of the), Cote d’Ivoire, Croatia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Fiji, Ghana, Guatemala, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Lichtenstein, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, the Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Vanuatu.

Azerbaijan, Chile, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sierra Leone will conduct VNRs for the second time.

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In addition to the national VNRs, HLPF 2018 also focused on the extent of the implementation of SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (clean energy), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production) and 15 (life on land). SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) is analysed on a yearly basis.

As regards 2019, HLPF 2019 will review the implementation of SDGs 4 (quality education), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities), 13 (climate action) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). A number of countries have already committed to presenting VNRs, including Burkina Faso, Serbia and South Africa.



10 min

### Who is in charge of leading the 2030 Agenda and its review in your country?

The units in charge of leading the 2030 Agenda will differ from country to country. In many cases this role will be assumed by the corresponding Ministry of Foreign Affairs (as in countries such as Spain or Cyprus), but other ministries or national agencies may also be charged with this task, such as the corresponding President or Prime Minister (as in Belgium and the Czech Republic), the Ministry of Finance (Denmark), the Ministry of Economy (Azerbaijan), the Ministry of Planning (Benin and Indonesia), the Ministry of Environment (the Maldives), the Ministry of International Cooperation (Jordan) etc. It is, however, important to underline that the higher the rank of the person or unit in charge of leading the 2030 Agenda, the greater the commitment the Government conveys.

The role of departments of statistics in the implementation of the SDGs has become increasingly important. One of the key lessons learnt from the MDGs is that there is a need for more and better data in order to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the global agendas. At present, statistical departments play a key role in the process of formulating targets and indicators, identifying related data sources and compiling data in an appropriate way, thus ensuring that monitoring is firmly grounded on established principles and sound statistical practices. To achieve this, it is essential for them to have a close relationship with key stakeholders, and especially LRGs and their associates, and to exchange information with them. As the scope of the 2030 Agenda greatly exceeds the content typically collected by departments of statistics, mechanisms should also be put in place, wherever applicable, for the systematic collection of data by all of the institutions, apart from departments of statistics, which have relevant databases.

#### Jordan

In Jordan, the Department of Statistics is responsible for quality assurance and the clearance of all indicators and a special SDG team was created within this department for this specific purpose. The responsibilities relating to quality assurance associated with the SDG indicators will be reflected in the National Statistical Strategy, which is currently under development. This will also focus on the importance of strengthening the quality of administrative records in order to cover important data gaps in the future.

The data collected, compiled and analysed by these departments of statistics in the context of the machinery established for achieving the 2030 Agenda will form the core of the reporting process that is explained below.



15 min

## How is the consultation process organised? Who is invited to participate?

The consultation process to prepare the VNRs should be as participative as possible, in accordance with paragraphs 78 and 79 of resolution 70/1. The specific modalities for engagement are likely to vary from country to country and must be decided by the respective national governments.

Although this is not specifically recommended, some national governments may decide not to include any stakeholders in the process. The preparation of the VNRs would then be limited to the participation of different national ministries, or even to the work carried out by the group piloting SDG implementation (the high-level group or team of experts etc.). Other governments may opt to include key stakeholders with national relevance and give particular attention to avoiding the exclusion of any minorities, such as indigenous communities or young people.

It is essential to include LRGs and their associations in the process of drafting the VNRs. However, many countries do not perceive subnational levels or localization as a core need of bottom-up approaches. Top-down approaches may lead LRGs to view the SDGs as an external burden or imposition and therefore lose interest in their introduction at the local level.

The methodology may vary substantially, but it should allow stakeholders to give their opinions and even to submit their own SDG reports, which should then be included in the final versions of the resulting VNRs (as, for example, in those of the Netherlands and Sweden, see ↪ *Annex*). There are several principles that should be borne in mind in this participatory process:

- Sharing the different steps to be taken and schedules with stakeholders
- Conducting public campaigns to encourage active participation in the whole preparation process
- Utilizing various different online and offline channels in order to give the public opportunities to provide input
- Involving all stakeholders, including both government (including LRGs) and non-state actors, such as academics and experts, philanthropists and business actors, organisms representing civil society, and the media, in order to ensure the representation of the widest possible range of interest groups and/or public elements
- Documenting and publicizing in order to ensure the maximum degree of accountability and transparency within the process, in line with the principle of open government
- Using easy-to-understand language in order to reduce the information gap between the parties involved

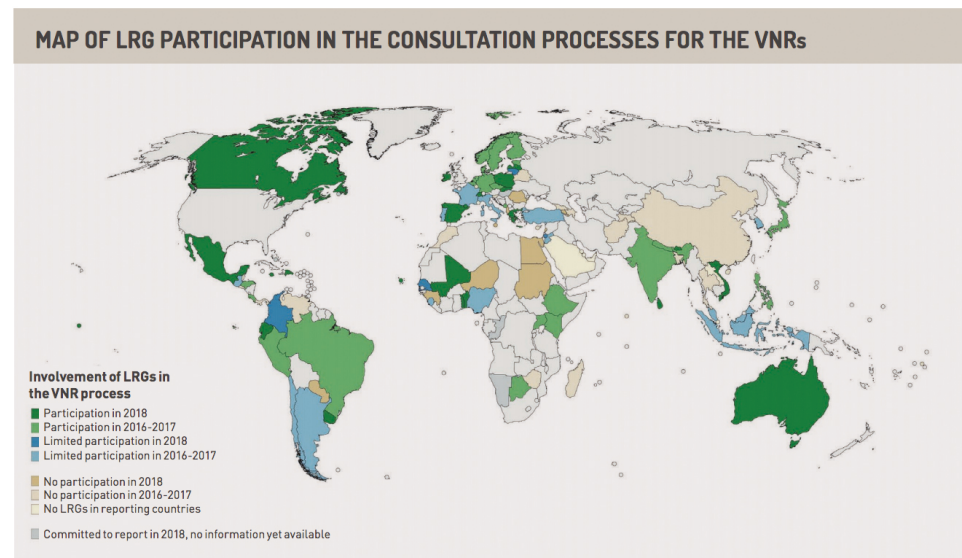
National governments should interact with relevant stakeholders and listen to their opinions and evaluations of the work done. National governments could also resort to national and international studies and analyses, whether sectoral or cross-sectoral, especially relating to fields in which the country in question may lack its own methodology and/or resources for conducting research. This would be useful for the VNRs, but also for implementation purposes. This would include using administrative data provided by ministries

and agencies, reports and reviews produced by international organizations, expert evaluations, the monitoring of the results of regional development programmes, and other information from international sources.

Within the framework of the GOLD Report, UCLG has mobilised regional experts to collect information and produce regional reports which could be of use to LRGs. Other international networks (ICLEI, C40, CLGF, AIMF) have also collected information and compiled databases on different subjects — such as carbon reporting — that could also prove useful. Other examples include the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (or RFSC — one of whose management team members is the CEMR), the SDG Index developed by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and the OECD Study on Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets. These indexes provide country rankings as well as overall SDG performance ratings based on their own specific criteria. These may prove helpful for the self-assessments of some countries.

**What is the specific situation of the LRGs and their associations with regard to their participation in the VNRs?**

At the moment of publishing the Local and Regional Governments’ Report to the 2018 HLPF (July 2018), in 23 out of the 43 countries which submitted information to UCLG (53%), LRGs declared that they had participated in the reporting process and the preparation of the VNRs. The LRGs of only 28 out of 65 countries made similar statements in 2016 and 2017, showing that progress has been made. Even so, the integration of the local and regional perspective in the reports and follow-ups remains a major challenge.



Source: Local and Regional Governments’ Report to the 2018 HLPF (July 2018, UCLG, Global Taskforce)

## Chapter 3: The participation of LRGs in the reporting process



Lecture



15 min



Slides 14-16

The participation of LRGs in the reporting process is essential for the inclusion of the local perspective within the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. LRGAs may, or may not, however, be directly invited to participate in the drafting of the VNRs.

National governments may launch consultation processes that involve LRGs, but they may also proceed without them. In fact, the presence of LRGs will probably tend to be channelled through their national associations and networks (those of major cities, metropolises and federal regions may be directly asked to participate by their national authorities, although this cannot be guaranteed). Once the consultation process has been launched, LRGAs should prepare to participate and guarantee that the local and regional perspective is taken into account.

If LRGAs have been invited to participate, they must adjust their participation to the framework in question (and even strive for a more prominent role if they do not feel that they are sufficiently represented). If LRGAs have not been invited to participate, as may be the case in many countries, a formal request should be addressed to their respective national authorities, justifying the importance of including the views and contributions of LRGs with respect to the SDGs. In this context, alliances with other stakeholders, including the representatives of the international community present in their country, may well prove essential.

Today, the situations of LRGs, in all the countries involved, that either submitted, or promised to submit, a VNR on the introduction of SDGs to HLPF 2016 (22 countries reporting), HLPF 2017 (43 countries) or 2018 (46 countries) are quite diverse. **Two particular lessons that were learnt from the drafting of the UCLG Local and Regional Governments' Report to the 2017 HLPF can be highlighted in this respect:**

- **Greater efforts are needed to involve LRGs in the VNRs and institutional mechanisms for coordination and follow-up.** Fewer than half of the VNR consultations and one third of the follow-up mechanisms in the 99 countries involved related to local government organisations. Achieving the SDGs will require collaboration both within and between governments 'to a level that has not been seen before'. Current levels of involvement are clearly insufficient and threaten to become an unbridgeable gap for the achievement of the goals. National governments and UN institutions need to further develop multilevel spaces for dialogue and joint action. These must ensure the participation and engagement of local and regional leaders, both in the reporting process — via the VNRs —



and in the national and global-level follow-up institutional mechanisms. This will require adapted agendas and policy support.

- **New institutional frameworks for collaborative governance.** Progress towards more collaborative governance requires better spaces for dialogue between different levels of the administration. Many countries acknowledge the role of LRGs and yet their VNRs and/or national strategies do not always demonstrate a clear strategy in favour of the ‘localization’ or adapting the SDGs to the local level. The SDGs provide an opportunity to catalyse both local sustainable development as well as a more inclusive and resilient form of urban development.

### How to promote ownership within LRGAs

It is clear that LRGAs will not be able to report on the performance of the LRGs relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda if they do not fully participate in the process. LRGAs have a duty and need to get LRGs involved through the political and technical staff who are present in the organization and, especially, those occupying the highest positions (such as the President, the Mayor, and/or any other officials leading the organization). This is necessary to foster the maximum degree of commitment and ownership possible. In this sense, a well-balanced mixture of bottom-up initiatives from LRGs and relatively top-down efforts from LRGAs are required to ensure the fullest possible participation.

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LRGAs have been very active in raising awareness amongst their LRGs as to the importance of the 2030 Agenda. In Brazil, 7,000 local elected officials participated in the national congress of the National Confederation of Brazilian Municipalities (CNM) and the national association of municipalities provided its newly-elected local authorities with a Guide for the Incorporation of SDGs into Municipal Multi-Year Plans. In Germany, the national association has drafted a charter to express the support of its local government organisms for the process of SDG implementation, while in the Netherlands, the national association has involved LRGs via a number of specific campaigns (e.g. the Municipalities4GlobalGoals campaign). In South Africa, SALGA has aligned its internal working groups with each of the SDGs, while the national association of Benin (ANCB) has created a special thematic commission to pursue these goals.

One in every five Flemish municipalities has signed the Global Goals, Local Focus declaration, which is sponsored by the regional association of local governments: VVSG. In Portugal, the Inter-Municipal Network for Cooperation and Development (RICD), with a membership of 20 municipalities, has organized a travelling exhibition on the SDGs and their localization that has been roving the country since 2016. The Finnish association has organized regional ‘tours’ providing information on the SDGs in collaboration with the 2030 Agenda Coordination Secretariat at the national level. Many other associations have also been highly active in mapping initiatives by LRGs and fostering exchanges (Sweden), promoting workshops (Botswana) and training activities (Togo), and communicating via various media, magazines, and web-based portals and resources (e.g., Belgium, Denmark and the city of Seoul, in the Republic of Korea) to further engage their members.

The success of these, and other activities, should provide a platform to help reach these local governments again and get them involved in the continuation of the process.



**Exercise /  
Your roadmap  
to reporting  
(Step 1 of 5)**



**10 min**



**Slides 17-18**



**Handout 1A**

## STEP 1: Your role in the reporting process

The goal of this exercise is to help trainees understand that the participation of LRGs in the reporting process is essential for the inclusion of the local perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. During this activity they will have a chance to reflect on their role in the drafting of the VNR.

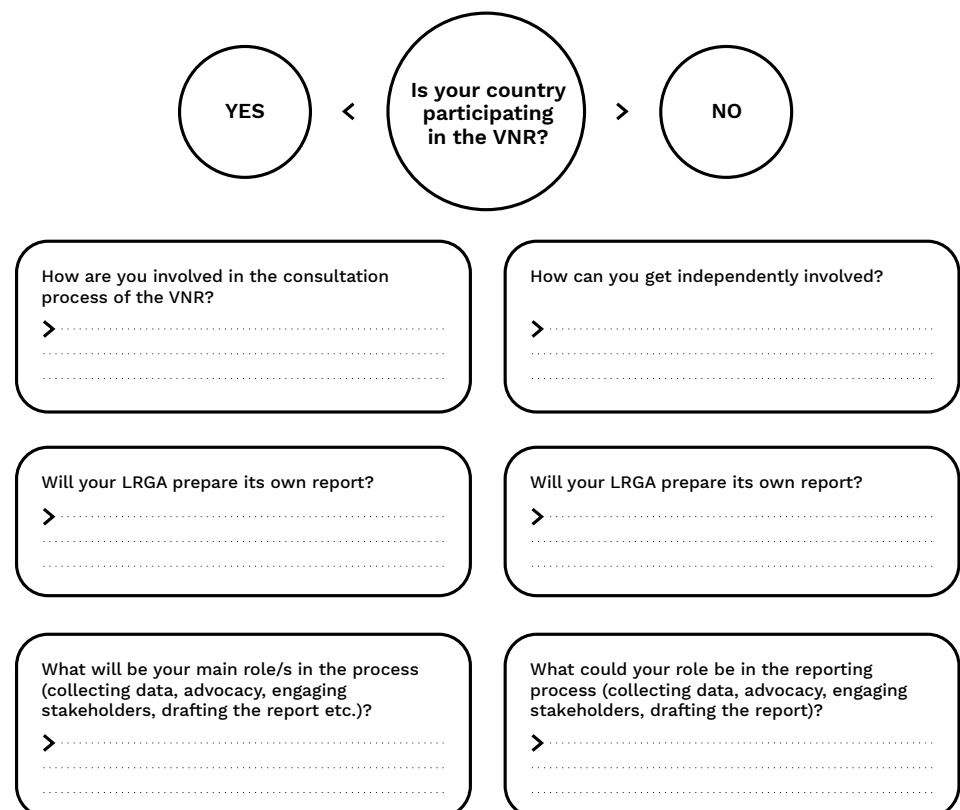
The exercise consists of two parts: creating a **mind map** (either individually, or in groups if the trainees come from the same territory) and a **group debate**.

When it comes to tools and materials, for this exercise participants may find it useful to have: a flipchart (to draw the main structure of the mind map), some pieces of paper (for the trainees to do work with) and perhaps some stickers and/or post-it notes.

Start by putting some questions on a flipchart, so that they are visible to all the attendees. Encourage trainees to think about them and to create their own mind maps with possible answers.

### Example of a mind map

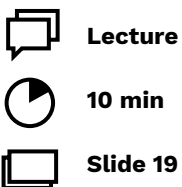
(all the questions should be written on the flipchart):





After this exercise, if there is enough time left, you could invite your trainees to take part in a **debate** to share their reflections after working on the first part of the map. **Below you will find some questions that could help you to moderate and make the discussion more dynamic:**

- How do you think that your role is understood by other stakeholders?
- What is your relation with the institution responsible for the VNR?
- What could hamper the promotion of the SDGs within the LRGA?
- Would the presidency/board pose problems to the Agenda? Would they deem it unnecessary?
- Would the technical staff see it as an added burden on top of their daily activities?
- Would the forthcoming end of the mandate encourage or discourage the implementation of the SDGs?



### How can LRGAs get in touch with the authorities in charge of the VNR?

LRGAs should arrange institutional contacts with the authorities that are in charge of the consultation process in order to clarify the different modalities and procedures for participation. This includes:

- Getting in touch with the national focal points at the highest possible political level in order to seek the commitment of the national government to include local data and views in the process
- Maintaining permanent contact with the national focal point at the technical level and looking to exchange information that could be useful in a bidirectional sense
- Reaching a consensus on the modalities and procedures required for LRGAs to be able to effectively participate in the VNRs. The national authorities in charge of the VNRs and LRGAs will have to agree upon whether local visions should be presented in their LRG reports. If an association is allowed to participate in high-level meetings, or in specific working sessions, it must be decided whether it will share the participative space with other stakeholders or whether its participation is to be limited to it filling in a questionnaire etc. A duly agreed calendar shall be given to the association in order to ensure its participation is designed and prepared in the best way possible. It is essential that LRGAs ensure that these modalities and procedures allow the participation of LRGs to be as effective as possible and not merely a formality
- Co-organizing a conference, together with the national government, in order to present the national strategy and the way in which LRGs have been involved in the process — thus giving visibility to the work done by LRGs and to the critical role that they play in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda
- Promoting new initiatives to support the localization of the SDGs, generating a more consensual alignment of different mechanisms in order to foster a bottom-up approach, and giving greater visibility to local political initiatives etc.



### Additional Exercise

**Create a template for a letter that could be sent to the national government in order to request the involvement of LRGAs in the VNR.** For this, the LRGAs will need to ascertain which department is in charge of drafting the VNR and therefore who the most appropriate recipient of the letter would be.

The answer could contain the key points that the trainee should have included and any reflections upon them.



### Lecture



15 min



Slide20

### What are positive aspects of building alliances with local, national and international stakeholders?

LRGAs should analyse what other stakeholders need in order to be involved in the process: private sector, academia, CSOs, foundations, international organizations... This analysis should include information about how these stakeholders can contribute to the SDGs and what the characteristics of the paths for collaboration should be.

CSOs and the private sector are good allies for influencing the reporting process. In many situations, LRGs and CSOs are already working together to implement the SDGs. If they are already sharing strategies, including them in the reporting process would be an asset.

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Local governments also participate in various platforms and initiatives in collaboration with organizations representing civil society, the private sector, professional organisms, and many other stakeholders. The Belgian SDG Charter is supported by a very diverse consortium of eight partners — ranging from a retail supermarket chain to a municipality and several large and small NGOs — which provide information about the SDGs and their implementation at the local level to their respective audiences. This agreement was also signed, among many other stakeholders and governmental bodies, by 73 municipalities.

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Building alliances with academia, experts and research centres could also be crucial, as these entities are able to support the efforts of LRGAs to influence the reporting process by providing both data and information. Strategic partnerships with departments of statistics ensure the expansion of data sources and complementarity of information. This implies providing more specific and reliable results and also a clearer description of the reality of the SDG implementation process.

According to the VNRs submitted, many countries still consider problems relating to the availability of disaggregated data and the reliability of data collection capacities and resources as key vulnerabilities within the localization process. It is, nevertheless, important to underline the need to include geographically disaggregated information, broken down at the regional and municipal levels, in order to guarantee the effective participation of subnational governments in the monitoring process.

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In May 2017, the German associations of cities (DST), towns and municipalities (DSTGB) and counties (DLT), launched an initiative to develop SDG

Indicators for Municipalities. This was done with the support of federal and academic institutions and foundations and with the aim of designing adequate and consistent indicators to assess SDG implementation at the municipal level: in both territories with 5,000 or more inhabitants and in rural districts. An example is provided provided in the ↪ [Annex](#).

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Several international organizations associated with the United Nations and/or the European Union have considerable experience working with LRGs and are strongly committed to the localization of SDGs. By taking advantage of their direct official contacts with central governments, international organizations can overcome many of the difficulties that LRGAs could face in the consultation process.

Many national networks and associations are supporting their members in the integration of the SDGs into local policies, sometimes in partnership with UN agencies. Many have done so through training activities (e.g., in Colombia), guidelines and roadmaps (the example of Brazil is relevant, in this regard, while at the global level the GTF has disseminated a Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs), portals and other resources for exchanging knowledge and delivering innovative solutions to help solve problems.

The UNDP, in particular, has worked with national LRG associations, in various countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to raise awareness of the efforts made via fora and workshops (e.g., in Ethiopia and Uganda) and dedicated programmes and training sessions (e.g., Bangladesh, Costa Rica, and Honduras). It has also assisted regions and municipalities with the drafting of their local plans and helped to make these compatible with the SDGs (this has been done in Brazil and Ecuador and, for example, in the Mexican states of Chiapas and Jalisco).

The UNDP-ART initiative and UN-Habitat, which in partnership with the Global Taskforce have co-led UN dialogues on the localization of the SDGs worldwide, have also contributed to the dissemination of the localization approach in various regions. As a consequence of these efforts, several bilateral cooperation schemes and multilateral development banks are now considering the localization approach to be a key strategic tool for converting their global agendas into sub-national initiatives and actions and thereby improving policy coordination by adopting systems of multi-level coordination and governance. Indeed, UNDESA and some UN Country Teams have worked with different countries to identify their needs and to help build capacity in these areas. This would be a great opportunity to extend this collaboration to LRGs as well.

Other key international stakeholders, in this sense, would include the European Union (and its various delegations around the world), international and regional development banks, and all kinds of donors, such as NGOs, foundations etc.

## STEP 2: Involving Stakeholders

During this exercise your trainees will learn about the process of involving stakeholders. **The goal of this activity is to make them aware that top-down approaches may lead LRGs to conceive SDGs as an external burden**



**Exercise /  
Your roadmap  
to reporting  
(Step 2 of 5)**



15 min



Slides 21-22



Handout 1B

**or imposition and this could lead to them losing interest in introducing them at the local level.** After completing the exercise your trainees should understand that the process needs to be participatory and to allow stakeholders to give their opinions and even submit their own SDG reports. This input should then be used for the final versions of the VNRs.

During this activity, your trainees will be asked to create a list of possible stakeholders (either individually, or in groups if the trainees come from the same territory). From this list, they will then choose 5 main stakeholders and write down their pros and cons and also the possible ways of engaging them within the process.

When it comes to using tools and materials for the exercise, it may be useful to provide: a **flipchart** (to draw the structure of the mind map), **some pieces of paper** for the attendees to do work on, and also some **stickers** and **post-it notes**.

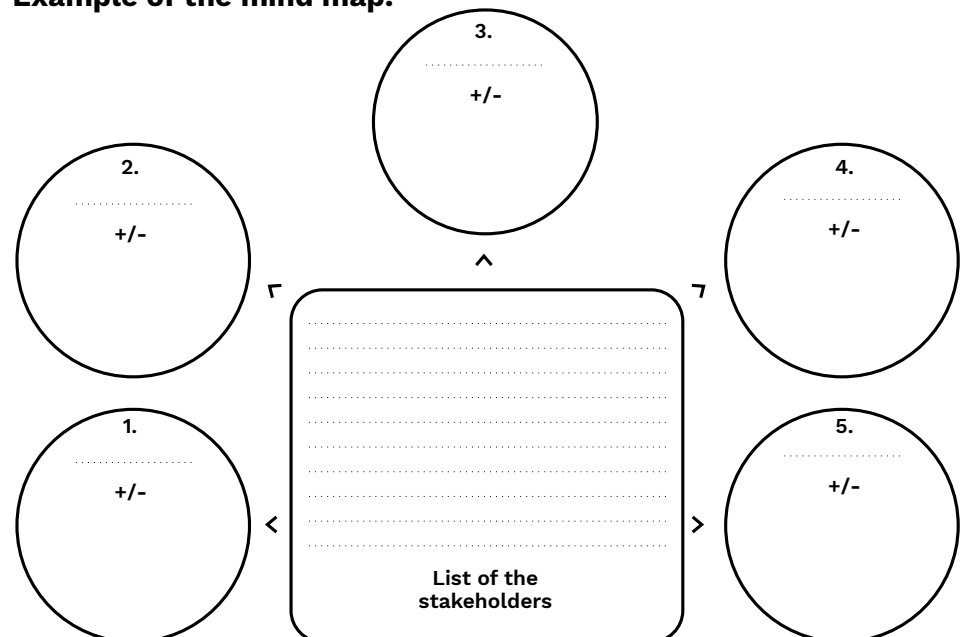
Start by putting the structure presented below on a flipchart so that it is visible for all the trainees. Then encourage them to create their own mind maps based on the following question:

**Which stakeholders should be involved in the process in your territory: private sector, academia, CSOs, foundations, international organizations (think of some specific stakeholders)?**

**Ask them to include on their mind map:**

1. A list of all the stakeholders (including specific institutions and providing names).
2. Choose five main stakeholders.
3. The Pros & Cons of each of the five stakeholders.
4. Ideas about how to engage them (specific actions).

**Example of the mind map:**



Ask the trainees to put the names of their stakeholders in the big circle. In the smaller ones, they should then present their main stakeholders with their respective pros and cons listed underneath and ideas about how to engage them.

After completing the exercise, if there is enough time left, you could invite your trainees to take part in a **debate** and encourage them to exchange their thoughts and ideas after working on the mind map. **Here are some questions that you could ask your trainees:**

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 **Debate**

- Do you play a leading role in getting stakeholders involved?
- How could you ensure that key stakeholders take part in the reporting process?

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## Chapter 4: Collecting local results and views, drafting the LRGA's own review and aiming to achieve a global impact



Lecture



10 min



Slides 23–26

### What data and information are needed and how should they be collected?

In order to contribute to the VNRs with the local and regional perspective and to ensure that this perspective responds entirely to reality, LRGAs must collect data and information (including best practices and new policies) about good practices of LRGs and their contributions to achieving the SDGs.

LRGAs can use different methodologies to collect data and information. The most common one is to conduct a survey containing specific questions on the state of the art of SDG implementation at the local level, aimed at both LRGs and local stakeholders.

The information gathered via the survey will make it possible to identify the LRGs that are committed to the new Agenda. It will also provide information about:

- The top SDGs that have been introduced and their targets
- Top priorities
- Types of interventions (raising awareness, alignment, projects etc.)
- Best practices
- Allocating budgets

This process should also help to ascertain how the priorities defined by LRGs, in their respective local development plans, can be recognized within national strategies for the implementation of SDGs. At the same time, it should help to identify major gaps between national SDG strategies and the demands of LRGs and, as a result, help to develop an advocacy strategy for obtaining more support.

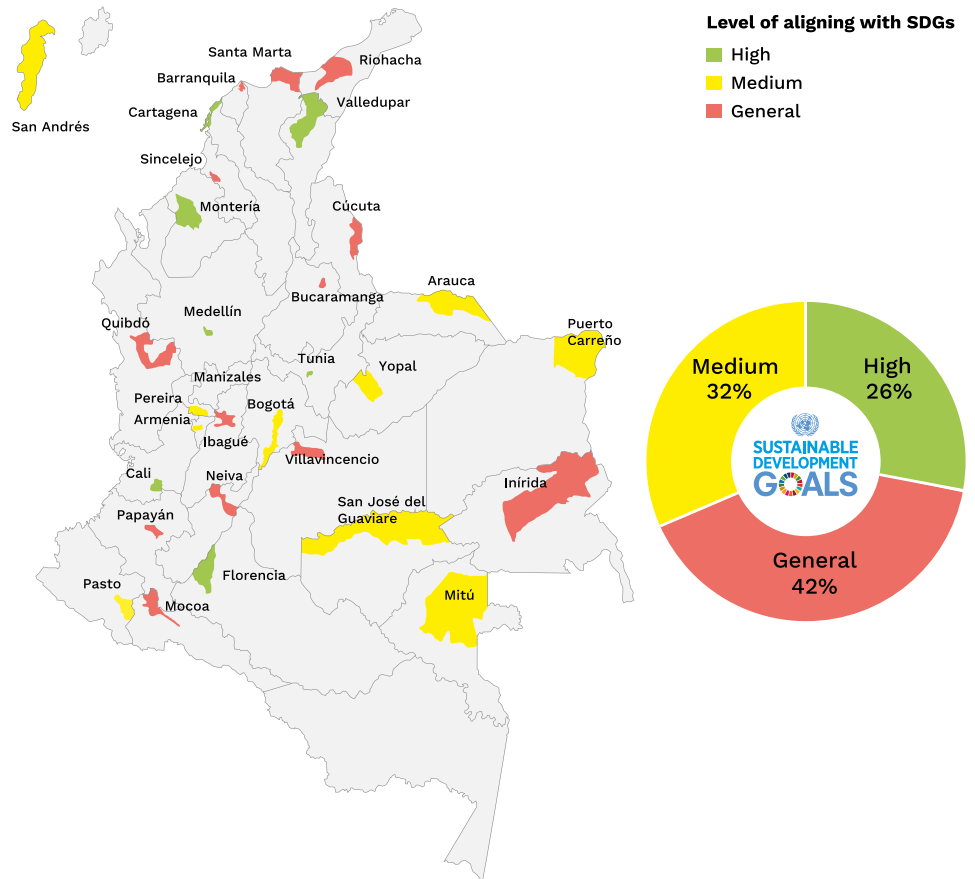
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Colombia has carried out an extensive review on how the country's territorial development plans and those of its capital cities plan to incorporate the SDGs. The next steps will be to analyse how local authorities can improve their contributions to the SDGs detected in the review. This should be ascer-

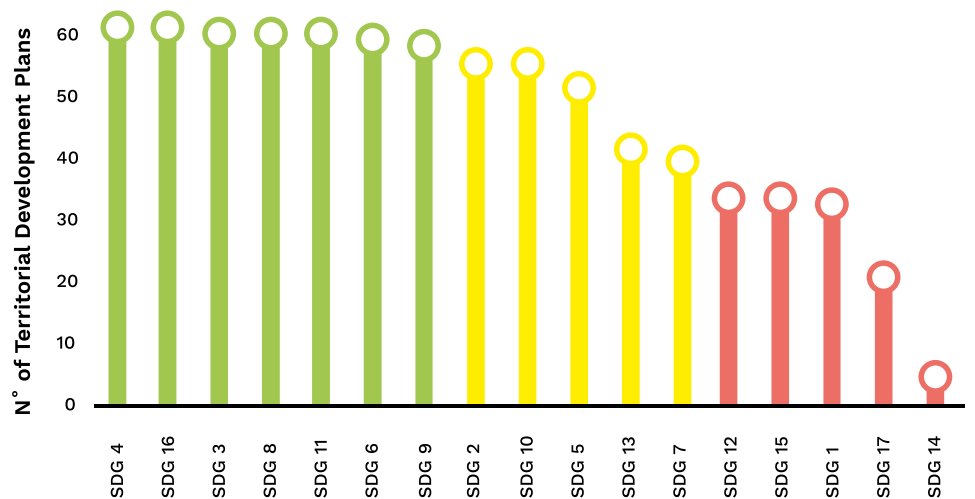


tained, amongst other ways, by using a selected set of indicators aligned with those defined by the UN for monitoring and evaluating the progress made.

### Inclusion of SDGs in Capital Cities Development Plans



### Inclusion of SDGs in Territorial Development Plans



Indeed, LRGAs should identify the indicators that are used by LRGs to monitor their plans, programmes and projects and to measure their results. An effort should particularly be made to align the local indicators available to the LRGs with those proposed by the UN. This important exercise will make it easier to compare the progress made by different local governments across the world. This is, however, a hard task given that the UN indicators are designed for the calculation of national variables, which are sometimes very different from those at the local level. Whatever the case, LRGAs should ensure that the results included in their reports are comparable.



**Exercise /  
Your roadmap  
to reporting  
(Step 3 of 5)**



**15 min**



**Slides 27-28**



**Handout 1C**

### STEP 3: What data should be collected?

In order to contribute to the VNRs and incorporate the local and regional perspectives and ensure that this completely reflects reality, LRGAs must collect data and information about good practices by LRGs and their contributions to achieving the SDGs. This exercise will help your trainees to understand what data they should collect and to take into consideration the specific characteristics of their territory.

When it comes to tools and materials, for this exercise, you may find it useful to provide: a **flipchart** (to draw the structure of the mind map), **some pieces of paper** for the attendees to do work on, and also some **stickers** and **post-it notes**.

Start by putting questions on a flipchart, making sure that they are visible for all the attendees. You could use these:

1. What information should you collect in your territory? (concrete good practices, achievements etc.)
2. What data sources are available to you?
3. How will you collect the data? Which mechanisms will you use?

Encourage trainees to think about the questions and to create their own mind maps with possible answers. Trainees should work individually, or in groups if they come from the same territory.

#### Example of the mind map:

<p>What information should you collect in your territory?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>What data sources are available to you?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>How will you collect the data? Which mechanisms will you use?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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## Debate

After this exercise, if there is enough time left, you could invite your trainees to take part in a **debate** and exchange thoughts and ideas after working on the mind map. **Here are some questions you could ask them:**

- How will you ensure that the process of collecting data is representative?
- What important information could be missed in the process of data collection?

## Is there a template to draft the review?

At the end of the process, LRGAs should develop their own reviews based on local achievements and share them with the appropriate national, regional and global organizations (UCLG sections and World Secretariat). In this way, they can help to strengthen the voice of LRGs in regional and international fora. This has been the process followed in the recent presentation of several Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). These are documents that local governments have presented to the international community as peer-to-peer contributions and complementary responses to the intergovernmental processes of VNRs and the HLPF. Chapter 6 expands on the structure and typology of the different VLRs, as well as providing a few valuable examples.

With the aim of achieving more homogeneous results, the UN Secretary General made a proposal for a series of common, voluntary reporting guidelines for VNRs (UN SG Report A/70/684, Annex 1). In turn, UCLG adapted the structure proposed by the UN for the VNRs and presented a new proposal, which can be found below. The text in brackets explains the content of each issue as extracted from the UN's Guidelines for Voluntary National Reviews. Some of the VLRs available today — and, in particular, the very first examples of New York and the three Japanese municipalities of Toyama, Kitakyushu, and Shimokawa — follow this blueprint (see the examples in chapter 4). LRG country reports should, however, be limited to three to four pages.



## Template 1



## Handout 2A

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### 1. Summary (half page)

Synthesis of the report, highlighting the role of LRGs in localizing the SDGs and highlighting one or two good practices and one or two challenges in which LRGs would need support in terms of capacity-building, financial support, a partnership and/or technology, etc.

### 2. Introduction (two paragraphs)

A short paragraph presenting the national context. Has the country started the SDGs implementation process? Why are the LRGs developing their own national report? What are the key challenges facing LRGs in the 'localization' of the SDGs in their country/countries?

A paragraph with a short description of the current LRG situation: the number of LRGs, key responsibilities for urban and territorial management (e.g., services, economic development, etc.), key figures in local finance (local revenues, expenditure and investment, and total national government revenue, expenditure and public investment).

### 3. Methodology and process for the preparation of the review (one short paragraph)

To what extent have LRGs been consulted for the National Voluntary Review? To what extent have their views been considered?

### 4. Policy and enabling environment (2 pages)

#### A. Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals:

[outline the efforts made to inform and involve all stakeholders — including LRGs — in the process, including the dissemination of the review process]

- *Participation of LRGs in the national debate on the SDGs:* if the country has initiated the process for the implementation of the SDGs, the report should provide more information about how its LRGs have been involved in the political debate. How can political and institutional balances contribute to the involvement of LRGs in the implementation of the global agendas?

The LRG report should also highlight any initiatives taken by associations of local governments and sub-national governments to disseminate information about the SDGs and to initiate the implementation process at the sub-national level (localization).

#### B. Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals within the national (and local) frameworks:

[This may describe national efforts made to integrate the SDGs into the country's legislation, policies, plans and programmes, including its strategy for achieving sustainable development. Countries could consider referring to major efforts undertaken by local authorities and non-state actors to implement the goals, including partnerships.]

This point can be jointly **developed with point f** (see below) on “institutional mechanisms”.

- *LRGs and national policies:* how have LRGs been associated with the definition of national policies or strategies for SDG implementation? To what extent have LRG priorities and positions been considered in national policies or national development plans to support the ‘localization’ process?
- *Multilevel governance:* has any specific mechanism been created to ensure that the implementation and review processes are followed up? If so, how have the LRGs been associated with it (e.g., in Brazil, the creation of a National Committee on the SDGs — via Decree 8892, October 2016. This body includes representatives from ministries, LRGs and civil society)? Have the SDGs had any impact on national legislation or institutional frameworks and helped to promote reforms and/or improve coordination between national and subnational governments (multilevel governance)?
- *Current institutional framework:* the report should explain the role of LRGs in the ‘localization’ of SDGs, based on the current distribution of responsibilities between different levels of government (as defined through laws governing decentralization and existing rules and

policies). It should also highlight the national capacity to build programmes for sub-national governments and what reforms are currently being, or should be, considered in order to improve the achievement of the SDGs in different territories and thereby ensure that “no-one gets left behind”.

- *Local democracy*: given the critical role of the involvement of local stakeholders in SDG implementation, the LRG reports should analyse whether the existing national legislation and the local institutional framework facilitate and promote the involvement of civil society and the participation of economic stakeholders in local decision making (e.g., Goal 16.6: “develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”). LRGs should highlight sub-national government initiatives to promote the participation of local stakeholder (e.g., via participatory planning and budgeting).
- *Create an enabling environment*: the LRG report should stress how national frameworks either facilitate or hinder the initiatives of LRGs. Even though, in most countries, it is probably still too early to identify any important legal or institutional reforms, the LRG report could help to define what the key areas are at the level of legislative and national policy that need to be revised in order to support SDG localization and the creation of an ‘enabling environment’ for LRGs.
- *Indicators*: as regards monitoring and review, what can national governments do to ‘disaggregate’ national data? How are LRGs associated with these initiatives?
- The LRG report should also *highlight any sub-national initiatives* taken to integrate SDGs into local development plans and local policies. This should involve the strengthening of institutional coordination and of planning mechanisms at the local and regional scales, and the creation of new local alliances (between LRGs and local stakeholders) to support the localization process.

### C. Integration of the three dimensions

[Discuss how the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are being integrated, as well as the principles of the 2030 Agenda. For example, “leaving no one behind” is one of the main priorities of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in a particular case]

Whenever possible, LRGs should, through concrete examples, highlight how local and regional development plans can help to bring about a more integrated approach that includes all three of the target dimensions (plus culture).

### D. Goals and targets

[Brief information on progress and the current status of all the Sustainable Development Goals and also of the critical difficulties encountered in reaching them. If possible, provide a more in-depth analysis on a few selected goals, targets and innovative policies. The discussion could focus on trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues, and lessons learned]

### **E. Thematic analysis**

[Include an analysis of any progress and initiatives related to the thematic focus of high-level political fora for the year in question]

**Points D and E can be developed together**, focusing on the analysis of national policies and LRG actions to support specific thematic areas, e.g., Goal 11 on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements.

The LRG report should highlight specific initiatives undertaken by sub-national governments in relevant areas, e.g., slum upgrading, strengthening urban participatory planning, urban mobility, water and waste management, and adapting to and mitigating climate change, among others.

Whenever possible, the report should refer to SDG indicators collected by national and international institutions and, if needed, it will be possible to add indicators identified by LRGs to pinpoint major gaps in official statistical systems relating to SDG achievements.

### **F. Institutional mechanisms**

[How the views of different ministries, agencies, levels of government and non-governmental stakeholders are taken into account and information about the institution in charge of coordination and integration. How responsibility is allocated among various levels of Government (national, subnational and local) for the coherent implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda]

This issue should be addressed jointly with point B (see above).

### **5. Means of implementation (one paragraph, half a page max.)**

[Discuss how the means of implementation are mobilized, what difficulties this process faces, and what additional resources are needed to implement the 2030 Agenda, including the terms of financing, the capacity to meet development needs, and also information relating to data and statistics, knowledge-sharing, technology and partnerships]

This section should introduce a general analysis of the evolution of local financing, explaining whether and how resources have been decentralized to allow LRGs to meet their responsibilities and what needs to be improved to achieve fiscal decentralization and to develop mechanisms that ensure greater balance between different regions and territories in order to support balanced and cohesive territorial development and “leave no one behind”.

### **6. Conclusion (half a page)**

[A summary of the analysis, with the findings and policy implications]

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A less detailed version of the review is proposed below for those LRGAs experiencing difficulties collecting the data required. This version includes the minimum content that must be included in order to provide a broad perspective of the localization of the SDGs within a given country.

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Template 2



Handout 2B

### 1. Summary

Synthesis of the report, highlighting the role of LRGs in localizing the SDGs and highlighting one or two good practices and one or two challenges for which LRGs would need support to help them with capacity-building, financing, establishing partnerships, technology, etc.

**2. Methodology and process for the preparation of the review:** sources of the data and information collected, number of participating LRGs etc.

### 3. Policy and enabling environment

**A.** The mechanisms for the participation (multi-level governance) of LRGs in the SDG national debate and for the definition, follow-up and evaluation of the contributions made to the Agenda (ad-hoc mechanism, informal consultations, no participation at all...)

**B.** The extent to which the priorities of the LRGs have been considered in national laws, policies and/or plans in order to support the localization process; also the possibility of LRGs contributing to the Agenda and the mechanisms used for data collection

**C.** Initiatives taken to integrate SDGs into local laws, plans and policies; the strengthening of institutional coordination, and the creation of new local alliances (between LRGs and local stakeholders) to support the localization process

**D.** The main difficulties facing LRGs (legal constraints, lack of financing, capacity to meet development needs, need for technical resources, differences between territories...)

### 4. Goals and targets: thematic analysis

Analysis of progress, initiatives and challenges related to the thematic focus of the HLPF for a given year, and also other issues considered relevant. Whenever possible, this should be analysed using SDG indicators or other indicators adapted to serve this purpose

### 5. Conclusion

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Additional  
Exercise

With these guidelines on how to draft the report on local achievements relating to the 2030 Agenda, course attendees should be able to produce a draft version (albeit with incomplete information and only preliminary conclusions) about the situation in their own country. Here, it is proposed to offer them some information regarding the current state of the art with regard to SDG implementation in a country (whether real or imaginary) so that they can produce their own report.

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## Chapter 5: The Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)

**Lecture****10 min****Slides 29-33****Handout 3**

During the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) of 2018, the city of New York (USA) announced that it would be the first city to ever present a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) — the reporting mechanism officially established by the United Nations — to the HLPF and that it would do this under the auspices of ECOSOC, as a sign of the progress made towards the achievement Agenda 2030. New York’s announcement brought with it a new concept: the “*Voluntary Local Review*” (VLR), to complement the existing Voluntary National Reviews (VNR). By April 2019, 181 of the 193 member states of the UN had already presented VNRs, which can be seen at ↪ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>).

Although the New York report really opened the doors for many to consider the role of cities in implementing the SDGs, the fact is that many other cities had already drawn up similar documents, but without using the new terminology or calling them VLRs. For example, three Japanese cities which also attended HLPF 2018: Kitakyushu, Toyama and Shimokawa, presented contributions to the SDGs using methodologies that were very similar to that of the VNR. Many other cities have also produced their own VLRs for other, but no less relevant, contexts. In fact, there are a vast variety of possibilities, situations and capacities, as shown in the examples attached.

The door that opened thanks to the initiative of New York has left the way open for many other questions regarding how cities can take advantage of this opportunity in order to report their own individual efforts towards implementing Agenda 2030 at the local level. It is our intention to use this opportunity to make a first set of reflections about the way ahead for cities thinking about preparing a VLR.

1. What are the possibilities of cities directly reporting to the HLPF and obtaining greater international visibility?
2. What are the main elements that a VLR should contain?
3. How can we produce a report that really helps local government organizations to achieve better delivery?
4. How should a VLR be organized for a local government organization, and by whom?



**Question 1**

10 min

**What are the possibilities of cities directly reporting to the HLPF and obtaining greater international visibility?**

At present, the HLPF does not have a specific mechanism via which cities, or territories, can directly present their reports to the HLPF. The UN is interested in receiving information about how the implementation of the agenda is progressing (and indeed accelerating), but there is not yet sufficient capacity to deal with the tremendous diversity of the information and data presented. We therefore need to reflect on how cities can ensure that their efforts to implement the SDGs receive visibility yet, at the same time, remain sufficiently adaptable to fit in with future reporting structures. In the meantime, the following options may be of help:

**A. Submitting a city report for publication on the “Localizing the SDG” website**

↳ *The Localizing SDGs website*, is a joint initiative by UCLG, UNDP and UN-Habitat. It is a site where users can directly submit documents, events and ideas about how to localize the SDGs. At present, the platform has more than 40,000 users and contains over 400 documents. It is already possible to register and submit documents for publication and revision. And the platform is currently studying how to give greater visibility to Voluntary Local Reports.

**Submit your experience for inclusion in the UCLG report presented to the HLPF**

Every year, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), working on behalf of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF), makes a report to the HLPF that collects together all the work done by local governments to implement Agenda 2030. The report looks at global trends and makes reference to specific city experiences, but it does not currently collect individual VLRs. Efforts should be made to include specific online references to cities and territories that have published VLRs in the UCLG/GTF Report and to ensure their visibility through the presentation of an annual report to the HLPF, in New York, every July.



↳ *HLPF 2018 Report*

↳ *HLPF 2017 Report*

**B. Making a submission to your National Reporting Mechanism**

Local governments have the opportunity to contribute to their respective National Voluntary Reports (NVRs). Furthermore, the ↳ *UN Guidelines* for preparing VNRs are very clear about the need to include local and regional governments in this process.

Local and regional governments should contact the national institution which is responsible for coordinating the preparation of their VNRs and make sure that this document also makes reference to any VLRs that are being prepared in the same country.

The options presented above are still not, in themselves, sufficient to guarantee the visibility of local efforts. This is an on-going issue and a priority that will hopefully receive more specific attention in the coming years.

In addition, there remains the problem of the resources available. Not all cities are able to: produce a report; find ways to collaborate with their national counterparts; go to New York to personally promote their report; or even present an English translation of their report. The efforts of the GTF, UNDP and UN-Habitat are in line with their missions to support all cities and local government organizations and to help them to produce their own reports and provide the visibility that their efforts deserve.



### Question 2



10 min

**Tip:** Use one or two of the examples provided in Annex 2 and the additional slides to illustrate how some VLRs have been developed so far.

### What are the main elements that a VLR should contain?

It is very difficult to recommend a specific format for VLRs and it should be noted that other organizations, such as the OECD, are currently working on methodologies to help cities to produce their own VLRs. It is also necessary to consider that territories need to establish priorities and to decide which SDGs are most important for them at a particular moment in time and based on their own specific political mandates and local needs. It is not, therefore, advisable for local and regional governments to try to cover all of the indicators and targets identified, but rather to concentrate on those that they consider to be of greatest local priority.

With this in mind, we would like to share some examples from cities that have already produced VLRs, even though some of them may not have used this specific term when referring to their documents. These could, however, be considered VLRs in a broader sense of the concept.



### Question 3



10 min

### How can we produce a report that really helps local government organizations to achieve better deliver?

The most important question that should be asked relates to how producing VLRs can help local government organizations to be more efficient, more transparent and more closely connected to their own citizens.

Many interpretations have highlighted the fact that the SDGs could simply be used by some institutions as a kind of “post-it”: they could potentially highlight what they were already doing under a global agenda perspective — and just paint a picture, but using different colours, to justify their existing actions as if they formed part of a larger, global strategy. This is, therefore, an important step, but only a start.

Ideally, the SDGs should constitute an opportunity for local government organizations to plan better and to report their actions to both their own citizens, at the local level, and also to their national governments.

The fact that the SDGs contain a very detailed set of targets and indicators means that they constitute a great tool for achieving more structured public policies which should allow cities and territories to establish a baseline that will allow them to show the progress made during the course of their respective mandates. In many cases, SDG indicators can help to demonstrate the capacity of a local government organization to the international donor community, or even to potential investors. However, the main idea behind the SDGs is that they can serve as a truly new instrument to support local government organizations and help them to better serve their citizens.

There is, as of yet, no single magic formula that can assure that future VLRs will help local government organizations to be more efficient, although this is the general spirit and sentiment behind every local action that uses Agenda 2030 as an instrument for monitoring and/or planning.



#### Question 4



10 min

### How should a VLR be organized for a local government organization, and by whom?

Delivering a VLR entails effort and resources, as well as political and management commitment from local government. As outlined in the examples of VLRs presented in [↳ \*the Annex\*](#), local government organizations have chosen various ways to establish and/or strengthen their reporting capacity. Some cities (such as Bacarena) have created specialized departments or advisory positions, some (like Kitakyushu), have established a political advisory body, others (like Durban) have given a specific mandate to their planning and/or environmental agencies, others have hired consultants to help gather the necessary information, while there are also those that have created critical stakeholder communities and/or that have made their VLRs part of a much wider review of strategy (as in the case of Seoul).

Whatever the case, this implies more work, as information has to be collected. It implies continuous investment in data collection, more transversal work involving the crossing of research and policy, and more exchanges between different technical departments and politicians. At the same time, more information and reports are being aligned with the global agenda, and this constitutes another opportunity; it offers a win-win situation, for obtaining a better structured dialogue, for providing more and better-quality information to the community, and for achieving better accountability.

Here, we would like to cite 2 working models: those developed by the Brookings Institute and the League of Cities, which are based on reports from 10 US cities and which were inspired by the example set by New York. We recommend reading their guidebook to anyone looking to write a VLR (quoted as follows):

*“The first is called the hub-and-spoke model and the second is a commission, or working group, model. There are pros and cons to each, but the appearance of VLRs has left ample room for the introduction of new models and mechanisms for organizing the process.”*

#### 1. Hub-and-Spoke

As the name implies, the hub-and-spoke model is characterized by a member of staff coordinating most, if not all, of the VLR process. Designating one person as the leader increases the likelihood of a city being able to fund the work and it having a specifically assigned member of staff involved can increase the quality of information sharing between departments. On the other hand, the hub-and-spoke model may create barriers to generating momentum around the SDGs, both between agencies and within the community. As a result, it may take longer to create a minimally viable product which may not subsequently survive a political transition.

## 2. Commission or Working Group

The working group model creates an opportunity for generate momentum around the SDGs and to quickly spread this throughout the city. Engaging staff in city agencies and directly involving them in the process can catalyse sustained, independent action within an agency. Establishing a working group also fosters integration by getting staff to work together in the same room on a consistent basis. On the other hand, a working group model begs the question of who must hold everything together. Without direct funding for this work, it may be difficult to get staff members engaged with a sufficient degree of frequency. Finally, a working group may not create the optimal environment for information sharing, as the discussion” [may be dominated by individual members.]



**Exercise /  
Your roadmap  
to reporting  
(Step 4 of 5)**



**15 min**



**Slides 34-35**



**Handout 3**

### STEP 4: Voluntary Local Review (VLRs)

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) present an opportunity to report individual efforts made by cities working to implement Agenda 2030 at the local level. However, this door – which was opened thanks to the initiative of New York — leaves space for many questions relating to how cities can take advantage of this opportunity.

This activity you can carried out with your trainees, in the form of a **debate**. **Ask the following questions and then moderate the resulting debate:**

1. How can producing VLRs help local government organizations to become more efficient, more transparent and better connected to their own citizens? What would you need to present a VLR for your territory?
2. Who would be responsible for it in your LRGA?
3. Are there any sections of the template for preparing VLRs that would be particularly challenging for your territory? Why?

Encourage trainees to go through all the questions and to express their opinions. Make sure that all the trainees actively participate in the discussion.

After the debate, and as a closing exercise, you could ask your trainees whether they would find it feasible to draw up a roadmap for the VLRs for their territory/territories.

<sup>1</sup> In "A Voluntary Local Review for Cities: Cities Taking the Lead on the Sustainable Development Goals" by Niki Deininger, Jason Griess, Yasu Lu and Robert Santamaria (from from Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy) for the Brookings Institute (Anthony F. Pipa), 2019.

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## Chapter 6: Sharing the results



Lecture



15 min



Slides 36-38

Once the report has been drafted and agreed upon by all the LRGs forming part of an association, the LRGA must ensure that this document is received and read by the national authorities and subsequently added to the VNR. LRGAs should also seek to extend the report to their respective regional and international local government networks, such as the UCLG regional sections and World Secretariat. UCLG and other organizations will then ensure that the message is heard worldwide, and particularly at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which is the official UN platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The message aims to underline the role of strong local leadership and the commitment of LRGs to achieving the SDGs.

The previously mentioned 2017 report, which was entitled “*National and sub-national governments on the way towards localization*”, introduced some of the initial outcomes drawn from first-hand information collected by networks of local and regional governments operating in over 30 countries. This input was complemented by an analysis of the 63 official VNRs and ‘Main Messages’ that have been presented so far by national governments, at the 2016 and 2017 HLPFs.

The report shows that LRGs are already taking action, or beginning to act, to foster the localization of the SDGs in all regions. However, it also shows that ‘localization’ is still an issue that remains largely unaddressed by the HLPF agenda. With nowhere to report issues from a local perspective, or to showcase what is being done, the international community risks missing out on an opportunity to enhance the role of local and regional government organizations in achieving the SDGs. An appropriate reporting framework would reward governments taking action to localize the SDGs and foster more local-level involvement where localization is still lacking.

The report shares UCLG’s high hopes for the ‘*Localizing the SDGs*’ partnership with UNDP and UN-Habitat, the Local 2030 Hub (promoted by the office of the UN Secretary General), and the Local4Action Hub, which will support the localization strategy of UCLG and contribute to the broader agenda of the Global Taskforce (GTF).

Furthermore, these voluntary local reviews are an opportunity to share and highlight achievements. By showing what kind of transformations have taken place, they can provide better reporting and evidence of pilot projects and this may also allow a certain amount of benchmarking between cities. The GTF and the partners are therefore interested in integrating the different observatories and knowledge platforms.



The partnership involving UNDP Art, UN Habitat, UCLG and the GTF has created ↪ *a toolbox* containing all the relevant information relating to the localizing of the SDGs.

This toolbox does not contain any rigid guidelines, or one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, it offers practical, adaptable, mechanisms and instruments which address various development challenges. The resources made available will empower local actors and help them to channel global goals into local actions.

The tools you will find here may be employed in a wide range of settings, both simple and more complex, where the political, institutional, economic and social characteristics may vary. They are for use not only between countries, but also between territories within the same country, or even within parts of a specific territory. The work presented on the open platform is meant to provide practical help with assessing, planning, implementing and monitoring local policies in line with the attainment strategies outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals.

This module, as well as other guides, has been developed considering a wide variety of regional experiences with the help of different stakeholders to help strengthen its inputs. Even so, to help illustrate the message presented in the previous chapters, we have gathered together what we consider to be the most important examples in an annex chapter.

### STEP 5: Sharing the results



**Exercise /  
Your roadmap  
to reporting  
(Step 5 of 5)**



**15 min**



**Slides 39-40**



**Handout 1D**

Once the report has been drafted and agreed upon by all the LRGs that form part of the association, the LRGA must ensure that this document is received and read by the corresponding national authorities and then included in the VNR. In this part of the roadmap to reporting, your trainees should think of the most effective ways in which to share their results and will learn how to make sure that their inputs are taken into consideration by the relevant authorities.

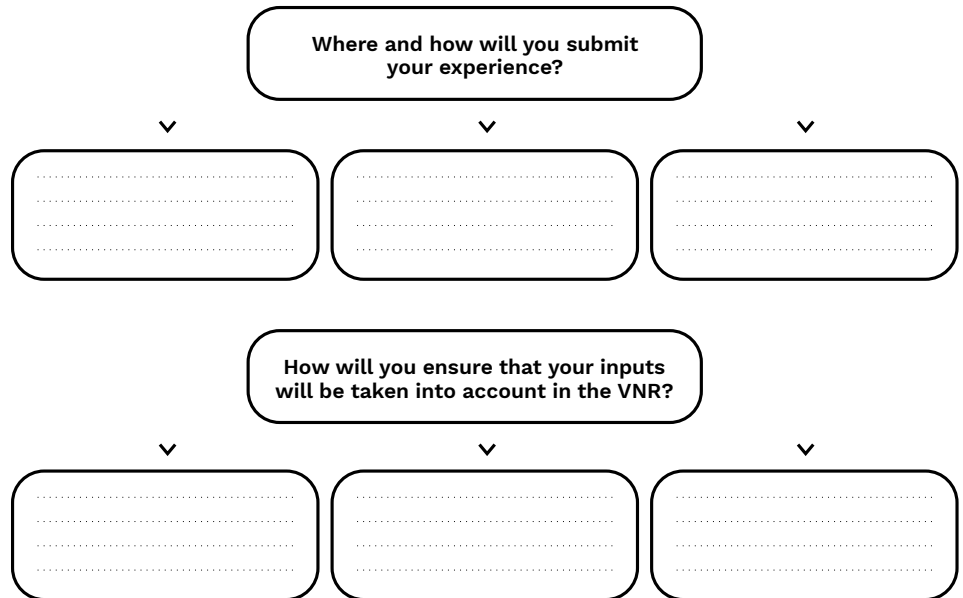
When it comes to providing tools and materials, for this exercise, you might find it useful to provide: a flipchart (to draw the structure of the mind map), some pieces of paper for the attendees to do some work on and also some stickers and post-it notes.

Start by putting the following questions on a flipchart so that they are visible to all the attendees:

1. Where and how will you submit your experience?
2. How will you ensure that your inputs will be taken into account in the VNR?

Encourage trainees to think about the questions and to make their own mind maps and provide possible answers. Trainees should work individually, or in groups if they come from the same territory.

### Example of the mind map



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 **Debate**

After the exercise, if there is enough time, you can invite your trainees to take part in a **debate** and exchange thoughts and ideas after working on the mind map. **Here is an example of what could be a good starting question for the debate:**

- What are the biggest difficulties you could face when you share your results?
- What would you do to solve these problems?

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## Annex 1 / Exercise: Storytelling for SDG reporting



**Exercise /  
Storytelling for  
SDG reporting**



**60 min**



**Slides 42-43**



**Handout 4**



**20 min**

### Trainer's Instructions

In this activity participants will be asked to give a speech about a city's successful projects in the form of story-telling, based on the given information and their own ideas.

To successfully carry out this exercise you will need envelopes (1 per participant). You should print out copies of handout 4 with the description of the cities and paper tokens. Participants can work individually or in pairs (each person/pair should get one city to work on).

Start with giving participants instructions for the task. Follow these steps to carry out the activity:

### Preparation for the task

1. Give participants handouts with information about the sample city. Ask them to imagine they were invited to speak at the International Cities Conference, during the sustainable development panel. They are expected to make a 3-minute oral presentation about their city's successful changes in the last few years.
2. Tell the participants to use the SDGs as a framework to talk about the city's success story. They should refer to minimum 2 SDGs. if they feel short in time.
3. Ask them to give the city a name and encourage them to come up with additional information about the city, apart from what they are given in the handouts. They can think of targets (using the app) and indicators related to the targets of the SDGs.
4. Give out envelopes and 10 paper tokens. Ask participants to write down the name of their city on the envelope and explain that they will use the paper tokens afterwards to vote for the presentations they like (by putting the tokens in the envelope with the name of the city).
5. Give the participants 15 minutes to prepare the presentation. Encourage them to add additional information and use the Internet to find more details etc.





20 min

### Presentation

- After 15 minutes ask the first person (or a pair) to give a presentation. Other attendees should listen to the presentation and take notes if they think it can help them with the voting afterwards. Make sure all the participants have enough time to give a presentation. If you are running the training in a group bigger than 6 people, split the participants into smaller groups to carry out this exercise.



10 min

### Voting and feedback

- When everyone has presented their city, it's time for the last part of the activity: the voting. Remind all the attendees they have 10 tokens and they can vote for the presentations they liked by placing the tokens in the envelope with the name of the city. The number of tokens they place in each envelope is their decision - they can decide to put all their tokens in just one envelope or spread the tokens between more envelopes.
- Ask participants to count how many tokens they have in their envelopes. Check which attendee/group got the biggest number of tokens - they win the title of the best SDG's storyteller.



Debate

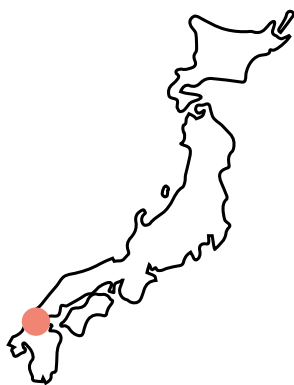
10 min

### Debate

- You can finish the activity by inviting participants to take part in a small debate. You can start the discussion with these questions:
  - How can the SDG's framework be used to create a narrative about the city?
  - How can you use it to talk about projects and events that take place in your territory?

es.

## Annex 2 / Specific examples of LGs (Local Governments) and LRGAs and similar organizations monitoring and reporting on the SDGs



### Kitakyushu, Japan

The city's Mayor, Mr Kenji Kitahashi, presented the city's report at the HLPF Special event: *"First local and regional government forum"*. This was the first occasion on which cities and territories were able to report to the HLPF at whole-day session and at the same time that their respective ministries presented their VNRs at the United Nations Headquarters. The approach chosen followed the same logic as national reporting, which has already been explained in chapter 3.

The report, which was published under the title of *"Kitakyushu City the Sustainable Development Goals Report. Fostering a trusted green growth city with true wealth and prosperity, contributing to the world"* corresponds to the title *"SDGs Future City Vision"*. The structure of the report was based on the "Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: 2018 Edition" and it took into consideration both specific characteristics and the current state of progress on initiatives in each city. According to the text: *"In a manner of speaking, it is a voluntary local review on the progress of SDGs actions in the city"*.

Kitakyushu has set itself six priority goals and targets linked to the SDG vision (pursuing SDGs 5, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 17). To be more specifically, the city seeks to focus its actions on promoting and/or creating: nursing care robots; next-generation automobiles; offshore wind farms; new advanced industries (economy); greater diversity; ESD; disaster-resilience (social) and renewable energy; energy saving; recycling, better public transport; and a compact city (environment).

The report describes specific projects that have been designed to achieve the SDG Vision and how the different city plans (a total of 17 are currently being aligned with the SDGs) would work. Regarding new initiatives, the city has created the following projects to enhance the implementation of its goals: Goal 7 (Energy) — The next-generation local energy model project; Goal 11 (Urban development) — A city forest project: urban development aimed at improving the coexistence between cities and nature; Goal 12 (Sustainable consumption and production) - Recycling throughout the city; Goal 15 (Life on the land) – The use of forest resources in large cities. In the document, each of these initiatives is linked to one of the SDGs.

To coordinate the initiatives, the city has created a Kitakyushu Future City SDG office, which is headed by the Mayor, who coordinates the work of the different city departments. Going forward, Kitakyushu plans to launch the Kitakyushu City SDG council (tentative name), which will be formed by stakeholders from civil society and the business, finance and educational sectors, which will work to promote the spread of the SDG goals and targets.

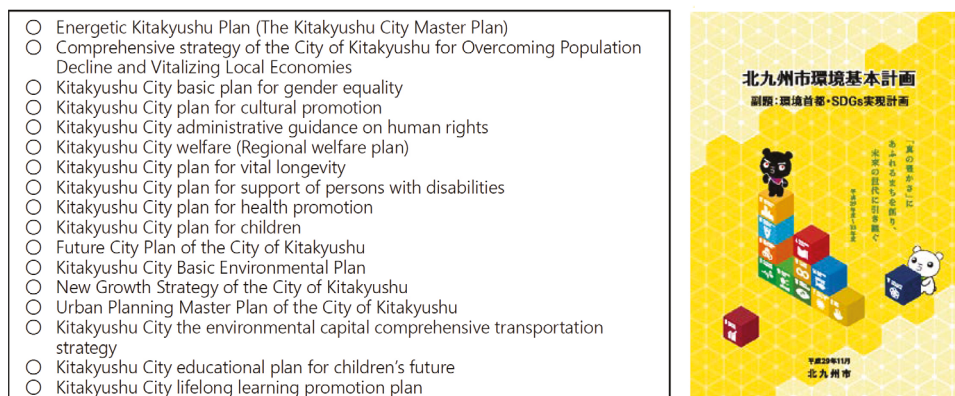


Fig 4. Kitakyushu's major plan

Source: Kitakyushu City the Sustainable Development Goals Report

**With regard to the targets and indicators, here is a sample of those identified by the city.**

UN indicator	Kitakyushu parameters for measurement
<p>5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local government organizations</p> <p>5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of seats held by women on the Kitakyushu City Assembly</li> <li>• The proportion of women in managerial positions working at the city hall had risen to 14.8% by 2018</li> <li>• Reference to the Kitakyushu City Basic Plan for Gender Equality</li> </ul>
<p>7.2.1 The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption</p>	<p>The percentage of renewable energy PRODUCED by the city (as it is not possible to calculate that consumed but not produced locally)</p> <p>Solar power generation, at 255,757 kW, ranked 3rd amongst the municipalities in Japan (2017). Wind power generation, at 32,270 kW (from 16 onshore wind power facilities and 2 offshore wind power facilities), ranked 1st amongst ordinance-designated cities. Hydropower generation was 1,708 kW. Waste power generation (waste-to-energy) was 46,840 kW (from facilities at 3 locations in the city).</p>

UN indicator	Kitakyushu parameters for measurement
8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per person employed	• Gross income tax per taxpayer by ordinance-designated city
8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and people with disabilities	• Changes in the unemployment rates of Kitakyushu (1995-2010), by gender and age group
8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and people with disabilities	
9.4.1 CO <sub>2</sub> emission per unit of value added	• GHG emissions in Kitakyushu, by sector • Changes in GHG emissions at Kitakyushu
12.5.1 National recycling rate, in tons of material recycled	• Resource recovery and recycling rates at Kitakyushu • Volume of household waste collected and volume of household waste per resident, per day • Transition of the rate of recycling

The report also specifically mentions its focus on “leaving no one behind” and gives a specific description of the means of implementation and resources put in place to achieve Vision 2030. Finally, it describes how the city is coordinating its actions with the Japanese government to promote the localization of the SDGs and to promote the use of a common methodology that would be easily applicable to other Japanese cities.

The report is available at ↪ <http://localizingthesdgs.org/library/view/479>. The Japanese cities of Toyama and Shimokawa also contributed some of the materials presented during HLPF 2018. This was facilitated by the presence of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies.



### New York, United States of America

The city of New York drafted its Voluntary Local Review in July 2018. The report was not officially presented to HLPF during a side event; instead, the city organized a series of site visits for the UN diplomatic community. The report was produced by International Affairs, in partnership with the NYC Mayor’s offices of Operations, and Climate Policy and Programs, and in collaboration with 71 different New York City agencies, residents and businesses, as well as an advisory board comprised of civic leaders, policy specialists, and community leaders.

Toyama City: the Sustainable Development Goals Report: Compact City Planning based on Polycentric Transport Networks <http://localizingthesdgs.org/library/view/478> - Shimokawa Town: the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Report: Connecting people and nature with the future <http://localizingthesdgs.org/library/view/477>

The review only addressed the five SDGs assessed by the HLPF in 2018: SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15. Most importantly, in addition to looking at NYC's SDG progress, the VLR provides an overview of how the city used the SDGs as a common language to discuss local efforts to promote sustainable development in collaboration with the UN community in NYC as well as with other partners in cities and countries around the world. The report included a first part which referred to specific programmes and actions that made advances in the 5 highlighted SDGs.

For the indicators, New York organized its principal policy instrument: "OneNYC", the main delivery instrument for the city, which was approved in April 2015 and included a set of key performance indicators, which were publicly reported on an annual basis. Upon the approval of the SDGs, in September 2015, the city aligned the OneNYC instruments and regrouped them in line with the SDG targets. This was done because many of the official SDG indicators were not originally designed to be used at the local level, but rather at the national level and in an aggregated way. New York also used a mixture of data that was accompanied by the description of key actions and policies that contributed to the specific SDGs reported during the HLPF 2018 and which linked the progress made to the existing "OneNYC" tool. The main advantage that the city had, is that it has been collecting data based on very precise indicators since 1970. It therefore started from a very good baseline whose evolution and alignment with Agenda 2030 was relatively easy.

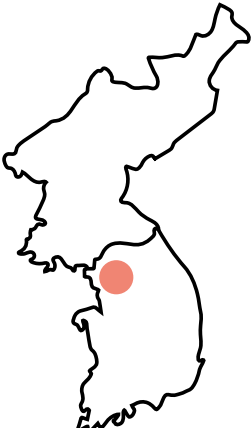
For several examples of the adaptation of the internationally agreed indicators, see a selection of them relating to SDG6 on water. This is something that is easily transportable to local governments organizations, since most of them, throughout the world, have responsibilities for water quality.

	<b>UN global goals and indicators</b>	<b>New York City – local adaptation (sample)</b>
<b>Goal</b>	6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all	6.1a: Comply with all federal and state drinking water quality standards.
<b>Indicator</b>	6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	Samples testing positive for coliform bacteria (%) — In-City samples meeting water quality standards for coliform bacteria (%) — Acres of land acquired in the watershed area - Average daily in-City water consumption (millions of gallons) Water supply — Critical equipment out of service (%) - Overall enforcement activity
<b>Goal</b>	6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations	6.2a: Resolve emergencies and perform preventative maintenance and required repairs to the water distribution and wastewater collection systems in a timely manner

	<b>UN global goals and indicators</b>	<b>New York City — local adaptation (sample)</b>
<b>Indicator</b>	6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water	Sewer backup complaints received — Sewer backup complaints resolved — Confirmed and Unconfirmed (on City infrastructure) — Sewer backup resolution time (hours) — Water mains breakages per 100 miles of mains, in the last 12 months — Broken and inoperative hydrants (%) — Leak resolution time (days) (City infrastructure only)
<b>Goal</b>	6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally	6.3a: Maintain high levels of compliance with federal and state treatment standards for wastewater and sewage entering receiving waters.
<b>Indicator</b>	6.3.1 Proportion of safely treated wastewater	Harbour survey stations meeting the flushable standard of 5mg/L for dissolved oxygen (%) — Wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) effluent meeting federal standards (%) — WWTPs — Critical equipment out-of-service (% below minimum)

New York City constitutes an excellent example of how to align existing indicators and to provide new ideas for cities and inspiration about how to report on Agenda 2030. By calling its report a “*Voluntary Local Review*”, the city of New York provided a new opportunity, as it created a new concept and manifested its will to work with other cities that seek to follow its example.

Full report available at ↪ [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/international/downloads/pdf/NYC\\_VLR\\_2018\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/international/downloads/pdf/NYC_VLR_2018_FINAL.pdf)



## Seoul, South Korea

Seoul was one of the first global cities that established a commission, back in 2013. This had 38 members, 29 of whom were ordinary residents, rather than specialists in the different fields. The commission held more than 100 meetings before finalizing Seoul's SDGs. Its vision was to achieve the UN SDGs by reflecting the current status of Seoul.



Seoul was one of the first cities that managed to align its strategy and strategic projects with the UN SDGs as part of its master plan, back in 2015.

17 of the UN SDGs were somewhat modified in accordance with the specific circumstances of the city itself. For example, UN Sustainable Development Goal N° 14 reads as, “*Conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources*”, but it was modified to “Conserve the marine ecosystem by recovering the natural properties of the Han River” in order to make it more relevant to the current circumstances facing the city of Seoul.

The UN SDG global perspective was “localized” to fit in with Seoul’s specific circumstances; it was therefore necessary to increase its relevance to Seoul. Seoul also established 3-9 targets within each goal in order to include major policies and projects.

Seoul puts emphasis on qualitative progress over materialistic growth, people-centred, impartial development over material considerations, and inclusive growth-sharing resources and profits over the growth frame.

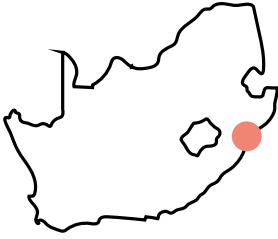
### Bi-annual Inspection through Assessment Indicators

The local government of the city of Seoul set up an Assessment Division and a Sustainable Development Assessment Team, in 2016. It gave them responsibility for managing the implementation of the SDGs and 2030 Initiative in order to promote goal-orientation and continued progress. The SDG Evaluation Team, which oversees the SDGs in Seoul, collects the results of the measurement made by every business department, once every two years, and produces a bi-annual report. The resulting report is made available to the public and the results of the report influence priorities and budget changes for the following year’s SDGs projects.

## Seoul Metropolitan City's department for Sustainable Development Implementation Plan for Water Management Related Indicators & Measurement

Strategy	Water related task	Detailed mission	Performance Indicator	Department in charge
2. Creating an energy efficient resource recycling city	5. Improve water circulation	Expansion of Rainwater Management Facility	Number of Rainwater Management Facilities Installed	Water Circulation Policy Division
			Rainwater utilization facility — installation and support	Water Circulation Policy Division
		Maintenance of old water pipes	Number of old water pipes and their maintenance	Seoul waterworks Headquarters, Department of Facilities and Safety
		Support replacement of old indoor water supply pipes	Number of households replacing old water supply pipes	Seoul waterworks Headquarters, Department of Water Supply
		Strengthen management of new non-regulated substances	Number of items surveyed for the presence of harmful substances	Seoul waterworks Headquarters, Department of Water Quality Analysis
		3. Creating a pleasant and green city with citizens	Restoring the natural properties of the Han River	Creating the Han River forest
Establishment of the Han River Ecological Base	Establishment of the Han River Ecological Base			Seoul Han River Project Headquarters, Park Department
Creating a natural river bank	Restoring the natural river bank			Seoul Han River Project Headquarters, Park Department
Creating Ecological and Cultural Space on Nodeul Island	Nodeul Island's ecological and cultural space -promotion rate.			Public City Renovation Department
Improvement of the quality of discharged water	Degree of water pollution. Biochemical oxygen demand(BOD)			Seoul Jungnang Water Regeneration Centre, operation department





### Durban, South Africa

Durban/ eThwinini is a city which is very active in international networks. This has helped with the Alignment of its SDGs and facilitated its pursuit of other international agendas linked to integrated developing planning (IDP).

One key indicator relating to a functionally integrated development plan (IDP) is the municipal budget, which requires the approval of the council.

The example of Durban illustrates the importance of a strategy that brings together political will, commitment to a budget decision, technical know-how, and management skills in tracking local investment.

The IDP is linked to budget cycles that provide evidence of the city's commitment to the SDGs. This is particularly evident in the capital projects, as shown in the following graphics (alignment and comparative cycle).

#### **The 4-step approach adopted by the IDP manager who was in charge of SDG alignment consisted of:**













1. Raising awareness and identifying areas relevant for SDGs
2. Identifying and collaborating with key departments and leaders and incorporating SDG Goals into the Municipality's IDP, as part of the strategic approach to sustainability
3. Proposing capital projects aligned with the SDGs and using a "best match" principle of linking one key project to one SDG
4. Measuring the impact of MSCOA\* on the results of the analysis, improving the long-term benchmarking of data, and planning a biannual progress review (a report in line with national reporting standards for government performance)

\***MSCOA:** the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts

Besides the change in expenditure, which will also be linked to the performance of the services, based on the SDG targets, **the impact on the organization should not be underestimated, for example:**

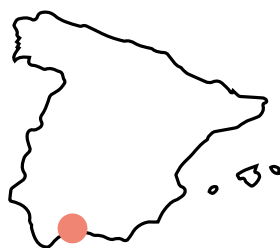
- Political Support for the VNR and SDG reporting
- Strengthening ownership of the SDG and the NUA
- Promoting active participation in SDG localization and of spaces for SDG dialogue
- Promoting the development of monitoring tools for SDG implementation
- Advocating the creation of credible, localized, city-level datasets aligned with the SDGs
- Promoting the implementation of the NUA as an accelerator for SDG implementation
- Advocating localized solutions in the quadrennial Global Sustainable Development Report in 2019

<b>Plan Description</b>	<b>SDG Goal</b>	<b>Sum of Capital Spend</b>
<b>1. Develop and Sustain our Spatial, Natural and Built Environment</b>	15	6,817,000
	16	697,000
<b>2. Developing a Prosperous Economy and Employment Creation</b>	2	13,500,000
	7	2,500,000
	8	362,001,000
	11	30,000,000
	16	72,849,000
<b>3. Creating a Quality Living Environment</b>	6	1,420,318,000
	7	740,599,000
	9	32,792,000
	11	2,869,122,000
	16	286,008,000
<b>4. Fostering a Socially Equitable Envi</b>	3	24,000,000
	11	29,790,000
	13	11,800,000
	16	58,867,000
<b>5. Supporting organization design, human capital development and management</b>	3	700,000
	4	1,370,000
	16	9,290,000
<b>6. A vibrant and creative city — the foundation for sustainability and social cohesion</b>	11	411,515,000
	16	56,668,000
<b>7. Good Governance and Responsive Local Government</b>	2	1,184,000
	16	380,849,000
<b>8. Financially Accountable and Sustainable City</b>	7	14,000,000
	16	192,094,000

SDG	2017/18 Capital Budget	2018/19 Capital Budget	Difference in Budget
 2 ZERO HUNGER		14,684,000	14,684,000
 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	93,234,510	24,700,000	(68,534,510)
 4 QUALITY EDUCATION	13,971,000	1,370,000	(12,601,000)
 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	516,042,000	1,420,318,000	(904,276,000)
 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	159,700,500	757,099,000	(597,398,500)
 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	153,560,200	362,001,000	(208,440,800)
 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	2,213,637, 210	32,792,000	(2,180,845,210)
 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	2,153,479,000	3,340,427,000	(1,186,948,000)
 13 CLIMATE ACTION		11,800,000	(11,800,000)
 15 LIFE ON LAND	8,219,000	6,817,000	(1,402,000)
 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	322,987,829	1,057,322,000	(734,334,171)
 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	41,000		(41,000)

The track of the difference in the budget allocated to capital projects is shown in the above chart and indicates a general increase in the budget for an aligned capital project. The greatest increases have been associated with goal 6 (water) and goals 9 and 16 (institutions and peace), while goal 3 (health) and goal 9 (innovation) have received reduced allocations.

The impact of these decisions can be further detailed and cross referenced with the territorial impact review to highlight what and where the projects have been implemented and how equally they have contributed to the distribution of different services.








## Malaga, Spain

Published under the title “The European 2020 strategy and the 2030 sustainable development agenda: an adaptation for the city of Malaga”, this document, like many others that cannot be included here due to lack of space, could be considered a form of VLR, but with a different title. The document considers the indicators and actions established in the base for the European Strategy until 2020 as a starting point and links them to the new SDG targets for 2030.

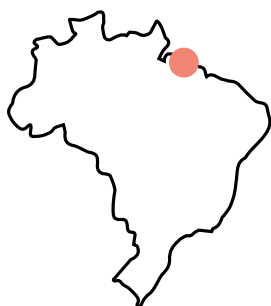
The document starts by offering the data for Malaga for each of the 7 objectives included in the European strategy (all of which are common to the SDGs). The Europe 2020 strategy is the EU's agenda for growth and job creation for the current decade. It emphasizes smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe's economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity, and underpin a sustainable social market economy. It is the predecessor for the European agenda for 2030, which encompasses the different levels of partnership in the 2030 Agenda on SDGs.

In its 4th chapter, the document makes a specific proposal relating to indicators applicable to the city of Malaga with the intention of establishing a baseline for future follow ups. The document addresses all the different SDG indicators and targets. Due to its length, we can only reflect some of the more interesting ones here. The most interesting part of the document is the explanation description about how each of the indicators was created and the methodology employed to gather the data. Each of the indicators is accompanied by a short description of the general situation of the particular SDG in relation to the city.

SDG	Target	Indicator	Progress
	Average annual income per household; Unemployment rate amongst people between 45 and 64 years old	Local expenditure on social services (euros per capita)	Percentage of income tax returns of under € 6,010 with respect to the total number of local tax returns
	City land area dedicated to agriculture (%)	Kg of fruit, vegetables and fish per inhabitant entering the local distribution market	Total hectares dedicated to ecological agriculture
	Number of women who denounced sexual violence to the local police	Number of women in key positions in the Municipality over the total number of high level positions.	Difference in the % of unemployment men and women
	Local public expenditure on public lightening (per capita per year)	Average expenditure per home on gas and electricity	Final energy consumption of the city, per year
	Average price of housing compared to gross income (municipal average)	Land use dedicated to green spaces, sport and leisure zones (m2 per capita)	Number of days per year with bad or very bad air quality)

SDG	Target	Indicator	Progress
14 LIFE BELOW WATER	% of urban beach with excellent water quality	Volume of fish disembarked in the city (kg per inhabitant)	Waste collection from the city beaches (kg/inhabitant)
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	Local transparency index	Electoral turn out	Municipal debt (euros per inhabitant)
	Perception of the functioning of the city's services	Satisfaction with living in Malaga	Number of environmental complaints

The document (in Spanish only) can be found at ↪ <http://localizingthesdgs.org/library/view/612>



### Bacarena, Brazil

The strategic dimension and new Plan for 2018-2021 includes all the SDG indicators together with an approach to promote territorial development and greater social participation. The main priorities identified were: poverty, hunger, gender, health, education, economic growth and partnerships, environment and peace. The city has established a coordinating office that regularly meets the departments responsible for the different areas to monitor and follow up on the situation.

The report includes both references to specific actions and a set of early indicators that relate to what have been identified as priority areas for the city (sample):

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys receive completely free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	<p>Actions — Public works on school buildings to reduce heat in the classrooms.</p> <p>Indicator — Reduction of the number of pupils attending school during the hottest hours of the day from 3,536 (2012) to 3,187 (2017). Approval of the service increased from 75% (2012) to 77.94% (2016). The number of children abandoning school dropped to 2%. The number of pupils attending school increased from 22,967 (2012) to 23,170 (2017). Restructuring of 51 schools and the construction of 4 new schools and one new kindergarten.</p>
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**6.1** By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

Actions — Legislative change and approval of new municipal regulations including a “social water fee” for disadvantaged families.

Indicator — Number of households with access to drinking water (increase of 52% in 3 years)

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**17.1** Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve the capacity to collect domestic taxes and other forms of revenue

Actions — Update the municipal property register and would notify those that would be the largest contributors — Implementation of a fiscal recovery plan to regularize municipal debt — Building greater capacity and improving municipal technical fiscal capacity for auditing and updating the register of debtors.

Indicator — Increase in revenue collection of 26.39% from 2015 to 2016.

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The document is available at (only in Portuguese) ↪ <http://localizingthesdgs.org/library/342/>

The following cases of local government action were inspired by the UCLG (CIB, GOLD and Learning) Webinars about the processes of SDG Localizing, Monitoring and Reporting, involving these National Associations of cities and organizations. Their full presentations can be found at ↪ <https://www.learning.uclg.org/module-3>.



## Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)

### General Strategy for Localizing the SDGs, in Spain

- Coordination between Local, National and International actions;
- Strengthening local authorities, alliances, institutional measures, raising awareness and monitoring;
- Prioritization of SDGs 11, 16 (strategic) and 17;
- Definition of a common multilevel and multifactor Action Plan for 2018-2020, together with National Government in Spain: territories, universities, civil society, private sector, citizens;
- The FEMP organizes local, national and international strategies for localizing the SDGs relating to the design, execution and monitoring of local plans relating to SDGs;
- Open Government as a key policy.
- Constant activities of capacitation relating to localizing SDGs with

short, medium and long-term strategies, involving municipal workers, local government organizations, federations and administrations;

- Collection and diffusion of local strategies related to Agenda 2030 good practices and towards the creation of an Observatory;
- Action Plan with a current diagnosis;
- Priorities established by each actor, and identifying the next steps to follow;
- Building of a collective strategy, which is open, participative and transparent, with constant accountability, for pursuing the SDGs at the local level.

### Objectives For The Development Of Local Empowerment

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#### Strengthening of the Role of Local Authorities

Strengthen and legitimize the role of local governments in developing the 2030 Agenda, working towards improved political action in this area.

#### Strengthening Alliances

Improve alliances and action and international cooperation to promote exchanges of experiences, technical assistance and decentralized cooperation to achieve the SDGs.




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#### Institutional Strengthening and Sensibilization

Strengthening the capacity of local actors to improve their knowledge of the SDGs and their integration into local strategies.

Monitor and constitute the local observatory of the SDGs.

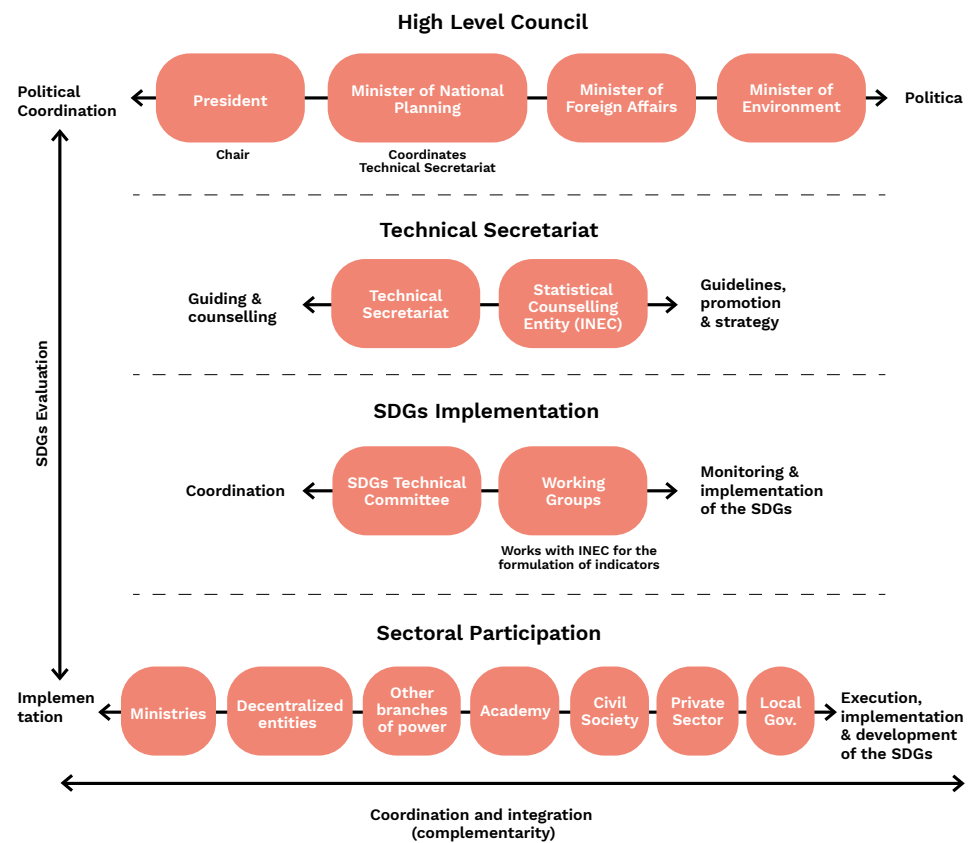
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### National Union of Local Governments of Costa Rica (UNGL)

#### General Strategy for Localizing SDGs, local governments in Costa Rica

- Local Governments form part of the commission for activating the SDG High Level Council of Costa Rica; this action is facilitated by the National Government;
- The UNGL strategy is also associated with the decentralization of finances and the mobilization of local resources;
- Costa Rica has defined its priorities for the SDGs based on local needs, defining three main priorities for action: plans, projects and defining goals;

- The local national strategy has carried out local diagnoses, prognoses, implementations and the monitoring of local SDG processes;
- The local (in consonance with the national strategy for SDGs in local governments) has established axes of action for constant improvement and for strengthening the organization, evaluation and achievement of the SDGs in local-level processes, aligning the National SDG plan with those of the regions and local governments (and their respective local thematic policies);
- UNLG supports local planning and implementation and helping to adapt the SDG goals to meet local needs;
- SDGs provide a fundamental opportunity to change the mentality of local officials and to work towards achieving a more humanistic and sustainable public policy culture.



### National Confederation of Municipalities of Brazil (CNM)

#### General Strategy for Localizing the SDGs, local government organizations in Brazil:

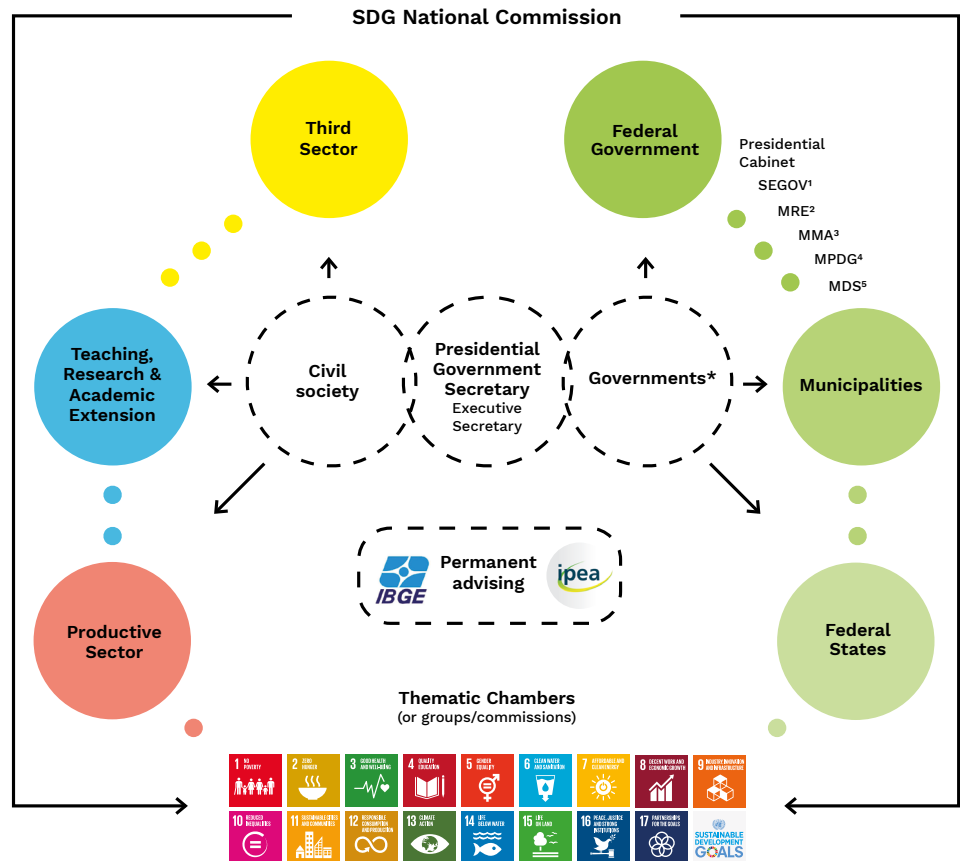
- The National government of Brazil established a Commission for the SDGs in 2017. This brought together the different levels of government, the private sector and civil society. Under the general Secretary of the Presidency, the CNM was made responsible for local government organizations in this commission;
- This national commission has launched a Best Practices National Award



for civil society and local and regional governments initiatives related to the SDG progress;

- The CNM has launched two guides for the localizing of SDGs which consider the execution of planning and public policy;
- The CNM has also launched a free 5-week online course about localizing SDGs which has been developed in combination with on-site training in SDGs relating to urban planning;
- The CNM has also prepared a series of thematic materials relating to urban policies and the technical application of SDGs in areas such as mobility and social development;
- The CNM has promoted campaigns of raising awareness about the SDGs, working with local officers in several municipal secretaries (as urban planning), and staying in permanent contact with its cities to follow up the SDG progress on the municipal plans and policies.

### Structure of the SDG National Commission



\* referred to multi-level governance- federal government, States and municipalities

1 SEGOV — Presidential Government Secretary

2 MRE — National Ministry of Foreign Affairs

3 MMA —National Ministry of Environment

4 MPDG — National Ministry of Planning, Development and Management

5 MDS — national Ministry of Social Development (since 2019 called National Ministry of Citizenship)

### **General Strategy for Localizing the SDGs, local governments in the Netherlands**

- 160 cities (out of a total of almost 380 cities) participated in the MDGs campaign until 2015;
- Until now, 66 cities have committed to the localizing of the SDG strategies and adapted their local plans and budgets in line with the SDGs;
- The VNG's national strategy on SDGs is promoting public campaigns like the SDG "time capsule", that consults citizens and their expectations related to the SDGs and their realization until 2030;
- In 2019, the VNG has also established the priority of participating internationally in campaigns to mobilise the SDGs in Europe;
- Every year, the VNG has participated in the national reports presented at the HLPF as a member of the national delegation on SDGs. It has done this representing local government organizations and as part of a strong partnership with the national government;
- The next step required is to improve the local indicators and to adapt the international indicators to the current reality of the Netherlands;
- The VNG is creating SDG indicators, based on the methodology developed in Germany.



Swedish Association  
of Local Authorities  
and Regions

### **Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)**

#### **General Strategy for Localizing the SDGs, the Swedish case**

- SALAR worked with the Foreign Affairs Ministry to guarantee the participation of LRGs in global agendas, even before the emergence of the SDGs.
- Sweden reported to the HLPF in 2017, through a national effort coordinated by the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finances, with the consultation of different actors involved in both civil society and local and regional governments;
- SALAR is responsible for LRG reports and collecting best practices. It has collected almost 40 cases in the form of short contributions about the local implementation of SDGs, providing a summary of examples;
- Along with SALAR, the city of Malmo was represented as part of the country's official delegation (which was coordinated by the Ministry of Public Administration) and hosted a side event on SDGs and "social inclusion";
- It is fundamental for members to carry out tasks of advocacy and to work to raise awareness, both outside the organization and within it. With this in mind, SALAR created a platform outlining the best SDGs practices, with a local network about Agenda 2030 and a communication project called "*Glocal Sweden*";
- SALAR has also signed an agreement with Sweden's national government to establish a series of indicators and monitor SDG progress at the local level.



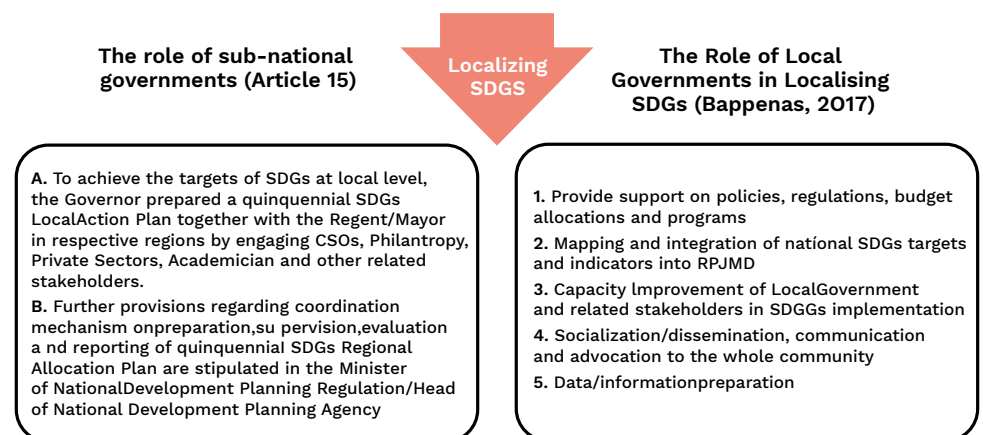
## United Cities and Local Governments, Asia Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC) in Indonesia

### General Strategy for Localizing the SDGs, in Indonesia

- The implementation of SDGs was established by Presidential decree. It is subject to the coordination of the National Development Planning Agency and includes a Local Action Plan. This brings together LRGs, the private sector, universities and other stakeholders;
- LRGs are expected to integrate policies, capacitate for the implementation of SDGs, communicate, and gather and share information;
- Provincial Governments are responsible for the SDGs and for reporting (directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and also for establishing local regulations in line with the Local Action Plan;
- UCLG-ASPAC is working on improving LRGs’ capacities to improve planning, implementing and reporting on SDGs at the regional government level (in 16 provinces and 14 cities), through training sessions and the collecting of local data, with the help of local officers and non-state stakeholders;
- Financing, creating common indicators, and capacitating public officials at the local level, are all challenges for the progress of the SDG agenda;
- Partnerships and private financing are possible ways of strengthening efforts towards accomplishing the SDG goals at the local level;
- UCLG-ASPAC is also supporting Indonesian LRG associations and helping them to prepare their own reports, through webinars and training.

### The Implementation of SDGs in Indonesia

Coordinating Ministry: National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas)  
National Policy on SDGs: Presidential Decree No. 59 on Achieving SDGs



Source: UCLG-ASPAC presentation about the SDGs Localizing in Indonesia, realized on December 18th, 2019



### Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

### General Strategy for Localizing the SDGs, through Platforma

- The Secretariat of Platforma, hosted by the CEMR, has a Dual objective regarding the SDGs:
  - raising awareness of global issues at the local level and participating in national-level decision-making;
  - reporting on the process of SDG implementation;
- Along with this, it participated in a multi-stakeholder ↪ *platform* for the implementation of the SDGs within the EU;
- It has organized ↪ *a Publication* about SDG localization within Europe;
- Through a pilot project, involving local governments and national associations in Italy, Spain, Latvia and the Netherlands and their members and key actors at the national level;
- The Pilot project has promoted Peer learning, the exchange of best practices, and strategies for meeting challenges relating to common issues;
- Specific results of the project:
  - National associations involved in national-level discussions (Spain and Latvia)
  - The development of specific indicators for the local context (Spain)
- The final outcome of the project: local and regional governments are recognized as key actors for the implementation of SDGs at the national level.
- It has also been proposed to integrate the Decentralized Cooperation framework in line with the SDGs and their specific targets.



### Federation of Canadian Municipalities

#### General Strategy for Localizing the SDGs, in Canada

- Participation in the national committee for SDGs (coordinated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs) and participation, for the first time, in the HLPF in 2018.
- The FCM believes that to achieve SDGs, it is necessary to work with other countries. Along these lines, it is also working with the national associations of Vietnam and Mali, which also presented their own reports for the first time in 2018.
- It supports the monitoring and reporting of Burkina Faso and South Africa. For 2020, the FCM will support efforts to include the progress made by Bolivian LRGs in Localizing SDGs in a national report;
- The FCM also contributes to UCLG and Global Taskforce initiatives for the HLPF;
- The Canadian government has adopted a national strategy that includes LRGs in Global agendas, such as SDGs, the Paris agreement and the Sendai Framework.
- The FCM will continue working together with the national government in responding to the different demands of its members, providing training, monitoring and reporting



## United Cities and Local Governments, in Africa (UCLG-A)

### ALGA strategy for Localizing SDGs

- With UCLG Learning and GOLD, UCLG-A has been training trainers, including LRG public officers and national associations in countries such as Burkina Faso and South Africa;
- UCLG-A also disseminates and gathers information from LRG associations relating to progress in the localizing of SDGs. This has been reported in the annual UCLG report to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York, as well as in the UCLG GOLD reports;
- UCLG-A also works with 25 local institutes to train local officers in Africa



### Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)

- The crucial role of local governments was not sufficiently stressed in the last VNR, it mentioned the VVSG and LRGs, but was not specific enough;
- In recent years, the national and regional governments have looked more closely to the LRGs to become relevant actors in the approach to the SDGs, in a more concrete way;
- The VVSG is developing tools for the monitoring and reporting on the SDGs, such as the “SDG circle exercise”, which aligns local initiatives, departments and policies to the SDGs;
- The VVSG has created SDG initiatives such as the “Declaration of Commitments” (which has been signed by more than 80 governments) and several publications, to mobilize the LRGs, and public opinion in general;
- From 2017-2019, more than 20 pilot municipalities have participated in the VVSG’s SDG initiative. This integrates the SDGs into policy making, organizing meetings with public officers, and campaigns for raising awareness;
- Within Policy Making, SDGs are part of the local-level, multi-annual strategic plans (over 6 years), and for this reason the VVSG has developed SDG software (with SDG-codes), aligning the SDGs to policies and local actions, in order to facilitate the creation of indicators for the monitoring of local-level SDGs (with a set of 54 local-level SDG-indicators);
- Several of the SDG tools that have been developed are available in English at ↪ [www.vvsg.be](http://www.vvsg.be).

### **Associations of German Cities and Municipalities (DST and DSGB) and Germany's National Association (LKT)**

- In partnership with the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), DST, DSGB and LKT have developed a set of local indicators for large-scale monitoring.
- Using the 17 SDGs as a starting point, each of the goals are assigned three or four indicators.
- The majority of the indicators are generated from a database of municipal data that is periodically updated. The availability and accessibility of municipal data through such a local database can be considered a significant advantage for benchmarking and clustering according to local traits and needs.
- The indicators that cannot be created through the local data base (about 10% of the total) use disaggregated data from the national or regional institutes of statistics. These indicators, which are based on national data, facilitate alignment with the global indicators of the SDGs and allow comparisons at the national level.
- The German example demonstrates that municipal data bases used in combination with national indicators can offer an effective and viable solution for SDG monitoring at the local level.

**Development and Coordination:**

UCLG Learning

UN-Habitat

UNDP-ART

**Content edition:**

Agustí Fernández de Losada Passols

Anna Calvete Moreno

**Methodology and design:**

Smilemundo.org





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# Handouts

# Your role in the reporting process



How are you involved in the consultation process of the VNR?

How can you get independently involved?

Will your LRGA prepare its own national report?

Will your LRGA prepare its own national report?

What will be your main role/s in the process (collecting data, advocacy, engaging stakeholders, drafting the report, etc.)

What could your main role/s be in the process (collecting data, advocacy, engaging stakeholders, drafting the report, etc.)

# Involving stakeholders

List of stakeholders

1. + Pros /- Cons

.....

Actions:

2. + Pros /- Cons

.....

Actions:

3. + Pros /- Cons

.....

Actions:

4. + Pros /- Cons

.....

Actions:

5. + Pros /- Cons

.....

Actions:

# What data should be collected

**What information should you collect in your territory?**

**What data sources are available to you?**

**How will you collect the data?  
Which mechanisms will you use?**

# Sharing the results

**Where and how will you submit your experience(s)?**



**How will you ensure that your inputs will be taken into account in the VNR?**



# National Review (Template 1)

## 1. Summary (half page)

Synthesis of the report, highlighting the role of LRGs in localizing the SDGs and highlighting one or two good practices and one or two challenges in which LRGs would need support in terms of capacity-building, financial support, a partnership and/or technology, etc.

## 2. Introduction (two paragraphs)

A short paragraph presenting the national context. Has the country started the SDGs implementation process? Why are the LRGs developing their own national report? What are the key challenges facing LRGs in the 'localization' of the SDGs in their country/countries?

A paragraph with a short description of the current LRG situation: the number of LRGs, key responsibilities for urban and territorial management (e.g., services, economic development, etc.), key figures in local finance (local revenues, expenditure and investment, and total national government revenue, expenditure and public investment).

## 3. Methodology and process for the preparation of the review (one short paragraph)

To what extent have LRGs been consulted for the National Voluntary Review? To what extent have their views been considered?

## 4. Policy and enabling environment (2 pages)

### A. Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals:

[outline the efforts made to inform and involve all stakeholders — including LRGs — in the process, including the dissemination of the review process]

- *Participation of LRGs in the national debate on the SDGs:* if the country has initiated the process for the implementation of the SDGs, the report should provide more information about how its LRGs have been involved in the political debate. How can political and institutional balances contribute to the involvement of LRGs in the implementation of the global agendas?

The LRG report should also highlight any initiatives taken by associations of local governments and sub-national governments to disseminate information about the SDGs and to initiate the implementation process at the sub-national level (localization).

### B. Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals within the national (and local) frameworks:

[This may describe national efforts made to integrate the SDGs into the country's legislation, policies, plans and programmes, including its

strategy for achieving sustainable development. Countries could consider referring to major efforts undertaken by local authorities and non-state actors to implement the goals, including partnerships.]

This point can be jointly **developed with point f** (see below) on “institutional mechanisms”.

- *LRGs and national policies*: how have LRGs been associated with the definition of national policies or strategies for SDG implementation? To what extent have LRG priorities and positions been considered in national policies or national development plans to support the ‘localization’ process?
- *Multilevel governance*: has any specific mechanism been created to ensure that the implementation and review processes are followed up? If so, how have the LRGs been associated with it (e.g., in Brazil, the creation of a National Committee on the SDGs — via Decree 8892, October 2016. This body includes representatives from ministries, LRGs and civil society)? Have the SDGs had any impact on national legislation or institutional frameworks and helped to promote reforms and/or improve coordination between national and subnational governments (multilevel governance)?
- *Current institutional framework*: the report should explain the role of LRGs in the ‘localization’ of SDGs, based on the current distribution of responsibilities between different levels of government (as defined through laws governing decentralization and existing rules and policies). It should also highlight the national capacity to build programmes for sub-national governments and what reforms are currently being, or should be, considered in order to improve the achievement of the SDGs in different territories and thereby ensure that “no-one gets left behind”.
- *Local democracy*: given the critical role of the involvement of local stakeholders in SDG implementation, the LRG reports should analyse whether the existing national legislation and the local institutional framework facilitate and promote the involvement of civil society and the participation of economic stakeholders in local decision making (e.g., Goal 16.6: “develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”). LRGs should highlight sub-national government initiatives to promote the participation of local stakeholder (e.g., via participatory planning and budgeting).
- *Create an enabling environment*: the LRG report should stress how national frameworks either facilitate or hinder the initiatives of LRGs. Even though, in most countries, it is probably still too early to identify any important legal or institutional reforms, the LRG report could help to define what the key areas are at the level of legislative and national policy that need to be revised in order to support SDG localization and the creation of an ‘enabling environment’ for LRGs.
- *Indicators*: as regards monitoring and review, what can national governments do to ‘disaggregate’ national data? How are LRGs associated with these initiatives?

- The LRG report should also *highlight any sub-national initiatives* taken to integrate SDGs into local development plans and local policies. This should involve the strengthening of institutional coordination and of planning mechanisms at the local and regional scales, and the creation of new local alliances (between LRGs and local stakeholders) to support the localization process.

### **C. Integration of the three dimensions**

[Discuss how the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are being integrated, as well as the principles of the 2030 Agenda. For example, “leaving no one behind” is one of the main priorities of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in a particular case]

Whenever possible, LRGs should, through concrete examples, highlight how local and regional development plans can help to bring about a more integrated approach that includes all three of the target dimensions (plus culture).

### **D. Goals and targets**

[Brief information on progress and the current status of all the Sustainable Development Goals and also of the critical difficulties encountered in reaching them. If possible, provide a more in-depth analysis on a few selected goals, targets and innovative policies. The discussion could focus on trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues, and lessons learned]

### **E. Thematic analysis**

[Include an analysis of any progress and initiatives related to the thematic focus of high-level political fora for the year in question]

**Points D and E can be developed together**, focusing on the analysis of national policies and LRG actions to support specific thematic areas, e.g., Goal 11 on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements.

The LRG report should highlight specific initiatives undertaken by sub-national governments in relevant areas, e.g., slum upgrading, strengthening urban participatory planning, urban mobility, water and waste management, and adapting to and mitigating climate change, among others.

Whenever possible, the report should refer to SDG indicators collected by national and international institutions and, if needed, it will be possible to add indicators identified by LRGs to pinpoint major gaps in official statistical systems relating to SDG achievements.

### **F. Institutional mechanisms**

[How the views of different ministries, agencies, levels of government and non-governmental stakeholders are taken into account and information about the institution in charge of coordination and integration. How responsibility is allocated among various levels of Government (national, subnational and local) for the coherent implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda]



This issue should be addressed jointly with point B (see above).

**5. Means of implementation (one paragraph, half a page max.)**

[Discuss how the means of implementation are mobilized, what difficulties this process faces, and what additional resources are needed to implement the 2030 Agenda, including the terms of financing, the capacity to meet development needs, and also information relating to data and statistics, knowledge-sharing, technology and partnerships]

This section should introduce a general analysis of the evolution of local financing, explaining whether and how resources have been decentralized to allow LRGs to meet their responsibilities and what needs to be improved to achieve fiscal decentralization and to develop mechanisms that ensure greater balance between different regions and territories in order to support balanced and cohesive territorial development and “leave no one behind”.

**6. Conclusion (half a page)**

[A summary of the analysis, with the findings and policy implications]

# National Review (Template 2)

## 1. Summary

Synthesis of the report, highlighting the role of LRGs in localizing the SDGs and highlighting one or two good practices and one or two challenges for which LRGs would need support to help them with capacity-building, financing, establishing partnerships, technology, etc.

**2. Methodology and process for the preparation of the review:** sources of the data and information collected, number of participating LRGs etc.

## 3. Policy and enabling environment

**A.** The mechanisms for the participation (multi-level governance) of LRGs in the SDG national debate and for the definition, follow-up and evaluation of the contributions made to the Agenda (ad-hoc mechanism, informal consultations, no participation at all...)

**B.** The extent to which the priorities of the LRGs have been considered in national laws, policies and/or plans in order to support the localization process; also the possibility of LRGs contributing to the Agenda and the mechanisms used for data collection

**C.** Initiatives taken to integrate SDGs into local laws, plans and policies; the strengthening of institutional coordination, and the creation of new local alliances (between LRGs and local stakeholders) to support the localization process

**D.** The main difficulties facing LRGs (legal constraints, lack of financing, capacity to meet development needs, need for technical resources, differences between territories...)

## 4. Goals and targets: thematic analysis

Analysis of progress, initiatives and challenges related to the thematic focus of the HLPF for a given year, and also other issues considered relevant. Whenever possible, this should be analysed using SDG indicators or other indicators adapted to serve this purpose

## 5. Conclusion

# Voluntary Local Review

## What is a Voluntary Local Review (VLR)?

Since 2016, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) of the United Nations has asked member states to submit their reports — the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) — to assess the **state of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. VNRs promote accountability, transparency, and encourage dialogue on shared experiences between countries.

As all of the SDGs have targets directly related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments, **many cities have taken the first steps towards mapping their activities to achieve the SDGs** and using the goals as a comprehensive framework through which to assess their progress.

A Voluntary Local Review (VLR) has no official status at the UN, although the compilation of one underlines the value of the SDGs as a global framework driving local action. Moreover, Local Government Associations (LGA) advocate for including local achievements in VNRs.

## The Value of a VLR

**Within local government**



Align to Common framework, highlight the importance of data, update the divisions of labour, and break silos.

**Within civil society**



Listen to community and promote transparency and accountability, encourage new partnership and leadership.

**Within national government**



Affirm the principle of subsidiarity and the role of local governments in achieving national commitments (VNRs).

**Within the global community**



Engage with the global community, make your effort visible, elevate city priorities to the global conversation.

## What information is contained in a VLR?

### Refer the SDG in plans and policies

Many cities have tagged actions that demonstrated that they actually already work towards achieving the SDGs thus promoting dialogue between public administration and citizens.

Strategies to meet and to commit extra effort to achieve the SDGs have reshaped the character of large and iconic projects to look at them through a transversal lens.

### Data and Indicators

Cities take the responsibility of managing the implementation of the SDGs in order to promote goal-orientation and continued progress.

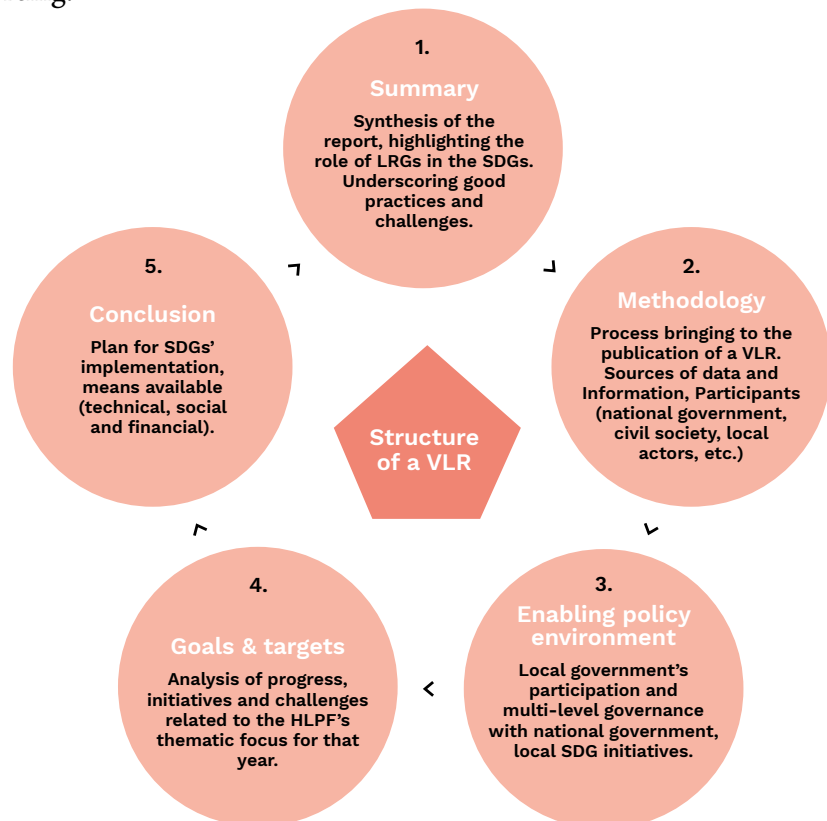
Existing performance indicators are a good basis to confirm the relevance of global indicators on the local level. VLR indicators may be local as well as global.

### Local norms

Local norms ensure that reporting becomes a continuous exercise independent of leadership changes.

### Structure of a VLR

There is no set template for the drafting of a VLR. Various partners and academia have supported local reporting with guidelines and web resources. UCLG contributes with a global report and learning module to engage in reporting.



## Starting the process

More than a dozen global cities have been developing a VLR and the methodology applied was similar. It mainly followed the following guiding questions:

### 1. Who starts?

- Ensure political support: Mayor's office and council can support the report and commit to localizing.
- Ensure citizen involvement: A report can help to empower participatory processes.

### 2. Who is managing?

- Appoint an SDG coordinator or facilitator from municipal staff:  
**Advantages:** Funding and inter-departmental information sharing.  
**Disadvantages:** Risk of blocking momentum, decrease in proactiveness.
- Commission or Working Group:  
**Advantages:** Empowers integration of servants and citizens and new leadership.  
**Disadvantages:** Difficulty in funding and discontinuity in reporting.

### 3. Who to learn from?

- Consult the national local government association on their role in VNRs.
- Visit national and global knowledge and research platforms and discover what other cities are doing and how partners and academia can help

### 4. Is Data available?

- Difficulty in access of databases.
- Consult budget cycle.
- Map different data along the city space.
- Engage in partnerships to collect and evaluate data with different stakeholders.

### 5. Keep engaged

- Cities must know their audience and target of the VLR.
- Open consultation at the local level increases accountability between citizens and government.
- Share your lessons and report through Local Government Associations.

# Storytelling exercise / City A

Imagine you have been invited to speak at the International Cities Conference, during the sustainable development panel. You are expected to make a 3-minute oral presentation about your city's successful changes in the last few years.

Use the SDG framework to talk about your city's success story, referring to at least 2 SDGs and using appropriate indicators. You can also refer to the structure of a VLR (summary, methodology, policy environment, goals & targets, and conclusion) to organize your presentation.

Give your city a name, and define your position within the city. Feel free to come up with additional information about your city to the one provided. Use the tokens at the bottom to vote for the presentations you like the most.

## City A

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ (You name it!)

**Habitants:** 75 000

**Location:** In your territory

**Key characteristics:** City situated near one of the country's most visited National Parks, with good touristic infrastructure and quite good access to the region's capital (buses every 40 min).

A recent debate is posed in parliament for national government to forbid plastic bags, as biodiversity of bird species has reduced 30% over 10 years.

### Key project aligned with the SDGs:



**Monthly market** for 50-60 local farmers, where they exchange 657892 products. Average weekly participation of habitants is 2500.



7000 **free books** for all secondary school students in the city.



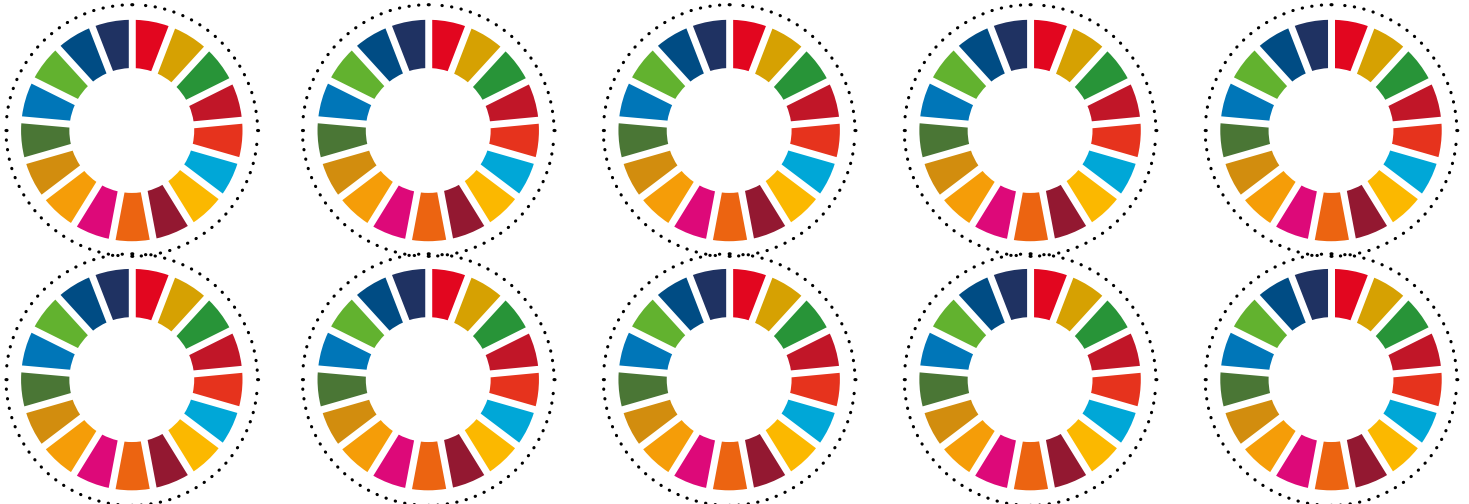
First network of **city bikes** in the region. 6000 users in the first year.



Creation of a **board of advisors** to the city council for **climate emergency**. Monthly meetings with scientists, representatives of NGOs and activists.



Creation of a **free phone number** for basic **juridical advice** for the citizens. Attended 7500 calls in last 12 months.



# Storytelling exercise / City B

Imagine you have been invited to speak at the International Cities Conference, during the sustainable development panel. You are expected to make a 3-minute oral presentation about your city's successful changes in the last few years.

Use the SDG framework to talk about your city's success story, referring to at least 2 SDGs and using appropriate indicators. You can also refer to the structure of a VLR (summary, methodology, policy environment, goals & targets, and conclusion) to organize your presentation.

Give your city a name, and define your position within the city. Feel free to come up with additional information about your city to the one provided. Use the tokens at the bottom to vote for the presentations you like the most.

## City B

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ (You name it!)

**Habitants:** 200 000

**Location:** In your territory

**Key characteristics:** Industrial city with a big pollution problem. The country's mining sector is in constant downturn (unemployment 18%). Many residents are employed in local factories.

**Key project aligned with the SDGs:**



750 homeless habitants attended by “**Integrated Support**” programme.



12 000 free school breakfasts from sustainable local produce.



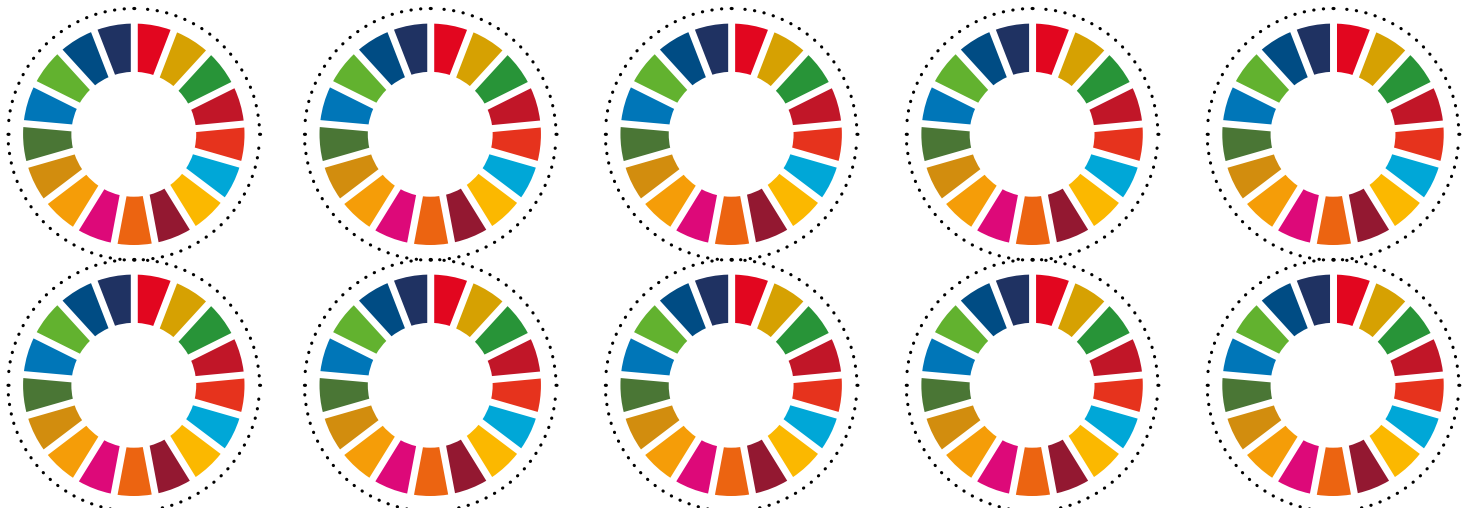
**Green job training** for 10 000 secondary school students to develop an interest in renewable energy industry.



Expanded **organics collection** to serve more than 25% residents — the largest program of its kind in the country.



**Planted over 20 000 trees** and created the City's street tree inventory — where users can track stewardship as well as submit tree updates and service requests.



# Storytelling exercise / City C

Imagine you have been invited to speak at the International Cities Conference, during the sustainable development panel. You are expected to make a 3-minute oral presentation about your city's successful changes in the last few years.

Use the SDG framework to talk about your city's success story, referring to at least 2 SDGs and using appropriate indicators. You can also refer to the structure of a VLR (summary, methodology, policy environment, goals & targets, and conclusion) to organize your presentation.

Give your city a name, and define your position within the city. Feel free to come up with additional information about your city to the one provided. Use the tokens at the bottom to vote for the presentations you like the most.

## City C

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ (You name it!)

**Habitants:** 350 000

**Location:** In your territory

**Key characteristics:** City located close to the big metropolis which is a place of work for most of the city's habitants. Young people tend to leave the city right after high school. Girls and women are afraid to leave, as the gender based violence is high in the country, including at work. (Proportion of women subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, since aged 15 is 10 in 1000)

### Key project aligned with the SDGs:



**Sexual education** classes for women and girls from the marginalized neighborhoods. In total 12 000 attendees.



**Subsidies** for 6200 senior and low-income homeowners to ensure the access to **clean drinking water**.



**Solar installations** in 7 city buildings. The buildings are fully sustainable.



6000 **microcredits** for youth to develop projects in the city. 30% of the participants came from low-income families.



Financed over 500 affordable apartments and homes. The biggest investment in **accessible housing** in the city's history.



25 schools joined the **energy saving program** led by the students.

