

GLOBAL GUIDING ELEMENTS FOR VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEWS

Mr. Amson Sibanda, Chief

National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch

Division for Sustainable Development Goals

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

VLRS AND THE GLOBAL MONITORING FRAMEWORK

- In the UN resolution to adopt the SDGs, UN member States committed to ***“fully engage in conducting regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the subnational, national, regional and global levels.”*** (A/RES/70/71)
- HLPF MD 2022 - ***“We encourage the full, equal and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, including local governments, civil society organizations and academia, in the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of national sustainable development strategies and in the preparation of voluntary national reviews. We encourage countries to consider developing national road maps of voluntary national reviews for presentation until 2030.”***

VLRS AND THE GLOBAL MONITORING FRAMEWORK

- Although VLRS are not officially a part of the HLPF, localization is a key aspect for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs
- Localization is *'the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and sub-national sustainable development goals and targets'* (Open Working Group of the GA on Sustainable Goals 2014)
- It includes the *'process of taking into account sub-national contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets, to determining the means of implementation and using indicators to measure and monitor progress'* (UCLG 2019).

VLRS – 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.
- VLRS are basically reports prepared by local and regional governments on their progress, gaps, challenges, strategies and measures for sustainable development, using the SDG framework (goals, targets and indicators).
- VLRS are also tools which enable the identification of interlinkages and relations, and foster the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of local measures that consider the various dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social, economic and institutional).

***DESA
GLOBAL GUIDING
ELEMENTS
FOR VLRS***

- To help countries prepare VLRS, UNDESA prepared Global Guiding Elements
- 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, e.g. those developed by UNECA and UN Habitat
- Aim at fostering a dialogue between the Voluntary National Reviews and the VLRS, where applicable

CONNECTING VNRS WITH VLRS

VLRS can enrich VNRS

- 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

VLRS can enrich VNRS

- Cities and local governments are providers of basic services –housing, health, education, water and sanitation, etc.
- Hence, VLRS provide a fuller picture of SDG implementation and challenges
- Showcase and bring forward unique but scalable solutions
- Help in assessing and addressing vertical and horizontal inequalities within a country

DESA CAPACITY BUILDING

- National capacity building activities – Gambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia
- Global peer learning workshops for cities and regions
- Voluntary Local Review Series:
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Integrating the SDGs into strategies, plans and budgets
 - Monitoring, data and indicators
- SDGs as a shared language for peer learning
- DESA capacity building support is demand driven

LESSONS LEARNED

- (1) VLRs broaden the scope for inclusive multistakeholder consultations.
- In all our project countries, a growing number of citizens are being engaged in local actions, and in the process:
 - 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 and that
 - no one is left behind.
- This allows the voices of civil society groups, youth, and groups in vulnerable situations to be taken onboard.
- National governments seeking to mainstream and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs are also realizing that they can be more inclusive and expand their perspectives by engaging more directly with LGAs, local communities, CSOs, private sector

LESSONS LEARNED, cont'd

- To be successful, these efforts must ensure that national level processes linked to SDGs implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and
- the preparation of VNRs should pay more attention to how well indicators capture the contributions and impact of local efforts.

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 countries to manage trade-offs across policy domains in the implementation of SDGs and NDPs is not an easy process.
- Reviews have also shown that 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, some countries have embarked on decentralization while others are actively reaching out and engaging local and regional governments, communities and stakeholders.

GOING FORWARD

- Countries should consider setting up national mechanisms to support and consolidate VLR contributions.
- They should consider designing and communicating the VNR timetable to allow sub-national governments to submit VLRs in a timely manner to actually inform the VNRs.
- Countries should also consider designing the VNRs and VLRs as an interconnected stakeholder engagement mechanism.
- Sharing of data needs to be prioritized, especially from national statistical offices while meaningful efforts should be made by national governments to build LGA capacities to perform subnational implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

THANK YOU!

For more information:

Mr. Amson Sibanda, Chief

National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch

Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA

sibanda@un.org