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# Reviewing implementation of the 2030 Agenda through Voluntary National and Local Reviews

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# Voluntary National and Local Reviews – What are they?

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs were adopted by all Member States of the United Nations in September 2015.
- They provide a visionary roadmap for all countries and stakeholders to strive for a world of sustainable prosperity, social inclusion and equality while at the same time preserving our planet and leaving no one behind.
- Effective follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda through peer learning is essential for renewed action and progress in achieving the ambitious and interlinked SDGs in these challenging times.



# Voluntary National and Local Reviews – What are they?

- At the heart of this process are Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)
- These VNRs have become a critical component of the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs
- They show the way forward and provide essential source of lessons learned and experience sharing among countries every year at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) that is held every July under the auspices of the [ECOSOC](#)
- VNR is a process through which countries assess and present national progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including achieving its 17 SDGs and the pledge to leave no one behind.



# Voluntary National and 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.
- VLRs are basically reports prepared by local and regional governments to monitor SDG achievements, gaps and challenges 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, M&E of local measures that consider the various dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social, economic and institutional).



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# Voluntary National and Local Reviews

- VNRs and VLRs are also a **process** that:
  - entails political ownership by national and local leaders
  - promotes inclusion and participation of ALL stakeholders- CSOs, business, academia, local communities, women, youth, PwDs, etc
  - fosters de-siloing and cooperation across public departments and an effort to promote vertical and horizontal policy coherence and enhance multilevel governance systems
  - Promotes utilization of national and local data and mobilization of national and local resources + development partners



## Status of VNRs as of July 2022

- In 2022 (7<sup>th</sup> year of reporting), 187 of the 197 members of the High-level Political Forum - 95% have presented at least one VNR.
- African Group – 53 presented a VNR, 1 not presented
  - Zimbabwe presented in 2017 and 2021
- Asia-Pacific Group – 52 presented a VNR, 5 not presented
- Eastern European Group – all 23 countries have presented a VNR
- Latin America and Caribbean Group – 31 presented, 2 not presented
- Western European and Other Groups – 28 presented, 2 not presented



## **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

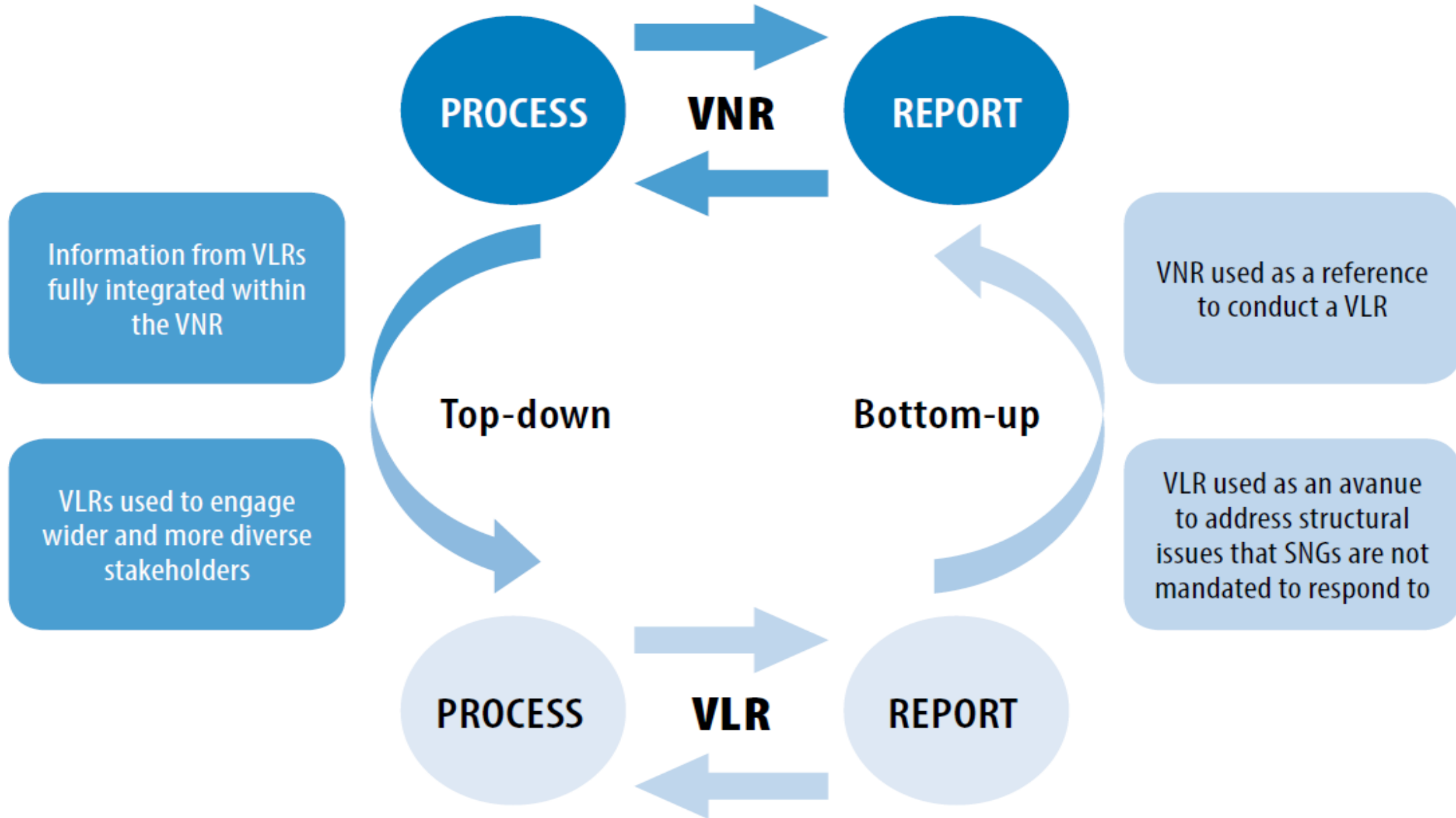


## Connecting VNRs with VLRs, cont'd

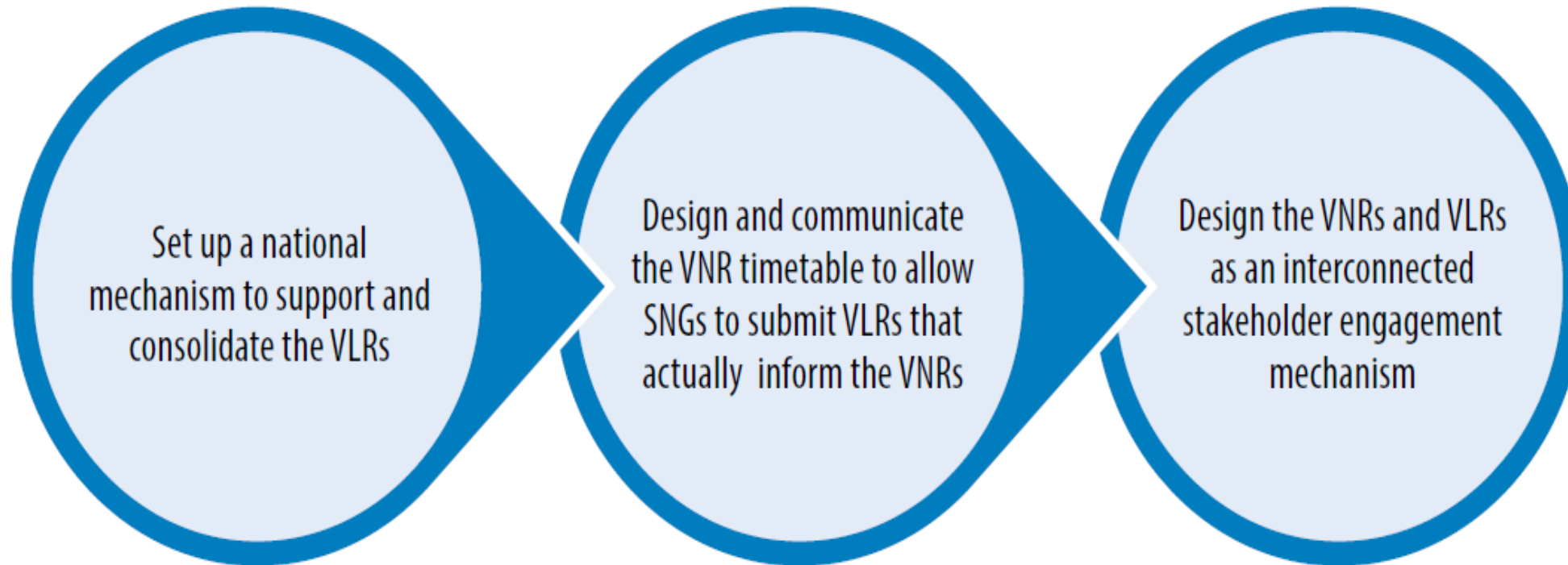
- A way to engage citizens into local action to:
  - promote shared understanding of complex national and local problems
  - devise integrated solutions that benefit from broader societal consensus
  - ensure ownership and commitment to possible solutions
  - ensure no one is left behind (LNOB)
- Local and regional gvts, development partners, CSOs, private sector, and academia are crucial to ensure the process is inclusive and accountable



# Operationalizing VLR-VNR integration



## Actions to consider when integrating VLRs and VNRs



# KEY ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER FOR VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

OFFICIAL INDICATION  
OF INTEREST

SUBMISSION OF MAIN  
MESSAGES  
3 MAY 2022

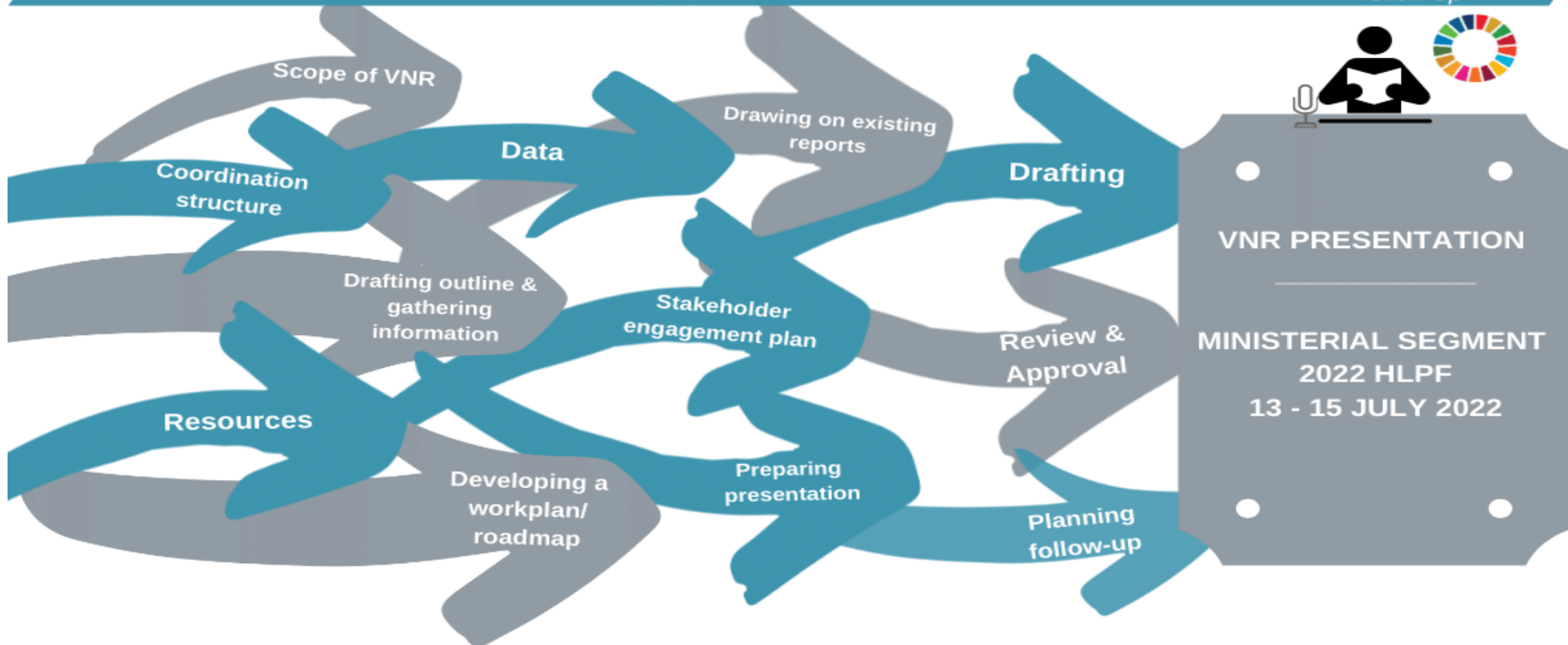
SUBMISSION OF  
FINAL REPORTS  
11 JUNE 2022

*Initial preparation and organization*  
*Stakeholder engagement*

*VNR preparation*

*HLPF presentation*

*Implementation & follow-up*



# 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)

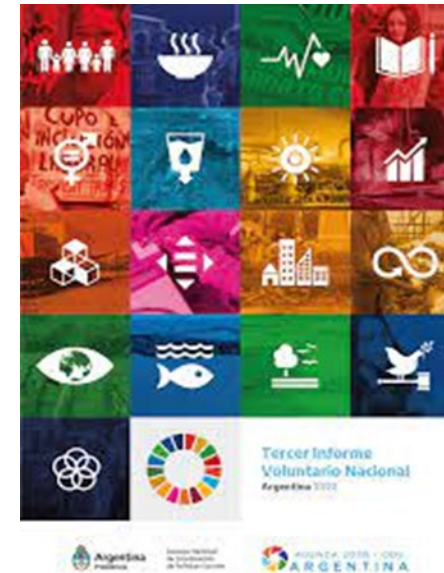
I. SDGs were mainstreamed in County Intergated Development Plans (CIDPs) in 2018 (supported by the UN)

## 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.





## **The VNR-VLR preparatory processes: Issues to consider**

- What is the role of local and regional governments in SDG implementation?
- How are VLR processes linked to VNR processes?
- What are the key elements and milestones in the process?
- Who leads the process and who is engaged? What works and why?
- What are the lessons learned from the process and how has it contributed to the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda, NDP and Agenda 2063?
- Sharing of data needs to be prioritized, to aid consistency on data collection



# Lessons learned

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

- 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.





## **Lessons learned, cont'd**

- 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
- To be successful, these efforts must ensure that national level processes are linked to SDGs implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- the preparation of VNRs should also 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



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## **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.



## **Challenges to Integrating VNRs and VLRs**

- Lack of political will – issues of devolution, provision of technical and financial support to local govts to implement local SDGs strategies
- Local capacity constraints for addressing the SDGs and inadequate financial resources
- 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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## **GOING FORWARD**

- Consider setting up a national mechanism to support and consolidate VLR contributions.
- Consider designing and communicating the VNR timetable to allow sub-national governments to submit VLRS in a timely manner to actually inform the VNRs.
- 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.



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A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a modern skyscraper with a dark, textured facade. The building's lines converge towards the top of the frame. The sky is a vibrant blue, filled with scattered white clouds. In the bottom right corner, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent white geometric shapes, including squares and rectangles, creating a modern, layered design element.

**Thank you.**