



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# SDG LOCALIZATION IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

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GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT  
SUBNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING  
AND BUDGETING



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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

United Nations Development Programme

Budapest, 2023

**Required citation:**

FAO and UNDP. 2023. *SDG localization in Europe and Central Asia – Guidelines to support subnational development planning and budgeting*. Budapest. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc8164en>

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# ABBREVIATIONS

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>ECA</b>    | Europe and Central Asia                                   |
| <b>ESCAP</b>  | Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific   |
| <b>FAO</b>    | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations   |
| <b>ICLEI</b>  | International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives |
| <b>IISD</b>   | International Institute for Sustainable Development       |
| <b>LNOB</b>   | leave no one behind                                       |
| <b>OECD</b>   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development    |
| <b>OPHI</b>   | Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative           |
| <b>SDG</b>    | Sustainable Development Goal                              |
| <b>UCLG</b>   | United Cities and Local Governments                       |
| <b>UNDESA</b> | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  |
| <b>UNDP</b>   | United Nations Development Programme                      |
| <b>UNSDG</b>  | United Nations Sustainable Development Group              |
| <b>VVSG</b>   | Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities          |



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*SDG Localization in Europe and Central Asia: Guidelines to support subnational development planning and budgeting* was prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Istanbul Regional Hub, in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

This publication was prepared under the direction of Valeria Rocca, FAO Regional Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Adviser, and Elena Danilova-Cross, UNDP Programme Specialist, Poverty and Inequality, with valuable technical guidance from Viktorya Ayyazyan, FAO International Rural Development Specialist. Overall guidance and support were provided by Raimund Jehle, FAO Regional Programme Leader.

The efforts and contributions of the IISD team are gratefully acknowledged. Data analysis and drafting of the text were conducted by Livia Bizikova, Lead II, Governance and Monitoring; Zakaria Zoundi, Policy Adviser; and Elena Kosolapova, Senior Policy Adviser.

From the FAO side, valuable peer review comments were provided by Bianka Laskovics, Regional Initiative Coordination and Rural Development Specialist; Anna Jenderedjian, Gender Mainstreaming and Social Protection Specialist; Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician; Dorian Kalamvrezos Navarro, Statistician; and Lourdes Marie Orlando, Territorial Development and Inclusivity Specialist.

Also acknowledged are the contributions from the following FAO Country Office staff: Aisela BeqirAga, Programme Assistant in Albania; Irada Garakhanova, Programme Support Specialist in Azerbaijan; Alesia Launikevich, National Correspondent in Belarus; Olga Sleptsova, National Administrative/Project Personnel in Belarus; Mamuka Meskhi, Assistant FAO Representative in Georgia; Natalia Davlianidze, Programme Specialist in Georgia; Zhanyl Bozayeva, Programme Officer/Team Leader in Kazakhstan; Dinara Rakhmanova, Assistant FAO Representative (Programme) in Kyrgyzstan; Jovana Sukovic, National Consultant on Project Coordination, Administration and Finance, in Montenegro; and Ibrohim Ahmadov, National Technical Coordinator, Government Liaison, Food Security, Nutrition and Emergency in Tajikistan.

From the UNDP side, valuable peer review comments were provided by Tina Stoum, Regional Project Manager, Mayors for Economic Growth; Kevin M. Schmidt, Policy Analyst on Digitalization and Urban/Local Governance; Vesna Dzuteska-Bisheva, Team Leader, Inclusive Growth Team; and Esther Dzifa Bansah, African Young Women Leaders Fellow.

Also gratefully acknowledged are peer review comments from the following colleagues from UN-Habitat: Katja Schaefer, Interregional Adviser; Martino Miraglia, Human Settlements Officer; and Telman Maharramov, Project Management Expert.

Thanks also are due to Iana Kulinich, FAO Junior Programme Support Specialist, for her support in publishing the document, to Matthew D. Anderson for his editing work, and to Nina Barrois, who provided graphic design and layout support.

# INTRODUCTION

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The importance of local and subnational governments to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been increasing at the same pace as national and global challenges. There are specific examples of subnational governments leading efforts on climate change, managing the COVID-19 pandemic, and responding to conflicts and economic challenges (UNDESA, 2000; United Nations, 2021, 2022). In this context, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs serves as a framework guiding subnational and local governments in their efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable area-based development, including by focusing on vulnerable people, known as the leave no one behind (LNOB) principle (OECD, 2020; United Nations, 2021).

The 2030 Agenda stresses the need for localized approaches to the implementation of the SDGs to support vulnerable communities, rural well-being and gender equality; promote partnerships and synergies; and address trade-offs related to development challenges. Localization entails a set of processes that aim to mainstream global development agendas, including the SDGs, into development planning documents at the local level. The concept of localization goes beyond the scope of local institutions and incorporates all local stakeholders, such as civil society, traditional and community leaders, academia and the private sector. The success of localization processes also requires working on effective decentralization and on fostering vertical coordination, with strong support and engagement from national and subnational entities.

There are many reasons why SDG localization is critical for the 2030 Agenda. It has been shown that without engagement with subnational governments, approximately 65 percent of the 169 SDG targets, excluding the SDG 11 on cities, will be challenging to achieve (OECD, 2023). Specific reasons for localization could include:

- With the rise of the intensity and complexity of global challenges, development agendas have been broadened as cities have been growing rapidly and rural well-being has been increasingly challenged. Issues such as agricultural productivity, food security, nutrition, rural development, migration, demography and climate change have long been addressed at national and international levels. However, long-term and inclusive solutions will require local actions at the levels of planning, budgeting, participation, governance and corrective interventions. Local contexts are critical and will shape the interventions that tackle rural development challenges.
- The SDGs provide a framework to guide local and subnational planning processes through the identification of potential targets, priorities and types of interventions and the integration of key SDG principles (i.e. LNOB, strengthening partnerships, data, analysis of trade-offs, sustainability, etc.).

## BOX 1. DEFINING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL LOCALIZATION

SDG localization is the process of taking into account subnational 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. Localization relates both to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy and to how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs.

SOURCE: **Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments**. 2020. Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: Implementation and monitoring at subnational level. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/commitments/818\\_11195\\_commitment\\_ROADMAP%20LOCALIZING%20SDGS.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/commitments/818_11195_commitment_ROADMAP%20LOCALIZING%20SDGS.pdf)



- As an important segment of multilevel governance, localization makes the discussions on the SDGs relevant to local populations and reinforces territories' sense of ownership and responsibility, thereby creating better incentives for actions.
- The 2030 Agenda takes an integrated view of sustainability, and each SDG covers social, economic and environmental aspects of a specific sustainability problem. This structure poses a challenge for decision-making and governance structures, as they tend to work in silos on specific sectors, often with limited interaction. From situational analysis to identified development challenges to SDG-linked interventions, the localization process presents a significant opportunity to move towards integrated decision-making that connects different aspects of sustainability.

Although countries have made efforts to integrate the SDGs into national strategies and development documents,<sup>1</sup> efforts at the subnational level tend to adopt national priorities without critical appraisal of their relevance to the needs and opportunities specific to the local context. In addition, a number of these efforts are centred on urban and peri-urban areas. Incorporating the SDGs into subnational development planning documents also presents challenges in terms of limited financial resources and capacities of local actors for implementation, accountability and monitoring.

The present toolkit is based on requests from countries in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region for assistance with SDG localization to boost synergies between sectoral and local development agendas, in line with the SDG targets and respective statistical frameworks. It provides guidelines to support local authorities and other relevant stakeholders in the formulation of local and subnational development planning documents to improve well-being through the strengthening of SDG localization processes. The toolkit provides a step-by-step approach to SDG localization and includes a checklist to facilitate its operationalization and implementation.

<sup>1</sup> An overview of national SDG strategies, examples and trends is available at <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/national-sustainable-development-strategies>.



# OVERVIEW OF DECENTRALIZATION AND SUBNATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

## PART ONE

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in early 1990s, the ECA region has made significant steps to move from a centrally planned system to decentralized planning and budgeting. Today, local government systems are being put in place to provide citizens with self-governance opportunities and support their participation in decision-making (UNDP, 2015).

Because countries went through different decentralization processes at different points in time – for example, decentralization in Georgia started in 1997 with the adoption of the Organic Law on Local Self-Government (UCLG and OECD, 2016), while in Uzbekistan it started in 2016 (Umarov, 2021) – the region’s territorial organization and levels of local governments’ autonomy vary greatly. The decentralization landscape includes state bodies of local government in Kazakhstan, a centralized hierarchical public system in Belarus, and a two-tier system of local self-government in Republic of Moldova. There are countries where local governments exist autonomously (e.g. Armenia and Georgia) or in conjunction with state bodies of local governance (e.g. Uzbekistan, at the rayon<sup>2</sup> level) (Golovanova and Kurlyandskaya, 2011).

In most countries, the territorial organization is represented by a three-tiered system of subnational government (decentralized) and administration (deconcentrated) (Table 1). Regions, autonomous republics (such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan,

Ukraine and Uzbekistan) and “cities of national importance” are located at the highest level. The second level includes districts and “cities of regional subordination.” In the third level, districts are subdivided into municipalities covering towns and villages (rural and urban), closest to households. In addition, there has been an expansion of the size of municipalities due to early initiatives in countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Such expansions were justified because of the poor management capacity of small municipalities and the lack of resources for investment in critical areas such as water, energy and social services (e.g. education, health and social protection).

At the national level, countries have been taking steps to implement the SDGs, including aligning existing programmes with the SDGs and refocusing implementation efforts and financial allocation on the priorities of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, most of the national efforts to address the SDGs are products of participatory design, with national governments seeing themselves as providing technical, coordination and financial support for implementation. Similarly, reporting, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is usually the task of the central government and national statistical offices. Also, national governments often undertake specific efforts to integrate the LNOB principle in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including through the use of disaggregated indicators (UNSDG, 2019). Many of these efforts are summarized in the countries’ Voluntary National Reviews (United Nations, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> A rayon is equivalent to a county or district.



**TABLE 1. EXAMPLES OF COUNTRY SYSTEMS AND LOCAL/REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN THE STUDIED REGION**

| Country           | Territorial organization   |  |   |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
|                   | First level  | Second level   | Third level   |
| <b>Albania</b>    | 61 municipalities  |  | Municipalities grouped into 12 counties   |
| <b>Armenia</b>    | 71 municipalities (including both rural and urban settlements), of which 64 are enlarged municipalities and seven are not-enlarged municipalities, including minority population settlements |  | Ten marzes (regions) and the capital city of Yerevan  |
| <b>Azerbaijan</b> | 1 606 municipalities   | 12 cities of republican subordination and 79 towns   | 63 regions and the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan; additionally, the districts of Azerbaijan are grouped into 14 economic regions                  |
| <b>Belarus</b>    | 23 027 rural settlements and villages, 24 municipal districts  | Ten cities of regional subordination and 118 districts   | Six regions and the capital city of Minsk   |
| <b>Georgia</b>    | 69 municipalities in total, out of which five are self-governing cities (Tbilisi included) and 64 are self-governing communities   |  | 12 administrative regions, including the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Tbilisi Region                    |
| <b>Kazakhstan</b> | 48 cities of district significance and 6 904 villages and settlements  | 186 districts and 38 cities of regional significance   | 20 territorial units, of which 17 are regions (oblasts) and three cities of republican significance   |
| <b>Kyrgyzstan</b> | 452 rural communities (Ayil-Aimaks) and 12 towns   | 40 districts and 32 cities of oblast subordination   | Seven regions (oblasts) and the cities Bishkek and Osh, which are cities of republican subordination  |
| <b>Montenegro</b> | 25 municipalities also listed as local self-governments  |  |   |
| <b>Tajikistan</b> | 368 urban and rural settlements (jamoats)  | 65 cities and districts of both regional and national subordination (18 cities and 47 districts) | Two big regions (oblasts), one autonomous region (the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast), one district of republican subordination and Dushanbe city |
| <b>Uzbekistan</b> |  | 120 cities, 113 towns and 164 rayons   | 12 regions/oblasts and the Republic of Karakalpakstan   |

SOURCES: Based on *United Cities and Local Governments. 2019. Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization*. <https://www.gold.uclg.org/reports/gold-v>  
 Updates retrieved from sources in footnotes and official online government statistics:  
**Kyrgyz Republic.** 2023. *Statistical Yearbook of the Kyrgyz Republic*. In: *National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic*. <http://www.stat.kg/en/publications/statistich-eskij-ezhogodnik-kyrgyzskoj-respubliki/>  
**Republic of Azerbaijan.** 2023a. General Information. In: *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.mfa.gov.az/en/category/xin.gov.az>  
**Republic of Azerbaijan.** 2023b. Azərbaycanın regionları. In: *The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan*. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/regions/?lang=en>  
**Republic of Belarus.** 2023. Official Internet Portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus. In: *President of the Republic of Belarus*. <https://president.gov.by/en>  
**Republic of Uzbekistan.** 2020. *On the administrative-territorial structure of the Republic of Uzbekistan*. <https://lex.uz/docs/4973069>  
**Smagulova, K.** 2022. *Administrative and Territorial Division of Kazakhstan in 2022: Symbolism or Reforms?* In: *CABAR.asia*. <https://cabar.asia/en/administrative-and-territorial-division-of-kazakhstan-in-2022-symbolism-or-reforms>

In the context of indicators and the LNOB principle, the contribution of local governments to the provision of (disaggregated) data for the SDGs remains a key priority. In fact, disaggregated data at the local level on indicators such as multidimensional poverty, gender inequality, nutrition and food security helps better identify marginalized communities, households and individuals and address their challenges. However, it is challenging to collect disaggregated data at the local level for a number of these indicators.

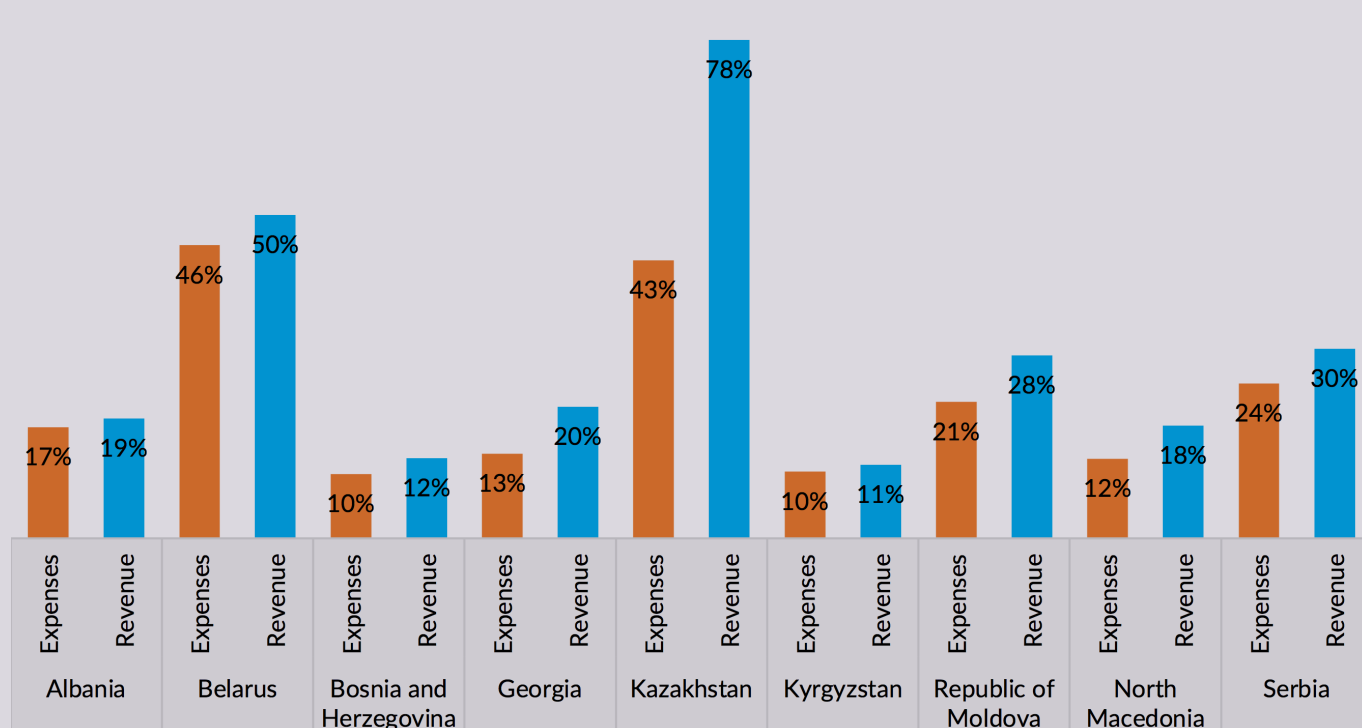
Localization and mainstreaming the SDGs depends on political will, authority, strong governance, financial autonomy and the capacity of local and regional governments to integrate the SDGs into their strategies, plans and programmes. In terms of implementing specific priorities of the 2030 Agenda at the subnational level, it is often the local governments' fiscal autonomy that is limited. In many studied countries in the ECA region, investment is mostly led by regional governments, with capital cities being the largest investors (United Nations, 2021). Local government spending represents a relatively small percentage of total government spending (Figure 1). Their primary source of funding is central government financing, mainly shared taxes and intergovernmental transfers (subventions). This dependency of local

governments on central government financing conditions can be an obstacle for the implementation of the SDGs at the subnational level (see, for example, the New Urban Agenda<sup>3</sup>).

Finally, at the national level, SDG planning and implementation is seen as a collaborative and participatory process. This approach should also guide policymaking at the subnational level. There are examples from the region of civic participation being leveraged through the involvement of society alongside elected local authorities in the process of developing local policies, including in Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyz Republic, 2020), Georgia (Georgia, 2023), Albania and North Macedonia (Ognenovska and Papa, 2017). At the same time, central authorities are beginning to recognize the responsibility carried by local and regional governments in implementing the SDGs, especially on locally relevant issues such as job creation, education, social services and addressing LNOB issues. As a result, initiatives targeted towards the promotion of sustainable development and the creation of ownership of the SDGs among local actors are gradually gaining momentum.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the New Urban Agenda, please visit <https://unhabitat.org/about-us/new-urban-agenda>.

**FIGURE 1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET (REVENUE AND EXPENSES) AS A PERCENTAGE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET**



NOTE: The numbers shown represent the percentages of central government revenue and expenses (including social security funds). All data is from 2021 except the data from Belarus, which is from 2020.

SOURCE: IMF. 2023. *Government Finance Statistics*. In: IMF Data. <https://data.imf.org/?sk=a0867067-d23c-4ebc-ad23-d3b015045405&slid=1435697914186>



# SDG LOCALIZATION AND EXAMPLES OF PILOT INITIATIVES

## PART TWO



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The adoption of the 2030 Agenda by United Nations Member States demonstrates the commitments countries have made to integrating globally agreed-upon social, economic and environmental goals into their development ambitions to preserve the welfare of future generations. However, implementation modalities and local realities have prompted the United Nations to stress the necessity to shift from top-down to bottom-up approaches, where efforts from States and non-state actors – including businesses, cities and local communities – are integrated and harmonized (United Nations, 2015a).

Bringing the 2030 Agenda to the local level will allow decision-makers to be well positioned to contribute to the SDGs, including by addressing LNOB issues. Local and subnational authorities can become important actors in supporting SDG achievement through bottom-up approaches that improve the well-being of their communities.

To be successful, the SDG localization process should follow several steps, all requiring contributions from local stakeholders. Localization efforts are suggested to be first applied in pilot areas that are interested in SDG localization. The next step generally involves an initialization phase, including awareness-raising campaigns, a diagnostic and the development of a planning document to identify the linkages between the SDGs and local needs and challenges. This should lead to a Voluntary Local Review to summarize the progress on the SDGs at the local level (IISD, 2022; UNECE, 2021). The initialization process is backed up



## BOX 2. CRITICAL ASPECTS OF SDG LOCALIZATION BASED ON THE EFFORTS OF INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES AND COUNTRIES

- 1. Select areas for localization pilots.** The experiences of Belgium, Georgia, Guatemala, Nepal, Tajikistan and Thailand, among others, show that pilot activities are key to successful localization in specific subnational entities. They help improve efficiency and address challenges before any large-scale efforts go into localization.
- 2. Raise awareness.** Communicate and engage with local stakeholders to improve their knowledge of the SDGs and explain the importance of their roles and decisions in contributing to the 2030 Agenda.
- 3. Integrate the SDGs into local development documents and plans,** such as rural development plans, agricultural strategies, disaster reduction strategies, agricultural development strategies and poverty reduction strategies. This process translates the local political agenda into concrete objectives and results (which should also be in line with the national political agenda), including modalities of achievement such as financial needs and resource and service use.
- 4. Conduct monitoring and evaluation and consider developing Voluntary Local Reviews.** Progress towards the SDGs should be assessed regularly to address any caveats. The elaboration of Voluntary Local Reviews as part of the assessment process provides an opportunity for the community to measure itself against the SDGs and reflect on strengths and challenges. It also may improve evaluation capacities.
- 5. Strengthen capacity.** Because of their critical roles, local and regional governments and stakeholders need to be empowered and equipped with a set of knowledge and tools. Capacity building can cover a spectrum of areas such as urban planning, Indigenous rights, disaster risk management, communications, partnership building, land-based finance, water and sanitation, etc.

SOURCES: Stockholm Environment Institute, Orozco, E.H., Cárdenas, M., Lobos Alva, I., Guerra, A., Betancur, J., Joshi, S. et al. 2021. *SDG localization baseline: How local-level actors are driving change and advancing the achievement of the 2030 Agenda*. Stockholm Environment Institute. <https://doi.org/10.51414/sei2021.026>  
Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments. 2020. *Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: Implementation and monitoring at subnational level*. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/commitments/818\\_11195\\_commitment\\_ROADMAP%20LOCALIZING%20SDGS.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/commitments/818_11195_commitment_ROADMAP%20LOCALIZING%20SDGS.pdf)  
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2023. *Localizing the SDGs in Flanders: SDG pilot-project*. In: Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/localizing-sdgs-flanders-sdg-pilot-project>  
United Cities and Local Governments. 2021. *Towards the localization of the SDGs: Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Driven by Cities and Territories. Local and regional governments' report to the 2021 HPLF*. [https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/hlpf\\_2021.pdf](https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/hlpf_2021.pdf)  
FAO. 2020. *Localization of Sustainable Development Goals related to food security within the frameworks of socio-economic development plan of Dusit District for 2021-2025*. Rome.

NOTES: The selection of subnational units can also be achieved through a call for expressions of interest to find those who want to participate in an SDG localization pilot project, as was the case with Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) in Belgium. See <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/localizing-sdgs-flanders-sdg-pilot-project>.

by institutional arrangements that foster collaboration and ensure accountability, coherence, and the building of capacity among local and subnational actors (Box 2). While the collected approaches summarized in Box 2 provide suggestions related to the important steps, they also include gaps in terms of actual strategy development and ensuring coherence with current policy priorities, budgeting and programmatic priorities. Alongside the already suggested approaches, addressing these gaps is outlined as a step-by-step approach to SDG localization.

Based on the examples for SDG localization in cities and municipalities (Table 2), pilot initiatives are undertaken before any large-scale action to identify key enabling factors and potential barriers and develop recommendations to support the localization process. New York City<sup>4</sup> underwent one

of the earliest successful localization process, one of the most commonly cited. Via the Mayor's Office for International Affairs, the city – in the wake of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, established in 2015 – developed its OneNYC<sup>5</sup> sustainable development plan reflecting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The plan set out to support the 800 000 New Yorkers who struggled to combat poverty, the effects of climate change, food insecurity and food affordability issues. In July 2018, the city became the first in the world to report on local progress towards the SDGs (which became its voluntary local review). The OneNYC plan was able to prioritize already-recognized issues for the city thanks to the extra impetus provided by the city's efforts to contribute to the SDGs. Thus, the plan helped reorder exiting priorities and related resource allocations.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/international/programs/global-vision-urban-action.page>.

<sup>5</sup> For more information, visit <https://onenyc.cityofnewyork.us/>.



**TABLE 2. EXAMPLES OF PILOT INITIATIVES TO LOCALIZE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

| Country                            | Areas, focus  | Key findings and outcomes   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Belgium</b>                     | 20 local governments initiated by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities  | <p><b>Drivers and enablers of localization:</b> Development of the Multi-annual Policy Plan, a guide containing methods, tools and recommendations to make municipality policy more sustainable using the SDGs. Advocacy was held towards local political parties to integrate the SDGs into party manifestos. Several municipalities integrated the SDGs into their context analysis or administrative memo or conducted an SDG impact analysis.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> Effort was needed to raise awareness about the SDGs.</p>  |
| <b>Japan</b>                       | “SDGs Future Cities”<br>Shimokawa (town); Kitakyushu (city)   | <p><b>Drivers and enablers of localization:</b> Municipalities working to foster local ownership, linking existing policies via formal procedures, multistakeholder partnerships, vertical communication with international and national-level organizations.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> Lack of awareness, robust monitoring and review systems assessing interlinkages among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, limited number of staff working on SDG promotion.</p>   |
| <b>Sweden</b>                      | Växjö municipality  | <p><b>Drivers and enablers of localization:</b> Long-term thinking, the tailoring of organizational changes to existing processes, strong interest at the leadership level, supporting organizational structure.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> Related to limited intersectoral coordination and gaps in management capacities to manage the whole process.</p>   |
| <b>United Republic of Tanzania</b> | City of Dar es Salaam; City of Dodoma (capital)   | <p><b>Drivers and enablers of localization:</b> Political will from the government, civil society organizations, the United Nations and parliament. Demands for review at the United Nations High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> Insufficient coordination, lack of data and resources, limited SDG awareness, shrinking democratic space.</p>  |
| <b>Türkiye</b>                     | A number of cities in the country have undertaken the integration of the SDGs into city-level planning documents summarized in Voluntary Local Reviews. | <p><b>Drivers and enablers of localization:</b> Cities such as Izmir, Avcilar and Sultanbeyli developed a Voluntary Local Review that summarized their localization efforts, including the monitoring of the SDGs. The involved cities conducted an assessment of city-level activities to explore alignment with the SDGs and potential adjustments to improve alignment, identify city-level SDG indicators and set city-level targets. The localization process was done in collaboration with a number of local stakeholders, including academia, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> Limited understanding of the SDGs and their relevance for the specific groups. Targeted training and capacity building for the private sector and other stakeholders were held to teach about the SDGs and prioritize actions to contribute to the SDGs.</p> |

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# LOCALIZING THE SDGS IN LOCAL AND SUBNATIONAL POLICY DOCUMENTS

## PART THREE

There is consensus that countries in the region have made efforts to mainstream the SDGs into national plans and development documents.<sup>6</sup> However, at subnational and local levels, the localization process and the integration of the SDGs into policy documents are still in its early stages. Despite this, development issues addressed in subnational policy and development documents, such as rural and agricultural development plans, are usually broadly aligned with the SDG targets (particularly SDGs 1, 2, 5, 13, 14 and 15). Closely linked to the SDGs are strategic documents addressing:

- human development, such as gender equality, jobs, poverty, social protection, education, health, and inclusion (SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10);
- urban and rural environment improvement, such as the adaptation of housing and building to people living with disabilities, access to and improvements in the water supply, and energy-saving technologies (SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11); and
- people-oriented development, mostly focused on urban areas, including public space, urban sanitation, heritage and cultural preservation, industrial activities and traffic in inner cities (SDG 11) (UCLG, 2019).

<sup>6</sup>For example, as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for a number of countries in the region, please see the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance at <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-guidance>.

In terms of ongoing efforts to localize the SDGs, the Rapid Integrated Assessment Tool aims to assist decision-makers at national and subnational levels in determining the relevance of the SDGs to country contexts and interlinkages across targets (UNDP, 2017). The tool, developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has been used in most of the ECA countries from 2016 to 2023 to mainstream the SDGs into policymaking, mostly at national levels. The results from assessments conducted at regional and city levels show that most of the SDGs are covered in local policy documents (Table 3) – aside from SDGs 12 and 14, which have limited coverage. In Belarus, the Passport of Territorial Sustainable Development, developed by UNDP, is an SDG mainstreaming tool at district/regional level that is gaining interest among district authorities.

In this context, FAO has supported this SDG localization process in the formulation of the agriculture and food security section of the district development plan, conducting an analysis of the SDGs related to agriculture and food security to assess their relevance at the local level and identifying proposed measures for the district that can be implemented to support the achievement of those SDG targets. These measures have been identified through the participation of a broad range of local stakeholders. The SDG assessment showed significant coherence between the SDGs relevant to the national level and those relevant to the local level, but local capacities, including a monitoring and evaluation system, need to be strengthened.



**TABLE 3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL LOCALIZATION BASED ON THE RAPID INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT TOOL IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (1/2)**

| Document linked to the SDGs  | Summary of SDG localization efforts   |
|--|---|
| <b>Georgia</b>   |   |
| <p>Rapid integrated assessment</p> <p>18 local policy documents and 37 national documents assessed</p>   | <p>Subnational planning documents mostly prioritize the same SDGs, irrespective of geography or development profile. The best integrated targets are those on poverty (SDG 1), energy (SDG 7) and cities (SDG 11). Those not captured include SDGs 12 and 14.</p> <p><b>LNOB issues:</b> Part of the recommendations is to broaden the SDG framework in favour of LNOB, with a specific focus on displaced people.</p>  |
| <b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>  |   |
| <p>17 national documents and over 50 additional documents on the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, canton and municipal levels</p>   | <p>The highest alignment with the SDG targets is observed for SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 16 and 17.</p>  |
| <b>Belarus</b>   |   |
| <p>Passport of Territorial Sustainable Development of the Minsk, Brest and Gomel regions (2017–2025); Strategies for sustainable development of the Berezovsky district until 2030; Plan for Regional Cooperation to Increase Sustainability of Development of Rural Areas (2018–2030)</p> | <p>The Passports of Territorial Sustainable Development can be used to mainstream the SDGs at subnational levels. The SDG road map for Belarus* suggests piloting the localization of the SDGs and evaluating the process and impact. Challenges in SDG localization include political challenges, a lack of transparency, limited SDG advisory capacity in regional and local administrations, and limited technical capacities.</p> <p><b>LNOB issues:</b> The SDG road map for Belarus stresses the need to include local communities and civil society and to ensure no one is left behind.</p>   |
| <b>Kazakhstan</b>  |   |
| <p>14 regional development strategic development documents for 2016–2020</p> <p>City-level development planning documents 2016–2020 for Astana, Almaty and Shymkent</p> <p>Kyzylorda region development plan for 2021–2025</p>   | <p>In the Kyzylorda regional development plan 2021–2025, SDGs 3, 4, 9 and 11 have over 50 percent of integration of national targets into regional development priorities. The least coverage is observed in SDG 5 (11 percent) and SDG 12 (18 percent). SDG 17 is not integrated into the document. The structure and content of the development plan clearly lacks interventions for planetary goals (SDGs 6, 12, 13 and 14). In terms of the statistical monitoring of the development plan of the Kyzylorda region, 24 of 122 nationalized SDG indicators (20 percent) are used for monitoring and evaluation of the progress of development plan implementation.</p> <p><b>LNOB issues:</b> The SDG road map stresses the need to include local communities and civil society and to ensure no one is left behind.</p> |

\* A Roadmap for SDG Implementation in the Republic of Belarus is available at [http://sdgs.by/kcfinder/upload/files/FINAL\\_SDG\\_Roadmap\\_ENG\\_27\\_06.pdf](http://sdgs.by/kcfinder/upload/files/FINAL_SDG_Roadmap_ENG_27_06.pdf).



**TABLE 3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL LOCALIZATION BASED ON THE RAPID INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT TOOL IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (2/2)**

| Document linked to the SDGs  | Summary of SDG localization efforts   |
|--|---|
| <b>North Macedonia</b>   |   |
| <p>Integrated plan for local development of Pehchevo municipality 2019–2022</p> <p>Programme for Development of Vardar Planning Region</p> <p>City of Skopje Strategic Plan 2019–2021</p> <p>Veles Smart City Strategy for Development 2019–2030 and Action Plan</p> | <p>Understanding the importance of localizing the SDGs, in addition to strategic sectoral planning documents, the draft strategic plan for the City of Skopje for 2019–2021 was one of the selected documents for this exercise. Some 66 targets out of 169 are covered in the strategic plan. This means that at the city level, the draft strategy has the potential to contribute to the implementation of progress on 40 percent of SDG targets. It is commendable that the city has designed a comprehensive and cohesive strategy that covers almost all SDG targets related to SDG 4 on education, SDG 6 on water, SDG 7 on energy and SDG 11 on sustainable urbanization and that substantially contributes to SDG 8 on economic growth and employment, SDG 12 on sustainable production and consumption and SDG 13 on climate change. However, taking into account that the strategy is still in draft form, some gaps could be addressed through activities related to inequalities in all forms (SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 5 on gender and SDG 10 on inequalities), as well as activities related to addressing SDG 3 (including Target 3.d on health early warning and Target 3.6 on road traffic accidents) and then SDG 9 (including Target 9.c on access to information and communications technology). All state institutions are obliged to make strategic plans with specific methodology and priorities and with integration of the SDGs, specifically to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the awareness and importance for alignment of the strategic plan with the SDGs for the city administration (local government) so this document and alignment will be seriously taken into deliberation. All further strategies, activities, key success indicators and budget plans should be sampled according to the SDG framework.</li> <li>• Implement and track progress of the SDGs in all upcoming activities and budget plans of the Department for Local Economic Development.</li> </ul> <p><b>LNOB issues:</b> Regional and city-level development planning documents mention the need to include local communities and civil society and to ensure no one is left behind.</p> |

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# GUIDELINES FOR SDG LOCALIZATION

## PART FOUR

This section provides step-by-step guidelines on localization to support the formulation of subnational and local development documents and plans that contribute to SDG achievement. The guidelines, which are based on the examples and experiences discussed earlier, present specific and adaptable actions to integrate the SDGs into subnational and local planning to meet local development needs and ensure that the LNOB principle is considered. The step-by-step approach consists of an inception phase, situational analysis to prioritize development directions and solutions, institutional analysis and strengthening, development planning document formulation, implementation, and resource mobilization (Figure 2) – all with the involvement and participation of local stakeholders. It should be kept in mind that planning and programming efforts are taking place at subnational levels, and thus several inputs for the suggested steps should already be available and ready to use during the SDG localization process. Finally, there are subnational areas in countries or regions<sup>7</sup> that have already undertaken efforts towards SDGs localization. Lessons learned from these efforts should be collected to inform localization processes elsewhere.

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<sup>7</sup> A summary of localization efforts and experience of diverse countries is presented at <https://www.local2030.org/>.

FIGURE 2. STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO SDG LOCALIZATION



# STEP 1

## INCEPTION PHASE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



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This step focuses on building a team of stakeholders for subnational planning, localization and integration of the SDGs into planning and budgeting documents. Such efforts need to work towards a shared vision for the local/subnational area that can be in congruence with national priorities that include SDG targets. This phase should include diverse stakeholder groups, such as government agencies, civil society – including both formalized organizations and non-formal interest groups – and the private sector. Many SDGs and rural development objectives will require interventions from multiple sectors; therefore, it is important to identify which ministries and agencies are responsible and at which level (such as the ministries of agriculture, environment or land and water). It is important to acknowledge local capacity levels and ensure that resources are allocated to addressing barriers such as low civic participation. For example, leveraging digital tools and other communications technologies can be a useful way to expand outreach. In addition, identifying communities that have been historically marginalized or discriminated against or that may experience higher vulnerability is critical for their consultation and engagement. This may include women, Indigenous Peoples, youth or other groups that might be left behind in consultation processes for structural reasons. These stakeholders may be identified in consultation with formal and informal community groups, youth engagement groups and networks, leaders and non-governmental organizations. In addition, some and perhaps most of these stakeholder groups likely already are engaged with other types of planning processes, and thus there are opportunities on which stakeholders can build.

Ways to engage stakeholders include regular meetings, workshops, focus groups and interviews for the purpose of exploring the current situation, needs and relevant interventions. Regular consultations with identified stakeholder groups to ensure that development directions and identified interventions are in line with their needs should be an integral part of the process (FAO, 2023). These participatory activities can cover the following:

- Stakeholder mapping exercises to identify actors in line with the objectives of the initiative. This includes the identification of a core team of potential stakeholders and their priorities and potential conflicts.





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All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

- Exchange of experience and knowledge, identification of opportunities and obstacles related to subnational development and integration of relevant SDGs and targets.
- Workshops to explore the situation of LNOB groups and the contributions of specific SDGs and targets to improve the conditions of such groups, the level of integration of the SDGs in current and forthcoming local policy documents, mainstreaming the SDGs in the organizational structure and culture, and opportunities to use the SDGs as a framework for international cooperation (donor support).
- Discussions on linking the SDGs to planning, budgeting, key performance indicators and governance among higher levels of government.
- Consideration of human, technical and financial/budgetary capacities, needs and gaps.
- Analysis of decision-making structures and types and levels of participation to influence policy and development planning documents.
- Engagement of local political leaders to discuss the role of the 2030 Agenda in their work and how to ensure it is at the heart of their political mandate.

When planning for SDG localization, it is important to consider windows of opportunity and entry points – such as subnational development planning documents and plans up for review or new subnational, national and international initiatives – and tie localization efforts to these opportunities. Finally, it also is important to specify the leadership of localization efforts and set up a core team that can support this process. This could include the subnational government agency responsible for planning, but it also could be a consortium of organizations, agencies and stakeholders – including those that focus on environmental management – leading the planning process in the area.



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## STEP 2

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### SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT FORMULATION

Efforts to localize the SDGs and integrate them into planning processes have been mostly focused on cities. However, with rapid growth, rural well-being has been increasingly challenged. The SDGs present an opportunity for rural areas to reimagine their development priorities and focus on interventions that tackle rural development challenges and promote sustainability. A critical contribution to the localization process is situational analysis, which consists of analyses of formerly evaluated, current and future local development needs, challenges, capacities and constraints in the context of the SDGs. While the SDGs can be used as a framework for a sustainable future for local and subnational areas, not all SDGs and targets are relevant to specific locations. With that in mind, we can identify the following components of situational analysis that could be adapted to specific local needs and be used to identify entry points for SDG implementation:

- a landscape analysis, with structural elements (such as agroecological context and characterization of the population), production elements (local versus external), economic elements (including value chains, livelihoods and public policy and investments), food systems type and infrastructure, and an understanding of the condition of natural resources (degradation/regeneration); and
- a historical analysis that focuses on access to natural resources, production types and agroecological dynamics (such as soil quality and fertility), markets, migration, public policy and livelihoods, social protection/safety nets and food culture, including Indigenous food systems and local food heritage.

Such a situational analysis can be framed around and informed by the following parameters:

- reviewing national SDG integration efforts, including national SDG programmes, plans and/or strategies that incorporate the SDGs, to inform efforts in subnational areas;
- identifying local needs, priorities and interventions included in development documents and initiatives, with specific attention to the engagement of, impacts on, and benefits for LNOB groups (e.g. unemployed youth in rural areas, rural women, smallholders, people living with disabilities, etc.);
- using the SDGs as a framework to identify gaps and challenges in baseline indicators, set SDG-aligned targets for subnational development priorities, and use existing indicators to track implementation progress; and
- linking the SDGs with local development priorities, targets and interventions.

Situational analysis will facilitate the assessment of development issues, their inclusion in current development planning documents, and interventions to address them. This assessment should also focus on understanding the situation



of vulnerable groups and households, the impacts of current interventions, and needed future measures. The SDGs provide a framework for target setting at local and subnational levels to address critical sustainability challenges. Once current and future interventions are identified, trade-offs and synergies

can be assessed and a draft planning document formulated (Table 4).

Finally, development priorities, challenges, interventions and synergies provide a basis for formulating a subnational development planning document that integrates the SDGs.

**TABLE 4. EXAMPLES OF IDENTIFIED DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

| Challenges  | Development priority and beneficiaries (including LNOB)   | Examples of possible selected interventions  | Synergies, trade-offs   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Malnutrition and food security challenges</b>          | Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all, including the vulnerable groups that are the most impacted, such as poor people, women and children (SDG Target 2.1).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve food storage capacities (relevance for SDG Target 2.3).</li> <li>Promote biofortified foods.</li> </ul>   | Synergies with addressing low-income farm workers affected by malnutrition and food insecurity.                   |
| <b>Limited access to reliable and clean energy</b>        | Improve access to energy and ensure that energy is affordable (SDG Target 7.1 used as a local development target).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to on-grid and off-grid energy.</li> <li>Pilot projects available and lessons learned identified.</li> </ul>   | Synergies among food security, nutrition and health.  |
| <b>Low-paying and informal employment of farm workers</b> | Improve access to social protection systems (focus of SDG Target 1.3), especially for vulnerable rural people, landless farm workers and migrant workers.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise safety nets and access to finance.</li> <li>Targeted services on healthcare and education (SDG 3).</li> </ul>  | Synergy among improved production, stable jobs and trade-offs, as technology can limit job availability.          |
| <b>Low yields in production</b>                           | Support production systems, adjust production choices and ensure that women, smallholders and entities with limited assets can access support (focus of SDG Target 2.3 and SDG Target 2.4). Reduce limited and unequal access to land (focus of SDG Indicator 5.a.1 and SDG 2). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure access to seeds, technology (irrigation), fertilizers and extension services (focus of SDG Target 2.3 and SDG Target 2.4).</li> <li>Review and improve allocation of land ownership and use (focus of SDG Indicator 5.a.1 and SDG 2).</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Occurrence of certain diseases</b>                     | Reduce specific diseases that are higher than national and/or regional averages. Improve access to health care among vulnerable groups.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build local clinics that provide services to vulnerable groups (focus of SDG Target 3.8).</li> <li>Targeted health education and prevention.</li> </ul>   | Synergies: Improve health services and reduce the impacts of air pollution to prevent and better manage diseases. |
| <b>Air pollution</b>                                      | Reduce the occurrence of respiratory illnesses due to low-quality fuel, outdated vehicles and industrial pollution (those most impacted are low-income households in rural areas and people in cities with air pollution).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer clean cooking fuel options.</li> <li>Work with industry to reduce pollution.</li> <li>Promote public transport (SDG Target 11.2).</li> </ul>  |   |

SOURCE: Elaborated by the authors.



## STEP 3

### INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS AND STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

The third step after the stakeholder mapping and situational analysis is an analysis of institutions. Institutions can be described as the longstanding rules and rights governing social and productive behaviour (North, 1990). Institutions are critical to linking local processes to national ones, and vice versa. It is therefore important to work on identifying, understanding and addressing local and national institutions and their roles. An institutional analysis can reveal the potential governance barriers that exist and enable solutions to create a better enabling environment for addressing development challenges (Table 5). For example, national legislation creates frameworks to aid local and regional governments in exercising their duties. However, these frameworks can both incentivize and create obstacles for the achievement of the SDGs, particularly when it comes to resource management, decentralization issues (fiscal and financial), environmental protection and inclusive development (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, 2020; ICLEI, 2015).

Common barriers to consider include:

- policy coherence, institutional and governance challenges (e.g. local versus national leadership);
- local budgetary/financing autonomy and capacity;
- accessing and building partnerships to produce financing for development priorities, including the SDGs;
- harmonization and standardization of approaches to assess SDG progress at the local level;
- coordination among national, regional and local governments;
- constant shifts in policy agendas due to high political turnover;
- openness to and engagement of women, youth and vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples to identify groups at risk of being left behind;



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- a language barrier among local stakeholders who are not proficient in languages not native to them regarding engaging with materials, examples and approaches from international sources or elsewhere;
  - competition and reluctance to collaborate due to concerns over splitting resources (for example, among many local governments); and
  - lack of availability of disaggregated data and statistics.
- Make sure that all critical aspects covered under the SDGs are invited to the planning process.
  - Pay specific attention to ensuring that institutions representing aspects of the LNOB principles are involved, providing support if needed.
  - Consider unequal power relations and create processes and opportunities for people connected to institutions with limited power to participate.
  - Explore linkages among institutions to reinforce opportunities for collaboration and to address conflicts and the misalignment of efforts.

In order to gain an understanding of the institutional setting in the context of localization, the approach suggested is to build on existing planning and programming efforts, as multiple institutional engagements likely already have been developed and tested. Therefore, for SDG localization, we make the following suggestions:

- Review existing institutions and their collaboration during the planning process and implementation efforts based on past processes and build on good examples and address gaps.

Thus, the focus should be on enhancing cooperation within governance structures and entities to ensure coherence among national, regional and local priorities towards an integrated approach to development in which service delivery, resources and capacities are effectively managed. Finally, findings from institutional analysis and the means for capacity improvement should be integrated into draft planning documents.



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**TABLE 5. EXAMPLES OF COHERENCE AND CAPACITY ISSUES AT NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL LEVELS OF DECISION-MAKING ON INTERVENTIONS RELEVANT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL LOCALIZATION**

| Interventions  | SDG targets and indicators | Coherence between national, subnational plans and potential governance and policy barriers  | Capacity gaps and improvements   |
|--|----------------------------|---|--|
| <p><b>Improve food storage capacities (relevance for SDG Target 2.3).</b></p> <p><b>Promote biofortified foods.</b></p>  | 2.1, 2.2                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National agricultural strategies include support for farmers but not for storage development.</li> <li>Biofortification is included at the national level but not at the subnational level.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include biofortification in subnational planning documents.</li> <li>Connect with national policymakers to include food storage in agriculture and food security priorities.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Improve access to on-grid and off-grid energy.</b></p> <p><b>Pilot projects available and lessons learned identified.</b></p>  | 7.1, 7.2, 7.b              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually part of the national green growth strategy.</li> <li>Pilot projects conducted in neighbouring communities.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited knowledge about off-grid solutions.</li> <li>Unknown interest of population.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Revise safety nets and access to finance.</b></p> <p><b>Targeted services on healthcare and education (SDG Target 4.4).</b></p>  | 1.3, 2.3, 10.3             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited integration of training on health into subnational planning.</li> <li>Limited understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support needed to pay for health educators.</li> <li>Study to understand the health needs of vulnerable groups.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Ensure access to seeds, technology (irrigation), fertilizers and extension services (focus of SDG Target 2.3 and SDG Target 2.4) and access to land (SDG Indicator 5.a.1 and SDG 2).</b></p> | 2.3, 2.4, 5.a              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local clinics are a priority of national strategies, with pilot projects.</li> <li>Limited understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups and their abilities to access assets and inputs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study to understand the health needs of vulnerable groups.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Build local clinics that provide services to vulnerable groups (focus of SDG Target 3.8). Targeted health education and prevention.</b></p>  | 3.3, 3.4, 3.8, 3.9         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priorities are in line with national strategies.</li> <li>Donor activities on clean cooking fuel.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to improve public transport in medium-sized and smaller cities.</li> <li>Explore collaboration with donor agencies on clean cooking fuels.</li> </ul>                              |
| <p><b>Offer clean cooking fuel options. Work with industry to reduce pollution. Promote public transport (SDG Target 11.2)</b></p>   | 3.3, 3.9<br>11.2           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National strategies focus on medium-sized and large farms.</li> <li>Donor activities support smallholder capacities.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for coordination of storage development.</li> <li>Explore collaboration with donor agencies.</li> </ul>  |

SOURCE: Elaborated by the authors.



# STEP 4

## PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Building from the previous three steps, it is possible to plan for a coherent strategy that recognizes stakeholders, the local context and dynamics, and the formal and informal institutions that can be leveraged. Identified development priorities, interventions, capacity gaps and improvements provide the basis for subnational development planning documents, but additional elements are needed to assist with implementation. As stated earlier, subnational governments often have limited resources to implement their priorities, with financing instead going to priorities identified in national strategies.

Planning for implementation requires specifying a timeline for planned interventions, specific activities to enable the interventions, a budget and sources of financing (Table 6). Generally, the more details that are included in the development planning documents about its implementation, the greater the likelihood of achieving the strategies' targets. Specific considerations on planning for implementation include:

### ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS-RAISING

- Subnational authorities, with the potential involvement of national and regional structures, should consider awareness campaigns to improve local communities' understanding of the SDGs, share information about SDG implementation efforts (including a focus on LNOB at national and local levels) and empower local communities to participate in implementation.

### BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- Ensure that the entire SDG localization process is linked to legal or regulatory frameworks (also based on institutional analysis) and that the process is linked to local budgeting.
- Specify sources of financing available for the implementation of subnational priorities, building on the potential alignment with national priorities, to support shared interventions at the subnational level, donor-led projects on identified priorities, and interventions that can be included in the local budget.
- Financing for interventions will be largely based on refocusing current budget allocations towards identified interventions at national and subnational levels. Legal and budgetary steps should also be taken to ensure that these resources are switched to identified interventions.



## RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBJECTIVES

- Experience from early SDG implementation (Table 2 and Table 3) shows that using pilot activities as part of implementation efforts can help build capacity, knowledge and evidence for the application of specific interventions at the subnational level.
- Consider the time frame for implementation of planned initiatives, including time for pilot

projects. Overall, the SDGs focus on the time frame until 2030, but selected interventions can conclude sooner, especially those that build on synergies among the SDGs.

Outcomes from this step will inform subnational development planning documents by providing details on planned interventions and their time frames and sources of financing.

**TABLE 6. EXAMPLES OF DEVELOPING A TIMEFRAME AND IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF FINANCING AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

| Interventions, SDGs, capacity needs   | Means of implementation  | Budget   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Improve food storage capacities (relevance for SDG targets 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3).</b></p> <p><b>Promote biofortified foods (SDG Target 2.2).</b></p> <p><b>Risks and capacity gaps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product preference to other types by consumers</li> <li>• Limited production capacity and lack of interest/access from producers to participate in shared storage and biofortification</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential improvements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include biofortification in subnational strategies</li> <li>• Connect with national policymakers to stress the relevance of food storage for agriculture and food security</li> <li>• Targeted efforts for private sectors to use the relevant production process</li> <li>• Information campaign to educate consumers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target: zero hunger, nutrition for all (by 2030)</li> <li>• Inform national policymakers on the importance of storage (by 2024)</li> <li>• Local government to ensure permits and connection to the private sector (by 2025)</li> <li>• Review legislation to target for social support (by 2027)</li> <li>• Implement improved social support system (by 2028)</li> <li>• Efforts to reach out to consumers and producers (by 2026)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National budget for biofortification</li> <li>• Refocus parts of national budget on agriculture to storage</li> <li>• Contribute to storage from local budget, in collaboration with the private sector</li> <li>• Improve allocation of social support (cash and food) for the most vulnerable: local budget (synergies with interventions on low-income workers and farmers)</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Improve access to on-grid and off-grid energy (SDG targets 7.1, 7.2 and 7.b)</b></p> <p><b>Pilot projects available and lessons learned identified</b></p> <p><b>Risks and capacity gaps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited knowledge about off-grid solutions</li> <li>• Unknown interest of population and potential affordability</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential improvements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific technology support systems for private sectors</li> <li>• Pilot project for private sectors and consumers</li> <li>• Feasibility assessments for production and consumption</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target: improve access to affordable energy and promote green energy (50 percent by 2030)</li> <li>• Campaign to inform population about green energy (by 2025)</li> <li>• Local government to ensure permits and explore private sector and population to contribute to energy development (by 2026)</li> <li>• Implement energy access improvements (by 2030)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National budget for improved energy access</li> <li>• Donor support for campaigns</li> <li>• Explore loans, population and private-sector contributions, and local budgets to finance energy access</li> <li>• Donor-led projects on off-grid energy solutions</li> </ul>   |

SOURCE: Elaborated by the authors.



## STEP 5

### DATA AND INDICATOR SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT



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Indicators and data are part of the SDG localization process from the first step, but a dedicated chapter in these guidelines is needed to focus on specific issues related to data and monitoring.

Data collection and the indicator system should support decision-making, monitoring processes and evaluation mechanisms. Priority should be given to using available disaggregated indicators and data sources to illustrate needs and challenges, the impacts of current solutions, suggested solutions and interventions selected for subnational development planning documents. Equally important is investing in producing missing data that may be needed to underpin evidence-based policymaking.

In general, national and subnational indicators and, later, monitoring efforts should, to the extent possible, be aligned with official global SDG indicators selected for the relevant SDG<sup>8</sup> that are already used in development planning and other initiatives and projects. It should be recalled that global SDG indicators should form the backbone of individual countries' SDG monitoring efforts – nonetheless, such global indicators can be complemented (but not substituted) with additional regional, national, local or thematic indicators (United Nations, 2015b). In many cases, official SDG indicators may be disaggregated at the subnational level, providing additional important insights on specific geographic areas or population groups. For example, the multidimensional poverty index comprises SDG Indicator 1.2.2 and can be disaggregated by rural and urban areas (see Box 3 and Table 7 for more details on the Rural Multidimensional Poverty Index).

Localizing SDG data and indicators therefore depends to a large degree on disaggregating the available indicators to the extent possible to describe development challenges, beneficiaries and impacts of solutions on different groups of society, including vulnerable groups and households. This is an enormous challenge, considering that many countries are already struggling to produce national-level figures for the 232 SDG indicators. Such a challenge calls for stepping up investments in data collection efforts at national and subnational levels, leveraging new and alternative data sources, and integrating them with traditional survey-based or administrative source mechanisms.

An indicator framework sensitive to local needs should lead to a compilation of well-disaggregated data and indicators across different characteristics of the population, in line with local contexts (income level, gender, age,

<sup>8</sup> The SDG indicator database with country-level metadata is available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>.



disability, location, migration status, ethnicity, race, employment status, education level, etc.). It is also worth reaching out to universities, research centres, think tanks, the private sector, communities, rural agricultural and development cooperatives, non-governmental organizations and regional affiliations of national statistical agencies to explore their data collection efforts and invite them to consider sharing their data for planned development documents. A number of countries in the ECA region and elsewhere have engaged in indicator identification efforts in the context of SDG localization (Box 3).

Subsequently, a set of SDG-aligned indicators, designed around local needs, priorities and interventions, with a focus on vulnerable groups, should be considered for inclusion in local and subnational development planning documents. The indicators should take into account local characteristics and social groups at risk of exclusion, in line with the LNOB principle,<sup>9</sup> and reflect local data collection capacities. Support should be provided by central authorities to reinforce local competencies and support better integration into the national monitoring system.

<sup>9</sup> See UCLG, 2014, for a discussion on the importance of localizing SDG targets and indicators and a methodological proposal.

**TABLE 7. EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS COVERING SELECTED RURAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES**

| Priorities  | Potential indicators   |
|---|--|
| <b>Malnutrition and food security challenges</b>          | Proportion of the population living below the national poverty line and by groups (SDG indicators 1.1.1, 1.2.1, 1.2.2); proportion of the population covered by social protection floors/systems (SDG Indicator 1.3.1); prevalence of undernourishment (SDG Indicator 2.1.1); prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (SDG Indicator 2.1.2); prevalence of stunting, wasting, and anaemia (SDG indicators 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3); consumption of healthy foods (milk, eggs, fruits, vegetables) by groups (national and local indicators) |
| <b>Limited access to reliable and clean energy</b>        | Proportion of the population living in households with access to basic services (SDG Indicator 1.4.1); access to electricity, clean energy (SDG indicators 7.1.1 and 7.1.2); energy costs per household, also by group (national and local indicators); types of energy sources used, also by group (national and local indicators)  |
| <b>Low-income and informal employment of farm workers</b> | Education completion rates (SDG Indicator 4.1.1); parity indices in education (SDG Indicator 4.5.1); proportion of informal employment in total employment (SDG Indicator 8.3.1); unemployment rate (SDG Indicator 8.5.1); proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training (SDG Indicator 8.6.1); low pay rate, child labour (Rural Multidimensional Poverty Index)  |
| <b>Occurrence of certain diseases</b>                     | Occurrence of hepatitis, HIV, tuberculosis, and cardiovascular and other diseases (SDG indicators 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.3.5); alcohol consumption and treatment of substance abuse (SDG indicators 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.5.1, 3.5.2); coverage of essential health services (SDG Indicator 3.8.1), also by groups (national and local indicators); health worker density and distribution (SDG Indicator 3.c.1)  |
| <b>Air pollution</b>                                      | Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution (SDG Indicator 3.9.1); mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, sanitation (SDG Indicator 3.9.2); type of households using low-quality fuel (national and local indicators); types of relevant diseases and their occurrence, also by group (national and local indicators)   |
| <b>Low yields in production</b>                           | Proportion of the population with secure tenure rights (SDG Indicator 1.4.2); volume of production per labour unit (SDG Indicator 2.3.1); average income of small-scale food producers (SDG Indicator 2.3.2); access to land for women and related legal frameworks (SDG indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2); access to roads in rural areas (SDG Indicator 9.1.1); agricultural asset adequacy, extension, risks, climate shocks, coping strategies, child labour (Rural Multidimensional Poverty Index, national and local indicators)                 |

SOURCE: Elaborated by the authors.



### BOX 3. EXAMPLES OF LOCALIZATION EFFORTS REGARDING DATA AND INDICATORS

The need for local capacities to better monitor and assess progress towards the SDGs has been stressed in the Voluntary National Review reports of countries such as Armenia and Georgia. Armenia, for instance, highlights the importance of having sufficient disaggregated local data and the need for a legal framework and user-friendly data collection system at the community level.

Looking at other regions, in Indonesia, some provinces have started the development of local indicators as a result of SDG capacity-building training. Jakarta, for example, developed its SDG 7 road map and has engaged in localizing the SDGs, with indicators incorporated into the city's medium-term development plan. In the Philippines, the League of Cities oversees the monitoring of progress on development goals, including the SDGs. A system of local target scorecards is used to document governance-related data and ensure that development plans are aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

#### Rural multidimensional poverty index

To summarize local challenges to sustainable development such as poverty and marginalization, the set of indicators used for the global multidimensional poverty index can be applied to rural areas to provide valuable deprivation insights using a structured and tested methodology. The Rural Multidimensional Poverty Index is composed of 18 indicators organized into five groups covering food security, education, living standards, rural livelihoods, and resources and risks. The index as a whole, and especially the underlying indicators, provides an evidence base to use in designing specific efforts and measuring progress as part of localized strategies to advance the SDGs, including SDG 1 on poverty eradication, SDG 2 on food security, SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education, SDG 7 on energy, and several others.

| Dimension                       | Indicator                           | Deprivation level   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Food security and nutrition     | Food insecurity                     | The household's probability of being food insecure exceeds 50 percent.  |
|                                 | Child malnutrition                  | At least one child (aged 6–60 months) of the household is underweight.  |
| Education                       | Years of schooling                  | No household members of ages "school entrance age +6" or older has completed secondary education.   |
|                                 | School attendance                   | At least one household member of schooling age (age by which he or she should complete secondary school) does not attend school.  |
| Living standards                | Cooking fuel                        | The household uses unclean fuels for cooking.   |
|                                 | Improved sanitation                 | The household's sanitation facility is not improved (according to national SDG Target 6.2).   |
|                                 | Drinking water                      | The household does not have access to safe drinking water (according to national SDG Target 6.1).   |
|                                 | Electricity                         | The household has no access to affordable electricity/solar or other renewable energy.  |
|                                 | Housing                             | The household has inadequate housing; either the floor, roof or walls are made of rudimentary or inadequate materials.  |
|                                 | Assets                              | The household does not own more than one of the following assets: telephone/mobile telephone, refrigerator, computer/iPad/laptop and does not have own vehicle (bicycle, motorbike, car, etc.).   |
| Rural livelihoods and resources | Agricultural assets adequacy        | The household's share of income from agriculture (excluding agricultural wages) is equal to or above 30 percent, and the amount of either land or livestock owned and operated falls in the bottom of 40 percent of the cumulative distribution of operated land size (ha/livestock ownership). (TLU)           |
|                                 | Low pay rate                        | At least one household member is a low-paid employee in either (a) agriculture, (b) mining, quarrying, manufacturing or construction, (c) services; or any other unspecified sector.  |
|                                 | Social protection                   | No member of a household is enrolled in any insurance or other social protection programme.   |
|                                 | Child labour                        | At least one household member 11 years is (informally) employed.  |
|                                 | Extension services                  | No one in the household has access to any extension services.   |
| Risk                            | Credit denial                       | If the household was turned down in all its attempts to seek credit or the household did not borrow because it did not seek credit due to non-adequate reason, such as (a) believing the credit would be refused, (b) the credit was too expensive, (c) inadequate collateral, or (d) did not know any lenders. |
|                                 | Risk exposure and coping strategies | The household suffered from covariate shocks or suffered from a shock but had no access to formalized coping strategies, such as support from the government or a non-governmental organization.  |
|                                 | Risk of climate shocks              | The household's probability of experiencing drought, floods or temperature above 35 degrees Celsius in the critical period of maize production is greater than the respective median probability.*  |

\* Probabilities are calculated based on the standardized precipitation index (SPI-n), taking into account the different lengths of agricultural rainy seasons.

NOTE: This table has been reproduced as shown in the Rural Multidimensional Poverty Index.

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## STEP 6

### FORMALIZING THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT WITH INTEGRATED SDGs

In completing the previous steps, inputs to the subnational development planning document should have been created. This step focuses on bringing the developed elements together in a coherent development planning document in which current local development priorities are aligned with the SDGs and their targets and indicators (Table 8). This step can focus on updating existing planning documents up for review, assessment or evaluation; creating a new development planning document; or, in some cases, developing ad hoc SDG plans for the locality to demonstrate commitment to the SDGs. Whatever the case may be, specific attention should be given to targets related to marginalized communities, given that LNOB is a central component of the 2030 Agenda. Because targets cannot be achieved in isolation, the subnational development planning document should also build on specific synergies and trade-offs, as identified in the previous steps. The developed planning document should be made available online as an open source document accessible to diverse groups with visual impairments.

Finally, the development planning document can provide a solid basis for creating a Voluntary Local Review to report on local efforts on SDG implementation (IISD, 2022). The subnational development planning documents and efforts at the subnational level should also be linked to Voluntary National Review submitted to the High-Level Political Forum.<sup>10</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> A database of Voluntary National Reviews, grouped by country, is available at <https://hlpf.un.org/vnrs>



**TABLE 8. OVERVIEW OF INPUTS INTO A SUBNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT, AS ELABORATED IN THE PREVIOUS STEPS**

| Step   | Activities  | Linkages to the SDGs  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>1. Inception phase and stakeholder engagement</b>                               | Select agencies to lead and be involved, including those focused on LNOB groups and households.   | Participation and inclusion, as suggested by the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on LNOB groups and households.               |
| <b>2. Situational analysis and draft development planning document formulation</b> | Identify development challenges, opportunities, risks and trade-offs and interventions relevant for the local level.  | Target and priority setting based on the SDGs and targets.  |
| <b>3. Institutional analysis and strengthening</b>                                 | Identify areas of coherence with national and other subnational development planning documents and outline capacity gaps and areas for improvement.   | Coherence with national SDG strategies and other national and subnational efforts on the SDGs.                          |
| <b>4. Planning for implementation and budgeting</b>                                | Identify a timeline and sources of finance for interventions. Pilot projects to test interventions. Hold awareness-raising campaigns.   | Time frame, campaigns and pilots on the SDGs (including SDG costing), national and donor financing focused on the SDGs. |
| <b>5. Data and indicator selection and development</b>                             | Select indicators from among national, subnational and other indicators, including well-disaggregated data and indicators across various characteristics of the population, in line with local contexts (income level, gender, age, disability, location, migration status, ethnicity, race, employment status, education level, etc.). | SDG indicators to cover the situation and track progress over time.   |
| <b>6. Formalizing the development planning document with integrated SDGs</b>       | Create a comprehensive strategy that meets the subnational/local context and needs and synergistic interventions (as much as possible).   | SDGs are integrated into the strategy, from target setting to monitoring.   |
| <b>7. Monitoring, accountability and assessment/evaluation framework</b>           | Track progress on subnational development planning document implementation.   | Monitor progress on the SDGs, possibly feed into Voluntary National Reviews and Voluntary Local Reviews.                |

SOURCE: Elaborated by the authors.



## STEP 7

### MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

As in national SDG implementation, local monitoring, accountability and assessment/evaluation frameworks are a key driver of success, as they help guarantee adequate implementation and efficient use of financial and human resources and better replicate pilot initiatives to other areas. The monitoring process should be a mechanism coordinated with the central government through the implementation of subnational monitoring or a joint multilevel structure and mechanisms (UCLG, 2018). The purpose is to ensure coherence, harmonization of methods, and accountability at all levels. Similar to other subnational planning documents and development strategies, the local context and national and global realities are always changing, and thus the approach to accountability needs to be dynamic and responsive. Accountability and the implementation of the developed strategy can be fostered by ensuring that civil society has access to information at all levels, including on budgets.

Monitoring should also favour independent review inputs, participatory approaches and collaboration with community-based organizations and the LNOB population. Data and the commitment to LNOB should be at the centre of the monitoring, accountability and assessment/evaluation process. The process should track and assess progress across all local-level development priorities as well as on the SDGs and their targets. Wherever possible, statistical progress assessment methods should be used to clearly spell out how close a country or region is to the target, how fast it is progressing and, therefore, how likely it is to reach the target by 2030. At the same time, when designing the monitoring and reporting process, it is necessary to ensure that the project take the initiative of addressing data gaps and prioritizing disaggregated data collection at the local levels as well as in collaboration with national statistical agencies and other agencies engaged in data collection and monitoring.

Regular reporting on progress at the subnational level should be conducted. Information thus obtained can be used to develop Voluntary Local Reviews and feed into Voluntary National Reviews. In addition, Voluntary Local Reviews and other monitoring and accountability efforts are well-positioned to provide a basis for stakeholder engagement, including among governmental and non-governmental agencies and the private sector.



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# CHECKLIST

## SDG LOCALIZATION

### STEP 1. INCEPTION PHASE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

**Outcome:** Engaging stakeholder groups and agreeing on a process for engagement (workshops, online participation, meetings, interviews, focus groups), with the end goal of developing a shared vision for a development planning document covering local needs and priorities, connecting to SDGs and targets where possible

#### SPECIFIC STEPS:

- Identify key stakeholders with interest and involvement in local development and who are likely to impact the process positively and effectively.
- Link each of the identified stakeholders with their area of competency: focus area, involvement in decision-making, focus on LNOB groups.
- Agree on the role of each stakeholder in every step of the process.
- Identify leadership who will manage the process.
- Create a shared vision with the involved stakeholders and a road map leading to a strategy with localized SDGs.
- Convene regular meetings to discuss key aspects and challenges related to the process and how localization will help address local challenges.
- Share regular updates to keep stakeholder interest high.
- Check for diversity and inclusion.

### STEP 2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT FORMULATION

**Outcome:** Understanding and placing in the context of the SDGs current and future local development needs, challenges, capacities and constraints, as well as details on vulnerable groups and means to improve their situation in the context of the identified development challenges and the SDGs

#### SPECIFIC STEPS:

- Collect any existing medium- and/or long-term development plans for your area of focus.
- Identify specific current and future local development needs, challenges, capacities and constraints.
- Connect the SDGs with identified development priorities by leveraging the SDGs to identify local development targets, targets and suggestions for interventions, and indicators for tracking progress.
- Assess potential synergies and trade-offs across identified priorities and the 2030 Agenda.
- When identifying development priorities, focus specifically on their impacts on vulnerable groups.
- Use the SDGs to provide suggestions for the types of vulnerable groups and interventions to address their needs.
- When listing development priorities, interventions and targets and when assessing synergies and trade-offs, pay special attention to the needs of and impacts on vulnerable groups.

# CHECKLIST

## STEP 3. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS AND STRENGTHENING

**Outcome:** Understanding and identifying efforts to ensure coherence among national and local development priorities, including those linked to the SDGs, and to address capacity gaps preventing an integrated approach to development planning at the local level

### SPECIFIC STEPS:

- Analyse current legislation related to the role and scope of actions of subnational governments on development, including the 2030 Agenda.
- Review existing institutions and their collaboration during the planning process and implementation efforts, based on past processes. Build on good examples and address gaps.
- Make sure all critical aspects covered under the SDGs are invited to the planning process.
- Pay special attention – providing support, if needed – to ensuring that institutions representing aspects of the LNOB principles are involved.
- Consider unequal power relations and create processes and opportunities for people connected to institutions with limited power to participate.
- Explore the linkages among institutions to reinforce opportunities for collaboration on activities and to address conflicts and misalignment of efforts.
- Build on existing barriers to develop a list of challenges that may impede the 2030 Agenda and the localization process itself.
- Create a mapping and classification of barriers based on type (political, legislation, financial, capacity, etc.), origin (sector, local, external, individual, etc.), impact and level of addressability.
- Prioritize barriers that are more critical.
- Work with stakeholders and partners to develop a planning document to address those barriers.
- Consider potential synergies and trade-offs between interventions to address barriers.

## STEP 4. PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

**Outcome:** Clearly identified types of activities, a time frame, and sources of financing for the planned interventions to achieve SDG-linked priorities at the subnational level

### SPECIFIC STEPS:

- Consider including awareness-raising campaigns to improve understanding of the SDGs, support implementation efforts, and empower local communities to participate in implementation.
- Select one or several pilot areas/projects, based on financial resources and readiness (assessed during the situational analysis phase), to build capacity and momentum for implementation.
- Consider diverse sources of financing – including national government, donor-led projects and initiatives – and the local budget.
- Ensure that legal and budgetary requirements needed for shifting current budgetary allocations towards priority interventions are met.
- Define timelines for achieving specific targets and carrying out interventions, including awareness-raising campaigns and pilot projects.



# CHECKLIST

## STEP 5. DATA AND INDICATOR SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

**Outcome:** A set of indicators reflecting the SDGs, designed around local needs, priorities and interventions, with a focus on vulnerable groups, ready for inclusion in the development planning document

### SPECIFIC STEPS:

- Compile existing local data and assess data gaps with respect to the level of granularity (LNOB, gender, geography) and alignment with development priorities and SDG targets.
- Review official SDG indicators and complementary national indicators and select those relevant for the planned development document.
- Explore subnational data availability for the selected indicators.
- Identify additional indicators in reports by donors, the United Nations and other agencies and integrate them into the subnational indicator set.
- Set up a data collection mechanism, with the support of the central statistical authority, to guarantee coherence, consistency and replicability.
- Consult with stakeholder groups such universities, research centres, the private sector, communities, cooperatives and non-governmental organizations that will support the data and indicator development phase.

## STEP 6. FORMALIZING THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT WITH INTEGRATED SDGS

**Outcome:** A coherent development planning document that brings local development priorities, interventions, and capacities together with the goals, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda

### SPECIFIC STEPS:

- Bring together the development planning document elements from the previous steps, including development needs and priorities, interventions, capacity gaps, institutional strengthening measures, implementation plans and indicators.
- Make sure that the challenges and contributions of vulnerable groups are well integrated into the document.
- Make sure the document builds on the synergies (as much as possible) among identified interventions and promote these throughout the development planning document.
- Make the development planning document accessible online.
- Work with partners to elaborate the first Voluntary Local Review.
- Contribute to the Voluntary National Review at the national level.

## STEP 7. MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

**Outcome:** Regular reporting on implementation progress and on adjustments to the subnational development planning document, based on identified trends and changes in other circumstances

### SPECIFIC STEPS:

- Identify key actors from the central government to support the monitoring process.
- Ensure that budgets and capacities are also tracked.
- Develop a work programme for regular reporting, including a calendar.
- Appoint a local focal point in charge of accountability matters.
- Agree on information exchange at all levels of governance and within the local team.
- Agree on an approach to making information accessible to citizens.
- Create opportunities for local actors to contribute to Voluntary National Reviews.
- Work with partners to elaborate the first or additional Voluntary Local Reviews.



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FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

<https://www.fao.org/europe>

[FAO-RO-Europe@fao.org](mailto:FAO-RO-Europe@fao.org)

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Budapest, Hungary