Action planning for sustainability reporting

Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

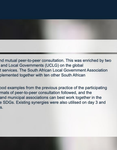
Overview

When adopting the 2030 Agenda, the member states of the United Nations (UN) committed to the world's ambitious and far-reaching goals to be implemented by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 2015, cities, regions and their associations have been increasingly committed to localising the SDGs and to the challenges in order to localise the SDGs on the ground.

On a voluntary basis, many countries also produce reports on the implementation status in Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Sub-National Reviews (VSRs) at regional level. These reviews form the national reports (VNR) of the governments and are presented each year at the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

From 2 to 4 December 2024, 37 practitioners from 25 countries met in Berlin at the invitation of the Association of Cities in Berlin to share their experiences in reporting. For the first time, representatives of municipal associations met with VLR practitioners. The aim was to discuss the commitments of cities dialogue to the implementation of the SDGs at local and regional level.

In addition to exchanging experiences on good practices and different approaches reporting, the aim was also to harmonise VLRs and VSRs with each other and, in a further step, to improve the monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs at local and regional level.



Program

The dialogue event focused on the exchange of experiences and mutual peer-to-peer consultation. This was enriched by two keynotes from representatives of UN-Habitat and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) on the global implementation of the SDGs and the role of local governments in this process. The German Association of Cities Association (DStGB) also presented examples of how VLRs have been implemented together with ten other South African municipalities.

The exchange of experiences began with the presentation of good examples from the previous practice of the participating municipalities and associations. On the second day, various formats of peer-to-peer consultation followed, and the participants developed recommendations for action on the harmonisation of reporting and the monitoring of the implementation of sustainability reporting in order to localise the SDGs. Existing synergies were also utilised on day 3 and dedicated to action planning, which resulted in future projects.

- Programme
- Connective Cities Overview Template
- Connective Cities - Veranstaltungsfilm (YouTube Video)

Keynotes

UN-Habitat Approach to SDG LOCALIZATION
In their presentations, Hasina Hassen and Tomwa Mahamoune from the SDG Localisation and Local Governments Unit at UN-Habitat explained the approaches to describe how SDG localisation strengthens the relationship between the various levels of government, provided an insight into global developments in VLRs and presented the "Global Urban Monitoring Framework" and the "SDG Cities Global Initiative" and the "Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs". They also explained the methodology of Action-oriented VLR.

From Local Action to Global Advocacy: UCLG's Support to VSRs, VLRs and Enhanced Multilevel Governance for Sustainable Development
Anna Calvete Moreno, Research Research, UCLG, provided insights into the relationship between the global, national, regional and local levels in the context of sustainable development. UCLG as an umbrella organisation of 25 associations and 1,500 cities is committed to the localisation of local governments worldwide. While the 2030 Agenda was mainly adopted at national level, UCLG is now well represented at the level of the Sustainable Development Goals (HLPF) and the Summit of the Future. The VLRs presented in the HLPF summary give a clear look. VSRs should be used as a lever for the creation of VLRs. The VSRs can also be used to highlight the differences from cities and act as a link between the local and national levels. VSRs can also strengthen the ties between the national and local levels and facilitate consultation. The UCLG supports the methodology of "action-oriented VLR".

Building the Bridge and Future to 2030: Accelerating SDG Implementation through VLRs and VSRs
Mpho Mokgatle, Chief Executive Officer, DStGB Manager, South African Local Government Association (SALGA), explained how SALGA supports South African local governments in the localisation and monitoring of the SDGs. They are arranging the global goals to local circumstances. In just eight months, ten municipalities were persuaded to draw up VLRs. The SALGA supports the cities in the form of training, advice, learning, networking and public relations work. Challenges such as insufficient data, scarce funding and political framework as well as a low level of awareness of the SDGs had to be overcome.

Presentations

The following 28 practical examples were presented at the Market of Opportunities:

Albania, Institute for Albanian Municipalities (IAM): Localizing efforts towards Agenda 2030 and trengthening the role of municipalities in national progress.

Amman, Jordan: Decision to publish the VLR (and simultaneously the VNR).

Bonn, Germany: Development of a sustainability dashboard.

Brazil, National Front of Mayors: Collection of data from municipalities to identify key issues for the localisation of the 2030 Agenda and assistance in its implementation.

Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana: Monitoring the implementation of the SDGs

Cuenca, Ecuador: Preparation of the first VLR

Hamburg, Germany: Interministerial cooperation in the preparation of the first VLR

Espargos Town, Lâffrontera, South Africa: Revitalization of the town centre in alignment with SDGs

Ghana: Technical guidelines, advocacy and capacity building to support local authorities to develop VLRs

Indonesia, Association of Indonesian Municipalities: Advocacy, capacity building and collaboration to support local governments in the VLR

Kenya: Supporting Counties to develop VLRs

La Paz, Bolivia: Preparation of the VLR using the Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF) methodology

Lusaka, Zambia: Preparation of the first VLR

Lviv, Ukraine: A hub for the exchange of experiences related to the promotion of sustainable development goals in times of crisis

Mannheim, Germany: Citizen-based vision Mannheim 2030

Mbarara, Uganda: Sustainable waste management systems and youth empowerment through job creation

NB, Serbia: Preparation of the first VLR

SALGA, South Africa: Coordination and technical support for municipalities in the development of VLRs

Stuttgart, Germany: On the way to impact-oriented sustainability monitoring

Association of Local Governments in Zambia: Integration of SDGs contributions at local level in VNRs

Results

The project steps were developed as part of the action planning, which are to be implemented in the course of 2025:

Establishing a network to accelerate and implement VSR/VLR
The exchange of experts that came together at this dialogue event is to be established as a network, thus consolidating the exchange between the municipalities and city associations.

Establishment of an SDG information centre in Nile, Loire, Cape Coast, Amman, uMhlathuze, Mbarara and Albania
A 'City Lab' to promote knowledge exchange through the establishment of databases and capacity building and the development of indicators.

Inclusion of the VLR in the medium-term development plan - APESD / alignment of the medium-term plan with the SDGs
The aim is to anchor the SDGs in the local development strategies and thus mainstream them.

Creation of a first VSR in Germany
The group consisting of representatives from German cities and the German Association of Cities plans to draw up a first VSR in Germany. The aim is to work with the Federal States / the Federal Government so that it can be included in the VNR and thus strengthen the local level in national reporting.

Preparation of a first VLR in Lusaka, Zambia
The group consists of experts who are fine-tuning their first VLR before starting out the implementation steps for Lusaka as an example.

Connective Cities accompanies the implementation of the project ideas and supports the actors with various services.

Report

Action planning for sustainability reporting
Documentation of the Connective Cities dialogue event from 2 to 4 December 2024 in Berlin

Here are a few voices from the event:

"It is key for us to collaborate to strengthen the partnerships to accelerate the VLR process. And also, the communication to engage our national government to be able to support the Voluntary Local Reviews or Voluntary Sub-National Reviews. It shows that we need to have a platform for all of us to engage people that can contribute to the table to ensure that we are moving in the right direction."
Martin Tebogo Matlou, SALGA (South African Local Government Association), South Africa

"I am delighted that we have succeeded in getting a very concrete project of our VSR for German municipalities on track, a result of the municipalities that we can then mirror at national level for the VNR 2025. On a personal level, I was very pleased to be able to exchange ideas with representatives from 15 different countries, to learn from each other and to establish contacts for the future."
Bettina Burk, Municipality of Stuttgart

"I see a lot of commitment of the participants that have been here to first continue working on their own strategies for SDG localisation, and second also contributing to this movement, which is a global movement, to reach more local and regional governments and partners."
Anna Calvete Moreno, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Spain

Gallery

Location

Related events