



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

# Global GUIDING ELEMENTS FOR Voluntary Local Reviews

Eswatini Workshop, 15-17 October 2024

**Jürgen Gafke**

Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA





## **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

# 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



# Guiding Principles for a VLR

VLRs should be guided by key principles from 2030 Agenda (para. 74) applying to all reviews, i.e.:

- Longer-term orientation, identifying achievements, challenges, gaps and will help mobilize necessary means of implementation and partnerships;
- Open, inclusive, participatory and transparent;
- People-centered, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind;
- Rigorous and based on evidence

# Possible VLR structure

## Opening, Highlights, Introduction

### Methodology and process for preparation of the review

Report on the full methodology for the VLR, including:

- Who was in charge of VLR preparation?
- How were stakeholders engaged?
- How was data collected and used?
- How were priority SDGs identified?

### Policy and enabling environment

- Describe the relationship between the subnational and national levels
- What activities were undertaken to raise awareness on the SDGs?
- How are SDGs included in local plans
- Leaving no one behind
- Institutional mechanisms/governance
- Barriers faced

### Progress on goals and targets

- Analysis of the progress of all/selected SDGs
- Are reference data available? How is progress monitored?
- Means of implementation (financial, capacity building)

### Conclusions and next steps

- What next?
- What lessons learned?
- How will progress be monitored

## Annexes



# 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.



## 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



## **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



## **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.



**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a modern skyscraper with a glass facade, set against a bright blue sky filled with scattered white clouds. The building's lines converge towards the top of the frame, creating a sense of height and scale. The text 'Thank you.' is overlaid in the lower-left quadrant of the image.

**Thank you.**