Local and Regional Implementation of SDGs: An Introduction to Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)

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HR1

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HR1 Heading, subheading and photos can be replaced. This is just to give an idea what can be done for the title of the presentation.

Helen Rosengren, 5/10/2019

Leading Locally to Implement the SDGs

- National governments cannot act alone in leveraging the opportunities or solving the complex challenges we face today.

- Two-thirds of the SDG targets will not be reached without the engagement of local and regional governments.

- For these reasons, the UN Secretary-General has identified SDG localization as one of the three essential areas of action for the achievement of the Goals

- The High-Level Political Forum also recognizes the importance of local authorities in translating the 2030 Agenda and national development priorities into local realities.

- Hence, VLRs have become one of the key tools for raising awareness about the SDGs and for transforming policies towards more sustainable solutions at the local level.

Voluntary Local Reviews – What are they?

- VLRs started as an adaptation of the process of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) conducted by national governments to the local dimension.

- Reports prepared by local and regional governments to monitor SDG achievements, gaps and challenges using the SDG framework (goals, targets and indicators).

- Tools which enable the identification of interlinkages and relations, and foster the design, implementation, M&E of local measures that consider the various dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social, economic, institutional).

United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Voluntary Local Reviews – What are they?

- VLRs are also a **process** that:

  - brings SDGs closer to the people, promoting inclusion and broader stakeholder engagement

  - entails political ownership of development efforts by local leaders – showcasing successes, gaps and challenges

  - fosters de-siloing and cooperation across public departments

  - promote vertical and horizontal policy coherence and enhance multilevel governance systems

  - promotes utilization of local data and mobilization of local resources

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Linking VNRs and VLRs is essential for achieving the SDGs

- SDGs can only be successfully achieved, when they are localized

- Today, 55% of world's pop lives in urban areas, projected to increase to 68% by 2050

- This has profound implications for decent and affordable housing, job creation, combating inequalities, energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, environmental degradation, etc

- Reporting on these issues at the local level using VLRs can enrich VNRs - giving us the whole picture and moving beyond national averages

- A valuable source of feedback, information and data for VNR processes

Connecting VNRs with VLRs, cont'd

- A way to engage citizens into local action to:

  - promote shared understanding of complex national and local problems

  - devise integrated solutions that benefit from broader societal consensus

  - ensure ownership and commitment to possible solutions

  - ensure no one is left behind and amplify the voices of the poor

- Local and regional gvts, development partners, CSOs, private sector, and academia are crucial to ensure the process is inclusive and accountable
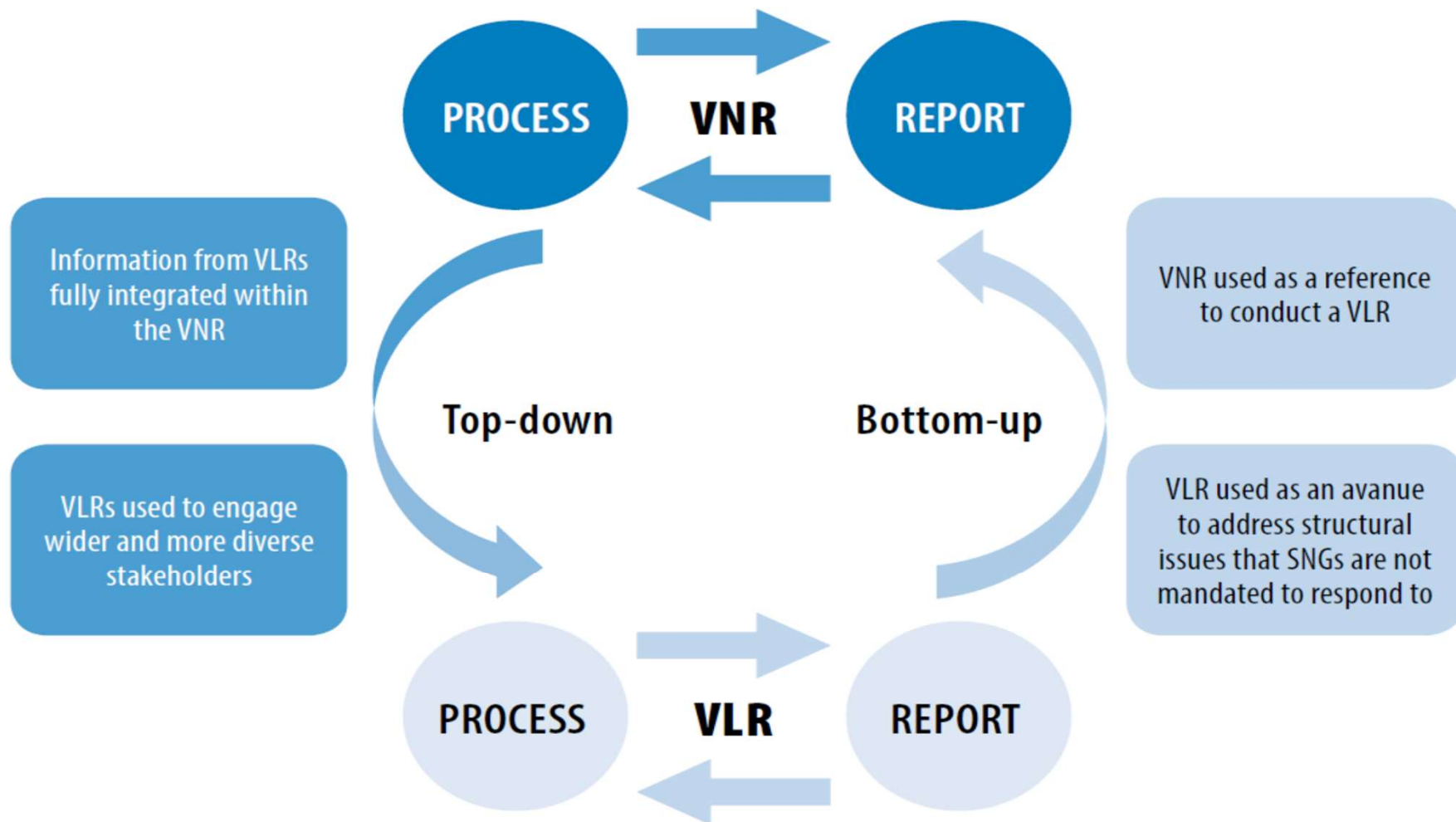
Connecting VNRs with VLRs, cont'd

- VLRs get their power and credibility from their effectiveness in catalyzing concrete local outcomes towards achieving the SDGs.

- Thus, the key questions are to what extent does a locality's VLR enable behavior change internally? higher-impact policy? new partnerships?

- It's important to ensure that SDG progress remains the primary objective - this is what has made VLRs so innovative.

- Any local govt, no matter their capacities and data constraints can prepare a VLR – the key is to start somewhere and build on it. Think about the robustness of the overall process.
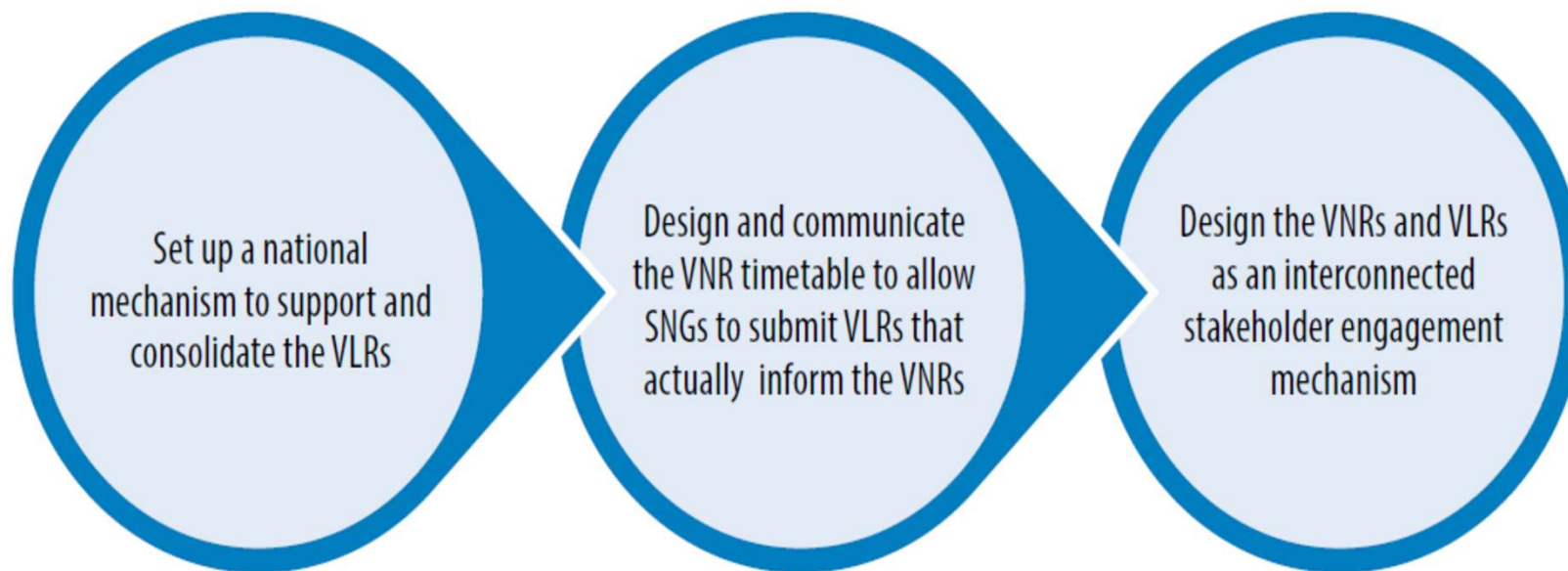
Operationalizing VLR-VNR integration

Information from VLRs fully integrated within the VNR

VLRs used to engage wider and more diverse stakeholders

PROCESS — VNR — REPORT

Top-down

Bottom-up

VNR used as a reference to conduct a VLR

VLR used as an avanue to address structural issues that SNGs are not mandated to respond to

PROCESS — VLR — REPORT

Actions to consider when integrating VLRs and VNRs

Set up a national mechanism to support and consolidate the VLRs

Design and communicate the VNR timetable to allow SNGs to submit VLRs that actually inform the VNRs

Design the VNRs and VLRs as an interconnected stakeholder engagement mechanism

The Kenya VLR Process

VI. Roadmap is to roll-out VLRs to all 47 counties (to have a bottom up VNR process –where VLRs contribute to the national VNR)

V. Private sector (Kenya Private Sector Alliance/KEPSA) and CSOs (Kenya SDGs Forum) produced complementarity VNRs which were annexes to the Kenya VNR 2020 (this was also the case in 2017)

IV. Five VLRs were an input in the 2020 Kenya VNR – best practices at SDGs reporting at sub-national levels

III. Five Counties (Busia, Kisumu, Kwale, Marsabit and Taita Taveta) piloted VLRs in 2019 (supported by the UN)

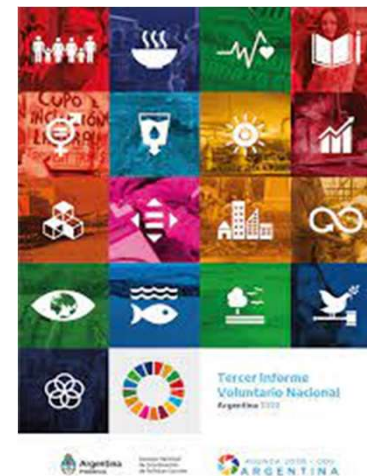II. Training of SDGs Champions from all 47 counties in 2019 (supported by the UN)

I. SDGs were mainstreamed in County Intergated Development Plans (CIDPs) in 2018 (supported by the UN)

VNR/VLR Linkages: the case of Argentina

In 2022, Argentina presented its 3rd National Voluntary Report, highlighting the central role of provincial and local governments in the implementation of the SDGs.

The VNR includes a section on territorialization of the Agenda in Provinces and Municipalities, which describes the institutional framework that Argentina has created for the localization of the SDGs, including the SDG Federal Network, which includes focal points in each province and is coordinated by the national government.

It includes information from provinces and municipalities on their efforts to localize the SDGs, and describes technical cooperation agreements signed between the three levels of government to advance SDG implementation.

VNR/VLR Linkages: the case of Italy

In 2022, Italy presented its second VNR, in which it highlights "Italy's firm conviction that regional and local authorities have a key role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda."

The VNR focuses particularly on three thematic areas, one of which is the localization of the SDGs, and the report includes a significant section on this topic.

The report also includes an annex with the NVRs of several regions, metropolitan cities and cities.

Lessons learned

(1) VLRs broaden the scope for inclusive multistakeholder consultations.

- growing number of citizens engaged in local actions and in the process promotes:

  - shared understanding of complex national and local problems

  - integrated solutions that benefit from broader societal consensus

  - ownership and commitment to possible solutions

  - no one is left behind

  - voices of women, youth, persons with disabilities, CSOs, private sector

Lessons learned, cont'd

(2) VLR processes have the potential to contribute to building strong institutions for SDGs, especially sound policy making and data availability.

- However, the participation of local and regional governments in national coordination mechanisms remains weak.

- According to UCLG, globally, the participation was 28% on average between 2016-2021, and 34% in 2022.

- The numbers are even much lower in Africa.

Lessons learned, cont'd

(3) Breaking silos or promoting horizontal policy coherence across sectoral departments of local and regional governments and managing trade-offs across policy domains in the implementation of SDGs and NDPs is not an easy process.

- while countries have been skillful in aligning their efforts with existing laws, institutions, and development programmes, they have been less skillful when it comes to developing new integrated strategies for achieving the SDGs.

- Many countries have also not done enough to incorporate local and regional governments in SDGs implementation

Lessons learned, cont'd

(4) Co-creation is helping local and regional governments to align the necessary resources and capacity and cultivating the political support and buy-in that is necessary for the successful adoption and localization of the SDGs

- To address some of these shortcomings, countries are:

  - improving alignment and domestication of SDGs and NDPs

  - implementing whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches

  - strengthening decentralization

  - strengthening links between planning and budgeting processes

  - costing of national & local plans to strengthen the link btw plans & budgets

Challenges to Integrating VNRs and VLRs

- Many LGAs may wish to prepare a VLR but they are discouraged when they need to start the process.

- They may feel overwhelmed if there is no specific department/unit dealing with SDG localization

- Lack of political will – issues of devolution, provision of technical and financial support to local gvts to implement local SDGs strategies

- Local capacity constraints for addressing the SDGs and inadequate financial resources

Challenges to Integrating VNRs and VLRs

- Lack of disaggregated data and capacities to perform subnational monitoring

- However, in the spirit of keeping the barrier of entry low, it's important to also highlight the importance of qualitative data.

- For local governments that do not yet have strong data, use the stories of your impact to share your commitment to the SDGs.

- This is sometimes even more powerful when it comes to relating to general constituents.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER GOING FORWARD

▪Setting up a national mechanism to support and consolidate VLR contributions.

▪Designing and communicating the VNR timetable to allow sub-national governments to submit VLRs in a timely manner to actually inform the VNRs.

▪Designing the VNRs and VLRs as an interconnected stakeholder engagement mechanism.

▪Prioritize sharing of data, especially from national statistical offices

▪Ensure meaningful efforts by national governments to build local capacities to perform subnational implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDGs.

Thank you.