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

Amson Sibanda

Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA





Progress Implementing the SDGs

- The COVID-19 pandemic has undermined decades of development efforts and has setback the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs everywhere.
- The human, economic and social toll of the pandemic has been devastating as underscored by rising poverty, hunger, inequality, job losses and inflation
- Health-care systems have also been pushed to the brink
- The impacts of a changing climate are placing the SDGs further out of reach



What Are Voluntary Local Reviews?

- Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) measure country progress on the SDGs
- Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) measure progress on the SDGs at local and subnational levels and are about engaging citizens into local action
- They are a valuable source of feedback, information, and data for the VNR processes
- VLRs are not officially a part of the HLPF, but have been discussed in the negotiations on the HLPF review as a useful tool for increasing local commitment to the SDGs
- Cities and regions are represented at the annual Local and Regional Governments Forum, DESA's special event at the HLPF





A Growing Number of Cities and LGAs Undertaking VLRs

- 2021 VNR countries referring to voluntary local/voluntary subnational reviews (VLRs/VSRs), among them Indonesia, Mexico, Zimbabwe
- Sweden officially submitted 4 VLRs from Stockholm, Uppsala, Helsingborg and Malmö together with the VNR
- The Gambia amongst many countries doing both a VNR and VLRs in 2022
- VLRs have been initiated in a growing number of countries : New York city, Cape Town, Harare & Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe; Suwon, Republic of Korea; Shimokawa & Toyama in Japan; Cauayan City in the Philippines
- Venice City Solutions 2030 -a permanent event fully dedicated to the local implementation of SDGs.





DESA Global Guiding Elements for VLRs

- Draw from the Secretary-General's common voluntary guidelines for the VNRs
- Provide a proposed shared structure for the reports, and at minimum, give a checklist of issues that could be reflected in the process
- Fully compatible with other, more detailed guidance documents
- Aim at fostering a dialogue between the Voluntary National Reviews and the VLRs, where applicable



Connecting VNRs with VLRs

- A valuable source of feedback, information and data for VNR processes
- Foster policy coherence and coordination among national and local efforts
- Enhance stakeholder engagement and awareness of the SDGs at the subnational level
- Amplify the voices of the poor and people living in vulnerable situations and help in ensuring no one is left behind
- Can highlight innovative local resource mobilizing solutions



Connecting VNRs with VLRs, cont'd

- Many of the 2030 Agenda's 169 targets rely on the contributions and responsibilities of local and subnational governments.
- Cities and local governments are providers of basic public goods and services—housing, health, education, food systems, water & sanitation
- Hence, they play an important role in delivering on the SDGs and VLRs provide a fuller picture of SDG implementation and challenges
- Subnational governments also have an important role in local resource mobilization, e.g. mobilizing property tax.
- Showcase and bring forward unique but scalable local solutions to development challenges



Why Localizing SDGs Is Critical in a post-COVID World

- With only 8 years left to achieve the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, countries must build back better and find ways to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs
- One way to accelerate implementation and fast-track progress is to mobilize subnational or local governments to pursue the SDGs at their level.
- SDG localization has been increasingly recognized as a strong driver of the 2030 Agenda, including by the HLPF
- Scaling up SDG localization requires system-wide alignment, enhanced local governance, and multi-stakeholder and partnership collaboration.



Why Localizing SDGs Is Critical in a post-COVID World

- *“We commit to involving and empowering local authorities to ensure local ownership of SDGs, in particular by citizens, community and local organizations and to best translate national development priorities into local realities and in this regard, note voluntary local reviews as a useful tool to show progress and foster exchange in local implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.” – HLPF MD 2021*
- Scaling up SDG localization requires developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and ensuring more responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision - making processes.
- It also requires system-wide alignment, enhanced local governance, and multi-stakeholder and partnership collaboration.



Barriers to Localizing SDGs

- Inadequate local capacity and financial resource
- Lack of policy coherence and coordination among national and local efforts (VNRs & VLRs)
- Lack of disaggregated data and capacities to perform subnational monitoring
- Limited awareness of the SDGs and stakeholder consultations at the subnational levels



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Thank you.