



# **National Workshop on “Improved Local and National Government Capacities for Localizing the SDGs through Voluntary Local Reviews in Malawi”**

**Concept Note**

**24-26 April 2024**

**Lilongwe, Malawi**

## **I. Purpose of the Workshop**

The Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DSDG/UNDESA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Malawi, the United Nations Resident Coordinator (RCO), UNDP Malawi, and UN Habitat, is organizing a national capacity building workshop on “Improved Local and National Government Capacities for Localizing the SDGs through Voluntary Local Reviews in Malawi,” to take place from 24 to 26 April in Lilongwe, Malawi.

The capacity building workshop is convened in the context of UNDESA’s mission to advise interested Governments on ways and means to translate policy frameworks developed in UN conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance that helps build national capacities, to integrate the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs into national development plans and strategies. Capacity building activities also aim to enhance strategies to minimize the negative impacts of unprecedented and overlapping challenges, including the enduring impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, cost-of-living and debt crises that have been triggered by rising inflationary pressures and conflicts, and the triple planetary crisis, namely climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. As a cross-cutting entry point, capacity building activities promote the integration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and regional development frameworks such as AU Agenda 2063 and the Southern African Development Community’s Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan into national sustainable development planning frameworks, sharing lessons learned and good practices through workshops and related events.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that capacity-building forms part of the means of implementation for the SDGs (paragraph 41). Each SDG contains targets relating to means of implementation, including capacity building. Moreover, SDG 17, which covers means of implementation and the global partnership for sustainable development, contains target 17.9 which aims to: “Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation”.

In this regard, UN DESA’s Division for Sustainable Development Goals’ (DSDG) supports localization of the SDGs through sub-national Voluntary Local Review (VLR) processes and their linkages to Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) through the provision of advisory and policy guidance, including through its Global Guiding Elements for the VLRs, and through



capacity development, including hybrid workshops at international, regional, national and sub national levels.<sup>1</sup>

The present national capacity building workshop was organized in response to a request from the Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA) after the International Mayor’s Forum held in Dakar in 2023. In the letter, MALGA requested support in the following areas:

1. Supporting through hand-holding and technical backstopping local government authorities including intermediary and emerging cities to prepare voluntary reviews and reports on SDGs; and
2. Undertaking national mechanism to consolidate voluntary local reviews and reports on SDGs including creation and management of a national dashboard.

Addressing this request, UNDESA, in collaboration with partners will hold this workshop for national and local policy makers to complement Malawi’s ongoing efforts to accelerate SDG implementation, by providing training modules, guiding tools, and illustrative examples from other countries on the SDG localization review process.

## II. Background

Malawi is actively engaged in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and has completed two Voluntary National Reviews in 2020 and 2022, with the intention to produce a third in the coming years. National strategy is primarily guided by “Malawi Vision 2063: An Inclusively Wealthy and Self-reliant Nation,” published in 2020 under the National Planning Commission. This document emphasizes the drive to become an inclusive, wealthy, and self-reliant country with a vibrant knowledge-based and environmentally sustainable economy.

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Malawi for 2024 to 2028 identified four key strategic priorities for the country over the next five years, including: 1) support sustainable, diversified, inclusive growth; 2) strengthen institutional governance; 3) ensure sustainable investments and outcomes in human capital development; and 4) adapt to climate change, reverse environmental degradation and support energy transformation. The framework also identified ending poverty and inequality as major challenges in the country, particularly amid multiple interlinking global crises.

To facilitate SDG awareness and implementation, in 2018, the government, with funding from UNDP, published translation booklets on the Sustainable Development Goals in three local languages including Chichewa, Yao, and Tumbuka.<sup>2</sup> These booklets are available for download. This initiative serves to bolster local SDG implementation among the government’s 35 single-tier local authorities, including 28 district councils, four city councils, two municipal councils and one town council.

## III. Objectives and Methodology

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<sup>1</sup> UNDESA. Global Guiding Elements for the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) of SDG Implementation. [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/GlobalGuidingElementsforVLRs\\_FINAL.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/GlobalGuidingElementsforVLRs_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.undp.org/malawi/publications/translated-copies-sustainable-development-goals>



This capacity building workshop aims to support the acceleration and scaling up of SDG implementation and localization in Malawi through the preparation of VLRs; through this process, the workshop aims to build the capacities of government officials at the national and subregional levels for effective implementation, review, and monitoring of the SDGs at all levels. Specifically, the inception workshop will:

- Strengthen capacity of local, regional and national government officials to conduct inclusive sub-national reviews of SDGs, including reporting and identifying main messages, challenges and opportunities;
- Enhance capacity of local and regional government officials to integrate the SDGs into local plans and strategies;
- Strengthen awareness and multi-stakeholder partnerships for sub-national implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs through the Global Guiding Elements for voluntary local reviews (VLRs);
- Strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation and experience sharing on the SDGs monitoring and review at local level; and
- Strengthen awareness regarding how the VLR process can be utilized to enhance data gathering and analysis across Malawi.

Promoting VLRs will also stimulate and drive local action to implement the SDGs at regional and local levels. In addition, the process will strengthen coordination, cooperation and institutional interaction between levels of government. The national government and the local authorities will be encouraged to work together, exchange data, practices, and techniques on the implementation of SDGs and related national strategies. In addition, the VLRs will enhance awareness of the goals, and significantly contribute to the capacity of local governments to solve urgent local issues, create partnerships and advance priorities related to equity and sustainability. They will be empowered to support local ownership of the SDGs and advance local priorities.

To accomplish these objectives, national and sub-national policymakers, experts and relevant stakeholders will convene from various line ministries, local and regional governments, academia, research centers, the United Nations, and civil society organizations. UNDESA and co-hosts will build the capacities of participants through a combination of substantive presentations and hands-on practical exercises.

#### **IV. Expected Outcome of the Capacity Building Workshop**

At the conclusion of the capacity building workshop, it is anticipated that participants will have:

- Enhanced capability and a better understanding of how to localize the SDGs and national development strategies
- Increased capacity to undertake a voluntary local review and link it to the Voluntary National Review processes.
- Improved national and subnational collaboration in ongoing national development activities to advance the 2030 Agenda, including the upcoming Midterm Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Malawi.



- Ability to remain in a community of similar practitioners and experts to support one another in implementing the SDGs at the national, local, and regional levels.
- Increased capacity for consolidating and tracking subnational and national data.

## V. Contacts

### **Ms. Lana Zaman**

Sustainable Development Officer  
National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch  
Division for Sustainable Development Goals  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Email: Lana.zaman@un.org

### **Ms. Sophie Kang'oma**

Director of Monitoring and Evaluation  
Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs  
Email: sophiekangoma@gmail.com

### **Mr Hadrod Mkandawire**

Executive Director  
Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA)  
Email: hadzeru@gmail.com