

Guidelines for Local and Regional Governments' Country Reports

Introduction

The new international consensus on the global development agendas – the Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the New Urban Agenda in particular – offers an unprecedented opportunity for all levels of government to partake in their achievement. National governments cannot meet these targets alone, and Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) need to be involved at all stages of the processes of implementation, monitoring and reporting. Giving **LRGs an enabling environment and resources to participate in the “localization” of the SDGs** is a strategic priority for our near future.

At the international level, the follow-up and reporting processes have been conceived as a responsibility of national governments and UN agencies. UCLG, however, is suggesting to give more impulse to the involvement of LRGs in this process. **We propose that our members:**

- 1. participate in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that their national governments are preparing for the UN;**
- 2. develop LRG-based *Country Reports* as an instrument to present and assess their contribution to the achievement of these ambitious goals.**

This approach is consistent with UCLG's strategy for the next few years, one that sees monitoring and reporting as seamlessly integrated with learning, implementation, advocacy and awareness-raising on the untapped potential of LRGs and their role in the process. On the one hand, to maximize this potential, **LRGs should already start contacting their national government** to participate in the development of the *Voluntary National Reviews* on SDG implementation that the UN High-Level Policy Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is collecting from member states. On the other hand, the *LRGs Country Reports* can highlight the role that LRGs can play in the **localization** of the SDGs,¹ and emphasize the link between national policies, sub-national governance and the challenges of localizing the global agendas. **The perspective of LRGs is an indispensable contribution to the localization and reporting processes.** We invite all members to take part in this initiative, the backbone of UCLG's collective effort that will lead to a global report on localization in 2019.

Structure of the LRGs Country Report

It is expected that each country carry out up to two voluntary reviews to be presented to the UN HLPF between 2015 and 2030 (a list of countries committed for 2017 is available at the bottom of this document). The *UN Guidelines for Voluntary National Reviews*² provide national governments with a structure to develop their national country reports. They also ask national governments to include a reference to the “policy and enabling environment” that they are creating to involve different levels of government and stakeholders.

This proposal for LRGs Country Reports adapts the VNR structure so that the reports present the perspective, needs and concrete experiences of LRGs. In this regard,

¹ Localization is a concept, common in the UN terminology, that refers to the empowerment of local actors and the ability to funnel global goals into local actions. Many local and regional authorities, in fact, have been 'localizing' the global agendas and their objectives even before these were formulated institutionally. The new global consensus can be an outstanding opportunity for local authorities and sub-national governments to be implement their plans and policies, while also improving dialogue and collaboration with national and international institutions.

² The report is available online at this address: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11819Voluntary_guidelines_VNRs.pdf.

their analysis would complement (or enhance, whenever necessary) the central governments' VNRs, assessing them through the eyes of sub-national governments.

The structure of LRGs Country Reports, designed to be about 4 or 5 pages long, could follow these guidelines:

1. Summary (half a page). A valuable report summary would highlight the crucial role of LRGs in "localizing" the SDGs; stress good practices or effective initiatives; and advance LRGs' key recommendations to support the localisation of the SDGs.

2. Introduction (two paragraphs). It would be useful for reports to quickly introduce the national context in which LRGs are acting. The report could provide insights on the situation of LRGs in their country with some key figures such as the number of sub-national governments and tiers (e.g., states, counties, municipalities) and their key responsibilities – e.g., basic service provision, urban and territorial planning, etc. Core data on local finances – e.g., the ratio of local revenues, expenditures and investments compared to those of national governments – can also be extremely valuable to assess the share of national budgets allocated to LRGs.

A few guiding questions can be useful for filling this part in: has the country started the actual SDGs implementation process? In which areas has the involvement of LRGs is considered particularly critical for the achievement of the SDGs? LRGs were also invited to mention the main priorities that may need more urgent action (e.g., slum upgrading, access to basic services, climate change mitigation). They should report on what the key challenges that LRGs are facing for the implementation and, more specifically, for the 'localization' of SDGs in their country (e.g. weak decentralization, financing, access to technology, etc.).

3. Methodology and process for the preparation of the review (one paragraph). Please explain how this note has been elaborated: who have been consulted (e.g., national local government leaders, a significant group of mayors). It can shed light to what extent LRGs (and their national associations) have been consulted for the Voluntary National Review, and to what extent their views have been considered.

4. Policy and enabling environment (2 pages). This part is the core of the Country Report in terms of contents. A few dimensions are key:

a. **Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals.** The LRGs' report should **emphasize the initiatives developed in the country to raise awareness – among LRGs – on the SDGs and their implementation** (e.g., conferences, dedicated campaigns organized either directly by LRGs or by other actors, such as national governments, NGOs, etc.). Please mention any initiative undertaken by local and regional governments to support the SDGs (e.g., declarations, action plans, etc.).

b. **At the national level – Involvement of LRGs in national institutional mechanisms and national plans for SDG implementation.** The involvement of LRGs and national associations at various stages of the localization process can vary significantly from one country to the other. The report should provide evidence, if any, of national consultations, conferences or fora, as well as new national institutional structures that have been designed to facilitate and support the participation of LRGs in the implementation of the SDGs.³ The LRGs Report can provide an analysis of the current national policies and assess whether or not these support LRGs responsibilities and facilitate the collaboration between national and local governments on SDG implementation (e.g., initiatives on basic services, housing, urban planning, etc.). Are there any planned reforms of national legislations, regulations, policies or programmes that support LRGs in the implementation of SDGs? Do these reforms facilitate the involvement of civil society and economic stakeholders in the implementation agenda, especially at

³ Brazil, for example, created a National Committee on the SDGs, by means of Decree 8892, in October 2016, which includes representatives from ministries, LRGs and civil society.

the local level? Have there been any national initiatives to facilitate the production of and access to disaggregated data for LRGs?

- c. **LRG-driven initiatives to localize the SDGs.**⁴ Whenever possible, LRGs should use their report to provide in-depth analysis on their own initiatives. LRGs should highlight, in particular, whether and how they have updated their local plans to make them consistent with the SDGs and their implementation. They should emphasize any innovative policies put into practice to promote the localization of the Goals and any new partnerships with civil society and the private sector aiming to achieve them. Their narration can focus on successes and challenges, emerging issues and lessons learned. In their account, we invite LRGs to refer – whenever possible – to SDG indicators collected by national and international institutions, but, if needed, they can also contribute any additional indicators that they deem relevant.

5. Means of implementation (half a page max.). This section explores the evolution of local financing, resource decentralization and consistency with local responsibilities and localization support. A key question guiding this assessment is what needs to be improved and what lessons can be learned, resource-wise, in order to achieve the objectives of localization and further promote social inclusion.

6. Conclusion: A summary of the findings, identifying where LRGs would need help with regard to capacity-building, finance, legislative reforms, partnership, technology support, etc.

Prospective time schedule

Although there is not a clear periodicity of the Voluntary National Reviews, it is expected that each country can carry out up to two voluntary reviews to be presented to the UN HLPF between 2015 and 2030. For the time being, the following countries have been registered for reporting in 2016 and 2017:

Countries that have submitted (or committed to submit) VNRs in 2016 and 2017:

In **2016**: China, Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela.

In **2017**: Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Monaco, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Uruguay, Zimbabwe.

DEADLINES IN 2017: The tentative deadline for the submission of the national governments' reports is 16 June 2017. For the above-mentioned countries, **it is extremely urgent for LRG associations to demand their national governments to be associated with the reporting process now.**

As regards the LRGs country reports, we ask in particular the local and regional governments associations able and willing to prepare a report by the first week of June to contact the UCLG World Secretariat, so as to develop a roadmap to present a report to the next HLPF in July 2017.

For the close future, a process to support LRGs should be initiated as soon as possible, enabling them to prepare national reports in as many countries as possible in 2018. These tasks will be part of the larger collective effort that will lead to the GOLD V report on the localization of the global agendas in all world regions in 2019.

⁴ This paragraph makes reference to the thematic review cycles defined by the HLPF. To date, the HLPF has defined three core themes: 1) in 2017, *eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity* (covering SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14); 2) in 2018, *transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies* (covering SDGs 6, 7, **11**, 12 and 15); and 3) in 2019, *empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality* (covering SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16). Goal 17 (means of implementation) will be considered transversally throughout the reporting process. These cycles will be renewed every four years.