

TERRITORIALIZATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



A manual for implementation
of voluntary local reviews
at the subnational level



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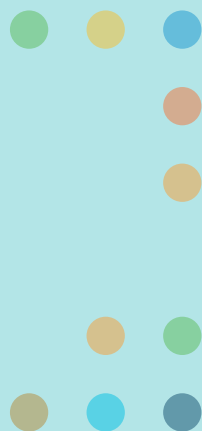
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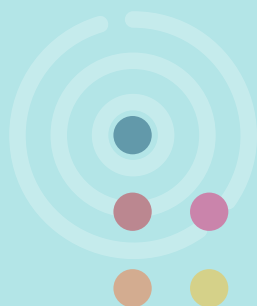
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at the subnational level



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ECLAC

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs
Executive Secretary

Javier Medina Vásquez
Deputy Executive Secretary a.i.

Cielo Morales
Chief, Latin American and Caribbean Institute
for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES)

Sally Shaw
Chief, Documents and Publications Division

This manual was prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), drafted by the following staff members of the Commission: Paulina Pizarro, Bárbara Silva and Valeria Torres of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES); Mareike Eberz, Office of the Executive Secretary; Humberto Soto, of the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico; and Pauline Stockins and Daniel Taccari of the Statistics Division. Lana Basneen and Carol Pollack of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations provided substantive inputs.

The following experts made valuable comments and suggestions at a virtual meeting held on 31 January 2024 which greatly enriched the final version of this manual: Norma García of the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Honduras; Reina Zavala, Consultant (Honduras); Miguel Calderón, Elizabeth Lara and Karina Morales of the Government of the State of Puebla, Mexico; Jessica Ibarra, former official of the Government of the City of Mexico; Jorge Avilés and Jessica May of the Government of the State of Yucatán, Mexico; César Aspiros and Diana Lazcano of the Government of the State of Querétaro, Mexico; Luciana Cabrera, Pablo Leyes, Florencia Machado and Rodrigo Márquez of the Government of Canelones, Uruguay; and Sofía Aldorino of the Government of the City of San Justo, Argentina. The text also draws on discussions held with professionals belonging to the Latin American and Caribbean Development Planning Network on approaches for promoting more sustainable forms of territorial development in the countries of the region within the framework of the "Resilient and Inclusive Public Management Systems for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean" Development Account project.

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Foreword

Just six years away from the date set for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, progress towards that objective has been hindered by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic which battered the world in 2020 and which, in Latin America and the Caribbean, caused 32.1% of all the COVID-19 deaths reported in the world up to August 2021. The pandemic was, moreover, just one in a series of crises around the world that have slowed progress towards the Goals, including the ever-worsening impacts of climate change, the conflict in Ukraine, trade tensions and geopolitical conflicts, forced migrations and the resurgence of inflation.

As a result, the countries of the region find themselves ensnared in three different traps. The first is a low-growth trap. In the 10 years that passed between the start of 2014 and the end of 2023, the region averaged an annual economic growth rate of just 0.8%, which is far less than was seen even in what has come to be known as the “lost decade” of the 1980s, when it grew by an average of 2.0%. The consequences of this meagre growth have been intensified by the rapidly unfolding effects of climate change, which include more devastating storms, heatwaves, floods, and the impact of El Niño. The second and well-known high inequality trap, which is a long-standing trait of the region, has numerous manifestations, including gender and income inequality and inequality of opportunity. The third trap, that of weak institutional capacity and governance, undermines public confidence and the citizenry’s relations with State organizations and diminishes the ability of the region’s States to take the steps that are needed to further the development process. This weakness, which diminishes the region’s ability to speed up its growth and reduce existing inequalities, is aggravated by the expansion of organized crime and drug trafficking and by political polarization, which impedes dialogue and hampers efforts to forge social compacts. All of this erodes democracy, and all of these factors hold back progress towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. As a result, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates that the region is on track to achieve no more than 22% of the Sustainable Development Goal targets by 2030.

There is reason for hope, however. The States represented at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in September 2023, which marked the midpoint of the path to 2030, adopted an ambitious political declaration that plots out a road map for getting the world back on track to achieve the Goals. In that declaration, the Member States made a commitment to undertake bold, swift, just and transformative action in specific fields of activity aimed at reforming the international financial architecture and building capacity for compiling the necessary information on the headway being made towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda calls for the design of comprehensive public policies that will bring all social stakeholders together to build a desirable future, to plot out the way forward and to shape the dialogue and participatory processes required to achieve that future.

Within this framework, rural and urban territories constitute strategic spheres of action for achieving sustainable development, and the leaders of subnational governments can help to provide the momentum and drive needed to speed progress towards the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. The growing interest of local and subnational governments in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in monitoring progress in that respect comes as no surprise in Latin America and the Caribbean (one of the most highly urbanized regions in the world, where over 80% of the population lives in cities), and that interest is reflected in their readiness to undertake voluntary local reviews. Major cities’ move to territorialize the 2030 Agenda has been embraced by midsized and smaller urban and rural territories,



which are now also carrying out voluntary local reviews and using them as an innovative tool for aligning their plans with national development plans with a view to speeding up progress towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

In the eight years that have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, there have been a significant number of initiatives for its territorialization. These efforts have included the use of institutional frameworks for linking up planning tools with the Sustainable Development Goal targets, information activities, dialogues and training events, and work on follow-up and evaluation. These initiatives have contributed to the development of inclusive, participatory policies at the various levels of the State that are aligned with sustainable development priorities.

Although the Sustainable Development Goals are global in scope, their achievement will hinge on the world's ability to make their attainment a reality at the territorial level. ECLAC is committed to strengthening subnational governments' capacities for formulating and improving the quality of their voluntary local reviews as crucially important tools for the further territorialization of the Goals. This manual is designed for use by all mid-sized and local subnational agencies tasked with carrying out these reviews in cooperation with various other stakeholders. Its purpose is to provide guidance that will facilitate the voluntary local review process. To that end, it presents a number of basic guidelines embodying best practices at the regional and international levels that are suited to the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It will take an unprecedented level of collective action in order to make the vision set forth in the 2030 Agenda a reality, and the subnational and local governments of the region will need to play a part in the regional cooperation required to make more rapid headway towards the Goals. Only by means of joint action can we create a world in which no one is left behind and in which everyone can achieve their true potential and shape a just, inclusive, productive and sustainable future for all.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs
Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for
Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the 193 States Members of the United Nations represented at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda held in September 2015 provides “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future”.



The 17 Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda provide a historic opportunity for the Latin American and Caribbean region, as they encompass the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and focus on high-priority issues for the region, such as the eradication of extreme poverty, the reduction of inequality in all its forms, inclusive economic growth with decent work for all, sustainable cities and the mitigation of climate change, among others.

Unfortunately, a series of cascading and interlinked crises are putting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in danger in every corner of the globe. As the date set for the attainment of the Goals approaches, the world is much further back on the path to sustainable development than it should be, and the Latin American and Caribbean region is no exception.

The extrapolation of current trends¹ for the region points to positive outcomes for the region by 2030 for fewer than one fourth of the targets for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. All the other trends indicate that public policies need to be swiftly put in place in order to turn the indicators around by stepping up the pace of progress in some cases and by reversing negative trends in others.

¹ For updated information, see “SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: statistical knowledge management hub”. [online] <https://agendaz030lac.org/estadisticas/regional-progress-sdg-targets.html>.



Figure 1
Latin America and the Caribbean: Sustainable Development Goal targets, by likelihood of achievement
by 2030 and percentages of targets analysed for each Goal

Goal	Targets																		
Goal 1				1.1	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.a	1.b									
Goal 2				2.1	2.4	2.a	2.2	2.5	2.c	2.b	2.3								
Goal 3		3.4	3.8	3.b	3.d	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.9	3.c						
Goal 4				4.1	4.b	4.2	4.6	4.a	4.c	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.7						
Goal 5						5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.b	5.c	5.1	5.6	5.a					
Goal 6		6.4	6.6	6.b	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.5	6.a										
Goal 7				7.a	7.1	7.3	7.2	7.b											
Goal 8		8.4	8.5	8.a	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.6	8.7	8.10	8.8	8.9	8.b						
Goal 9			9.1	9.2	9.5	9.a	9.4	9.b	9.c	9.3									
Goal 10		10.5	10.7	10.b	10.2	10.4	10.6	10.a	10.c	10.1	10.3								
Goal 11						11.1	11.5	11.6	11.2	11.3	11.4	11.7	11.a	11.b	11.c				
Goal 12	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.b	12.c	12.5	12.1	12.6	12.a	12.7	12.8								
Goal 13				13.2	13.3	13.1	13.a	13.b											
Goal 14				14.1	14.a	14.2	14.7	14.b	14.5	14.6	14.3	14.4	14.c						
Goal 15				15	15.5	15.1	15.4	15.8	15.2	15.6	15.a	15.b	15.7	15.9	15.c				
Goal 16			16.3	16.6	16.10	16.1	16.2	16.5	16.8	16.a	16.4	16.7	16.9	16.b					
Goal 17	17.1	17.10	17.11	17.13	17.17	17.4	17.7	17.12	17.8	17.3	17.6	17.8	17.9	17.19	17.2	17.5	17.14	17.15	17.16

- The trend is moving away from the target
- The trend is heading in the right direction, but progress is too slow for the target to be met
- The target has been reached or is likely to be reached
- Insufficient data

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The results reveal differing levels of performance from one Goal to the next and among the various targets subsumed under each Goal. The Goals for which the projections show the greatest likelihood of achievement are Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy), Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) and Goal 15 (Life on land). The Goals for which there is the least likelihood of achievement are Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and Goal 13 (Climate action).

Progress is being made towards Goal 1 (End poverty), Goal 2 (Zero hunger), Goal 4 (Quality education), Goal 5 (Gender equality), Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation), Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Goal 10 (Reduce inequality), Goal 11 (Sustained cities and human settlements) and Goal 16 (Peace, justice and sound institutions), but projections indicate that it is not being made swiftly enough to actually achieve them.

The reasons why the region is not on track to achieve these Goals include structural gaps and limited institutional capacity for implementing the policies and programmes needed to rectify those shortcomings. The effects of these structural gaps have been compounded by a series of crises such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and geopolitical conflicts that have had a negative impact in such areas as food and nutrition, health, education, the environment, and peace and security.

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1):

“Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities...” (paragraph 45).

“We also encourage Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels which are country-led and country-driven” (paragraph 79).

Despite the obstacles facing the region and the setbacks it has experienced, the countries are deeply committed to advancing the 2030 Agenda, and their commitment has been reflected in their efforts in various fields. The countries of the region have taken ownership of the Goals as a State commitment and have pursued them in close cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society, youth, the private sector, academia, local authorities, parliamentarians and many others. The multi-actor, multisectoral approach required to attain the Goals is helping to overcome the silo mentality and make their attainment possible. Major strides in strengthening the institutional framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda have included the integration of the Goals into national development plans and the designation of existing institutions or the creation of new ones to further the Agenda.

Between 2016 and 2023, 32² of the 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries have reported on their progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national agenda by submitting voluntary national reviews to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The nearly 60 voluntary national reviews submitted by the countries of the region to date constitute a repository of information, knowledge, good practices and lessons learned along the road to 2030.

Voluntary national reviews have been evolving into a tool for analysing complex national realities. Increasingly, voluntary national reviews are examining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole, integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, including a specific section on the pledge to leave no one behind, facilitating decision-making and follow-up to public policies, and proposing specific, comprehensive solutions for surmounting challenges identified in previous reports.

In a number of cases, voluntary national reviews have also become catalysts for the implementation of the Goals at the national level and have reinforced coordination among the various government ministries and society as a whole, as well as among different levels of government, while highlighting the particular importance of taking action at the local level.

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the crucial role of local authorities and communities in achieving these global objectives. Local and regional governments are at the core of the 2030 Agenda and have a key role to play in its fulfilment. Their responsibilities touch upon most of the Goals’ targets and indicators, and this is especially true of their role in delivering basic services.

The cities thus have an exceedingly important role to play. With four out of every five members of its population living in cities, the Latin American and Caribbean region is one of the most highly urbanized regions in the world, and the sustainable development of its urban centres is therefore of critical importance.

² Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.



It thus comes as no surprise that local and subnational governments whose jurisdictions include the cities of the region are showing a growing interest in supporting the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in preparing voluntary local reviews.

At least a third of the Latin American countries have drawn up voluntary local reviews, and many of those reviews have been prepared by individual cities. Nor are these efforts confined to capitals and major cities; to an ever-increasing extent, smaller cities, provinces and districts, even in rural areas, are also preparing these reports.

Thus, voluntary local reviews have become an innovative tool for helping to tie in national development plans and the Goals with territorial priorities. These reviews are supplementing national efforts to further the 2030 Agenda, facilitating dialogue between different levels of government and laying the groundwork for the formulation of more integrated, coherent and coordinated policies. Voluntary local reviews incorporate local data that paint a fuller picture of the implementation of the Goals and the challenges, including geographic inequalities, that are being encountered.

Although voluntary local reviews do not have the same official status as voluntary national reviews do, they have garnered increasing recognition at the global and regional levels, including at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit of 2023, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

The political declaration approved at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit of 2023 reiterates the countries' commitment to achieving the Goals and underscores the importance of local partnerships for sustainable development and the localization of the Goals: "We commit to enhancing global, regional, national and local partnerships for sustainable development, engaging all relevant stakeholders ..., recognizing the important contribution they can make towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the localization of the SDGs." (paragraph 23) "We will further localize the SDGs and advance integrated planning and implementation at the local level." (paragraph 38).

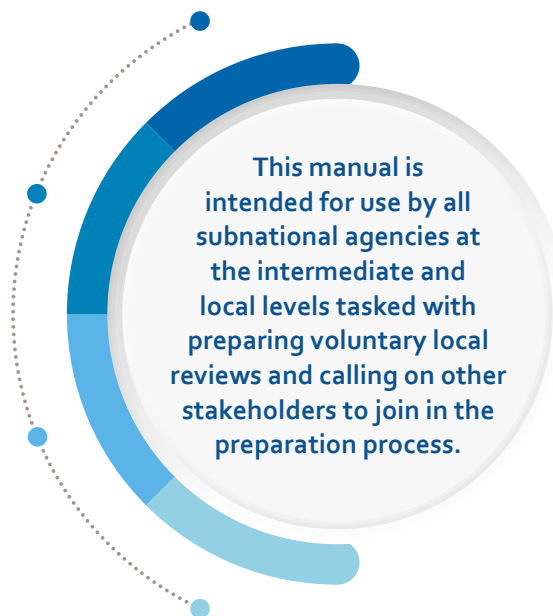
At the Summit, the United Nations development system submitted a set of 12 high-impact initiatives for demonstrating that transformative progress is possible despite the difficult circumstances existing around the world. One of those initiatives is the Local 2030 Coalition, which seeks to localize the Goals with the help of a wide array of stakeholders, ranging from local and subnational governments to the private sector and other local actors. By pooling the localization efforts of the entire United Nations system, the Coalition is working to empower local and subnational governments and other local actors by setting up regional and local problem-solving centres and providing technical support and advisory services. At that same Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General established the 20-member Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments to provide recommendations, to serve as a mechanism for the compilation of information from stakeholders at the subnational level and to improve coordination and collaboration among cities, regions, nations and international processes.

With so little time left to fulfil the vision of the 2030 Agenda, an unprecedented level of concerted action will be called for. Global and regional cooperation must be expanded and the commitment of all stakeholders must be deepened as a matter of urgency in order to find lasting solutions. Although the Goals are global in nature, their achievement will depend on the ability of territorial actors, including towns, cities and regions, to make them a reality at the local and subnational levels.

In order to reach the targets associated with each of the Goals, all stakeholders must have it very clear in their minds that the time for cooperation is now. Only through an integrated, inclusive and coherent form of cooperation can all stakeholders pool their efforts so that the sum of their efforts will be greater than its parts. Collaboration is needed to create an environment in which no one is left behind, in which all people are able to develop their true potential and thereby shape a just and sustainable future for all.

I. Objectives of this manual

- To provide basic, globally agreed yet regionally appropriate guidelines for the preparation of voluntary local reviews
- To support local governments' efforts to territorialize the 2030 Agenda based on the preparation of voluntary local reviews incorporating best practices at the regional and global levels
- To share lessons learned from the voluntary local review preparation process in the region



II. What are voluntary local reviews?

Voluntary local reviews are documents drawn up on a voluntary basis by subnational governments that review the implementation status of the Sustainable Development Goals in their territories.

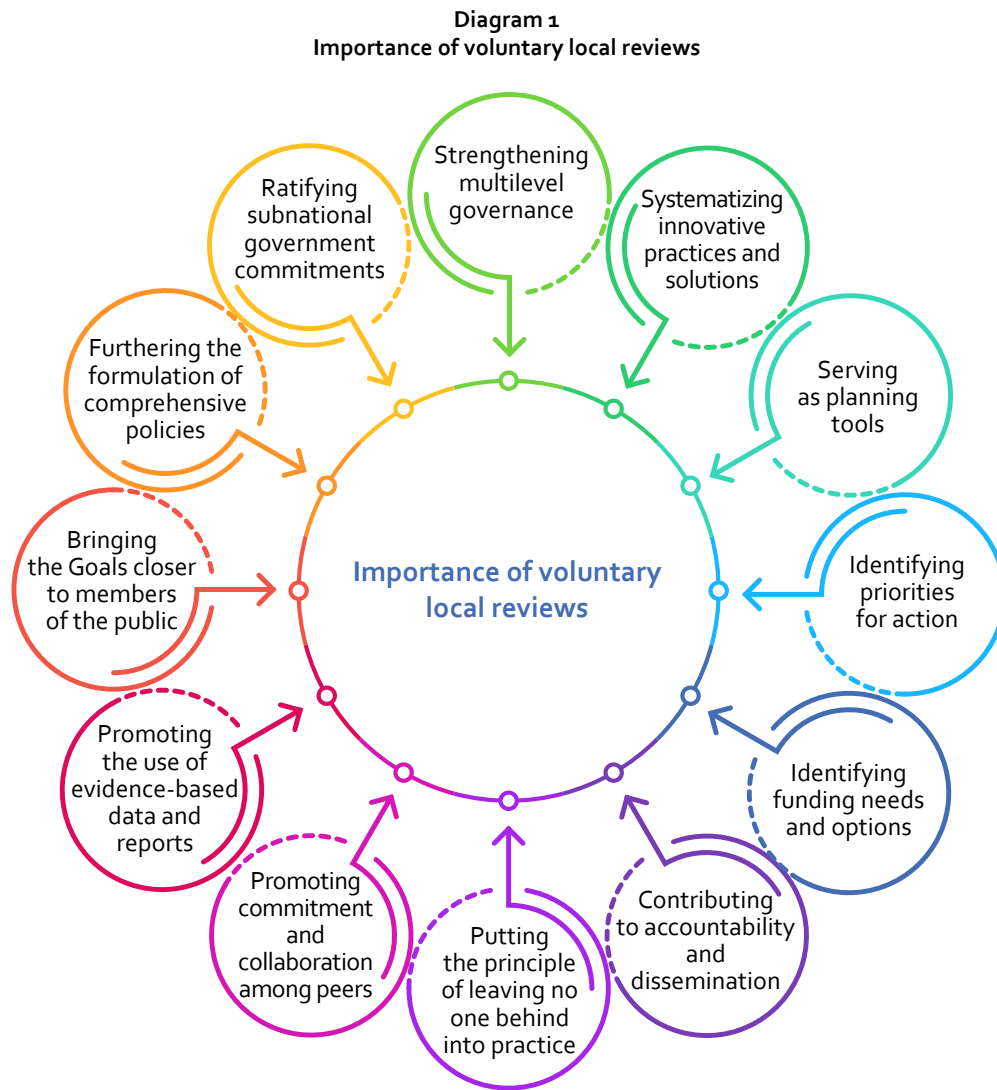
In general terms, they follow the established model for voluntary national reviews but with the necessary adjustments to take subnational factors into consideration.

Just as in the case of voluntary national reviews, the preparation of voluntary local reviews provides an opportunity for stakeholders to work together to analyse the progress made in furthering the sustainable development process at the local level and the main challenges faced in that regard. They also serve to identify priorities for the localization of specific actions for accelerating progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the near future.



III. Importance of voluntary local reviews

Voluntary local reviews serve many different purposes:



Source: Prepared by the authors.

- **Ratifying subnational government commitments for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.** The preparation of voluntary local reviews provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to address the global commitments entered into by the countries of the region. Voluntary local reviews can be used as inputs by each country in the preparation of the voluntary national review that it will use to provide an accounting of its efforts at global and regional meetings such as the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.
- **Promoting the formulation of comprehensive policies** that call for closer coordination among government offices and agencies. They may also provide an opportunity for undertaking internal reviews of existing institutional structures and exploring potential adjustments in that regard. Voluntary local reviews have evolved into a tool for linking up

the many different challenges involved in the territories' development within the shared framework of the 2030 Agenda, which can contribute to the establishment of clear-cut objectives, targets and indicators.

- **Helping to familiarize the general public with the Goals and providing opportunities for a participatory, inclusive analysis of the situation and the challenges faced in each territory.** The preparation of voluntary local reviews provides a way of opening up the process for the participation of different groups within the population and strengthening the dialogue with the general public based on a development strategy expressed in the shared language of the Goals, which calls upon all stakeholders to work together to ensure that no one is left behind.
- **Promoting the use of data and descriptive analyses** that serve as a basis for well-informed diagnostic studies on challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the Goals and decision-making that takes the territorial perspective into account in the detection of geographic inequalities. In some cases, these actions have given rise to the implementation of local statistical monitoring platforms.
- **Promoting a stronger commitment to working with different stakeholders.** The preparation of voluntary local reviews helps to build capacity and promote multi-stakeholder collaboration on the part of the technical staff of subnational governments. It can also lead to the formation of cross-disciplinary working groups within government agencies and the engagement of various actors in the establishment of working relationships with networks of peers at the national and international levels.
- **Increasing the opportunities, or providing the first opportunity, to hear the voices of marginalized persons,** which will help to ensure that no one is left behind.
- **Serving as a mechanism for strengthening multilevel governance** by prompting efforts to ensure public policy coherence. The preparation of voluntary local reviews leads to a more active dialogue among the different levels of government, which in turn facilitates greater coordination between national and subnational policies. This may even result in such policies being scaled up to regional and global levels.
- **Serving as a channel for systematizing and disseminating relevant experiences** and innovative solutions from which others can learn and can then replicate in other, similar contexts.
- **Serving as a planning tool** by setting the stage for future commitments which can then be integrated with other actors' planning instruments, such as development plans, land use plans and other policies, programmes and projects.
- **Providing an opportunity for setting priorities** and taking future action to further the territorialization of the Goals at the subnational level.
- **Permitting the identification of funding needs and options** for the implementation of action leading towards the Goals at the territorial level.
- **Serving as a useful tool for promoting accountability and disseminating the actions taken.** The information that is compiled and systematized in these voluntary local reviews is not only the product of efforts to gather data, analyse those data and provide an accounting; it is also useful in pinpointing areas where progress is lagging and to prioritize public actions and involvement.

IV. Latin America and the Caribbean: voluntary local reviews in the region

A desk survey of the voluntary local reviews produced in the region³ indicates that three types of subnational governments are preparing subnational reports. First, there are regional or intermediate-level governments, which, depending on the country, are called provinces, States or departments; 24 reports

³ Survey of 85 voluntary local reviews in 67 localities in 11 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay). These voluntary local reviews include those prepared by intermediate and local governments.



from five countries fall into this category.⁴ A second group is made up of city governments. These densely populated territories may encompass one or more municipalities; 21 cities in eight countries have prepared voluntary local reviews.⁵ The third and final group of territorial entities are municipalities, which are smaller in terms of both their area and their populations; the survey indicates that 21 municipalities in five countries have prepared voluntary local reviews⁶ (see map 1).

Map 1
Intermediate subnational governments, city governments and municipalities with voluntary local reviews



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of voluntary local reviews.
Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

⁴ Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico.
⁵ Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.
⁶ Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Paraguay.

This practice is being adopted by a wide range of territorial entities in Latin America and the Caribbean, from municipalities with approximately 10,000 inhabitants, such as Vicuña Mackena in the Province of Córdoba, Argentina, to the State of São Paulo, with a population of some 44 million. The voluntary local reviews prepared thus far in the region cover a combined territory having a population of nearly 165 million people, which is almost 25% of the total population of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Because these reports are updated on an ongoing basis, they are also being used as a planning tool and an accountability mechanism. In the first of these regards, some countries have drawn up manuals for use nationwide in the preparation of voluntary local reviews by their territorial entities and, in those manuals, they explain that the information compiled for these types of reviews will facilitate planning exercises and policy or development plan implementation. For example, in Colombia, the National Planning Department furnishes a toolkit for facilitating the integration of the Goals into territorial development plans. As for the use of voluntary local reviews as accountability mechanisms, 12 localities in five countries have drawn up voluntary local reviews on more than one occasion. An example in point is the City of Buenos Aires, which has prepared a review every year since 2019 of the progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The following guidelines for the drafting of voluntary local reviews are based on the challenges encountered in the past, best practices and lessons learned in the course of the preparation of existing voluntary local reviews.

V. The process: conducting a voluntary local review

The preparation of a voluntary local review is a multi-step process. Those steps, some of which are essential while others are optional, can be structured in phases. A **first phase** consists of the preliminary preparations: delimitation of objectives; institutional arrangements (responsibilities, roles and functions); definition of guiding principles; determining how the Goals tie in with subnational plans; identification of priorities in order to delimit the scope of the review; identification of the actors that will take part in the process and the persons who can provide the necessary information; and, where necessary, the organization of awareness-raising sessions for those concerned.

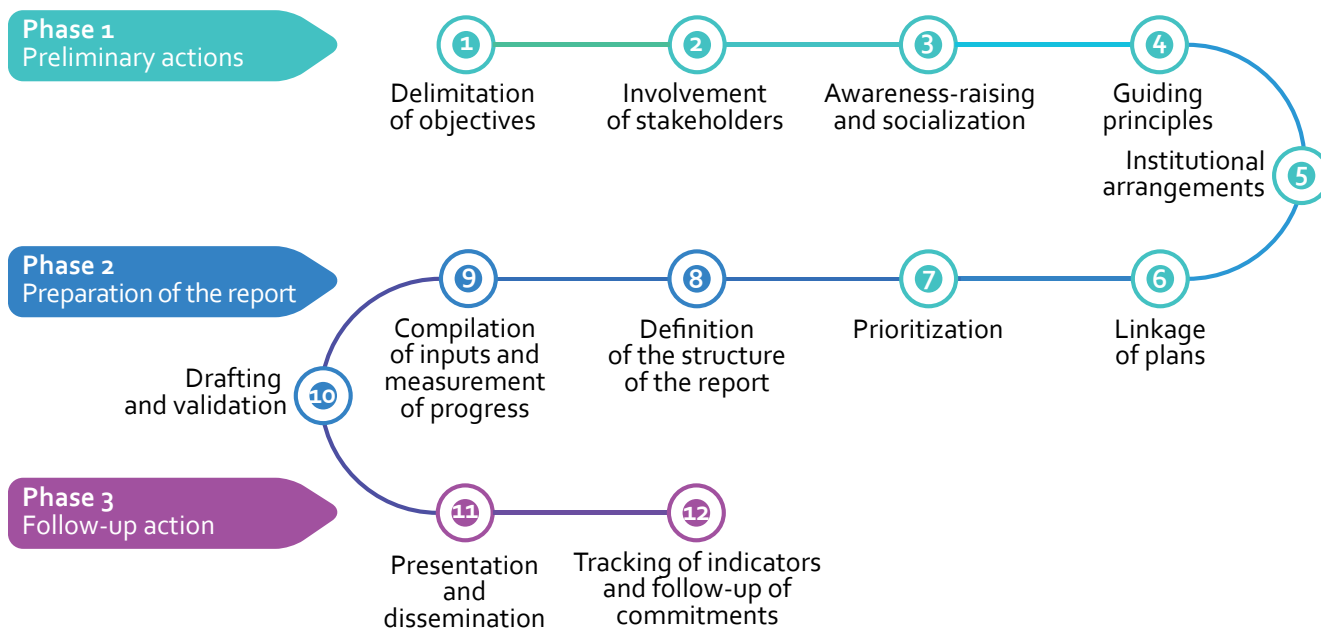
In a **second phase**, when the participants get down to work, a preliminary outline of the review is prepared, the road map for its formulation is plotted out, and work begins on compiling the relevant statistics and indicators and on drafting the narrative sections. The participating actors draw on inter-agency information flows to identify the overarching lines of action, challenges to be surmounted and opportunities to be seized in order to make headway towards the Goals. By the time this phase is completed, a version of the review will have been produced that is ready to socialize with stakeholders in order to validate its messages, including the conclusions and “next steps” section. The objective is to end up with a document that is ready to publish.

The **third and final phase** is a busy one because the process and the outcome of voluntary local reviews are leveraged through the presentation, dissemination, monitoring and evaluation of the contents of the document with a view to the initiation of actions forming part of a continuous process that will speed progress towards the Goals.

It is important to ensure that, throughout all the different phases, the process is open to the involvement of different governmental and non-governmental actors and to the possibility of forging links with other subnational governments that have already gone through the process of preparing a voluntary local review so that team learning can take place.



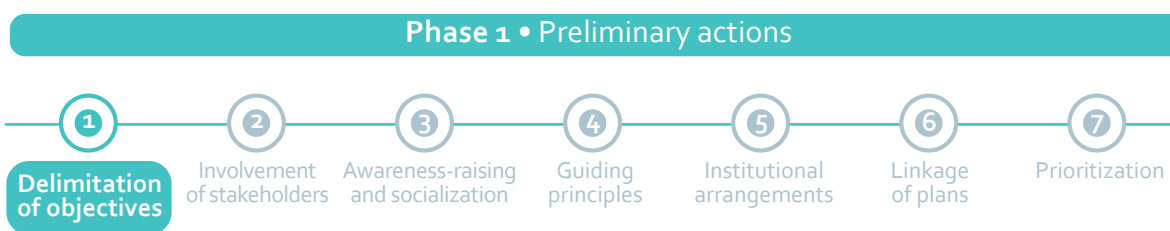
Diagram 2
Phases involved in the preparation of a voluntary local review



Source: Prepared by the authors.

A number of specific courses of action will be outlined below that may serve as guideposts for the implementation of the phases described above. These lines of action are based on the voluntary local review structure that has been employed by local governments either on their own or on the basis of manuals such as this.

Each of the proposed actions for these three phases is a suggested course of action, but the various steps outlined for each of the phases need not necessarily be taken in sequence, since different iterations may be undertaken at different points in time.



1. Delimitation of objectives

The preparation of a voluntary local review, as mentioned in section III, provides an opportunity for the relevant subnational entity to achieve various objectives. Those objectives should be delimited in order to focus the preparation and production of the review as effectively as possible.

Some subnational governments place priority on giving an account of what has been done. This is especially the case if they have conducted reviews before. Others may focus on the integration of planning tools as a means of increasing policy coherence or on pooling efforts to compile information and set up monitoring platforms. Voluntary local reviews are a useful, multipurpose tool, and each subnational entity will define its own priorities based on its specific needs and realities.

➔ A worksheet on the delimitation of objectives is provided in annex A1.



2. Involvement of stakeholders

Voluntary local reviews also provide an opportunity for identifying other stakeholders that should join in the process, both those that are already committed and those with which a closer relationship needs to be formed in order to encourage them to become involved. As mentioned earlier, one of the challenges to be overcome is the low level of participation by non-governmental actors. This is, in large part, a consequence of the general public's lack of ownership and unfamiliarity with the Goals. Further steps therefore need to be taken to socialize the Goals and make the general public aware of their importance. A commitment to the Goals on the part of the private sector, academia, non-profits and the public at large needs to be fostered and encouraged.

While this section is devoted to the involvement of all relevant actors, engagement is a factor that needs to be considered in all phases of the process. Care must also be taken to ensure that all stakeholders are represented and to remain mindful, at all times, of the principle of leaving no one behind. In line with that principle, consideration must be given to numerous other groups, in addition to civil society organizations, academia and the private sector, such as Indigenous Peoples.

➔ A worksheet on the involvement of stakeholders is provided in annex A2.

Box 1

A multilevel undertaking involving a wide range of actors: Córdoba, Argentina

The Ministry of Coordination of the Province of Córdoba is the focal point for the 2030 Agenda and has assumed responsibility for ensuring its implementation under an agreement signed with the National Public Policies Coordination Council, the lead agency for the Agenda in Argentina. Even though responsibility for following up on the Agenda is assigned to a particular ministry, the Province of Córdoba promotes multilevel governance as a shared undertaking by all relevant actors. For each of the four strategic areas prioritized by the Province, it specifies not only the main programmes and associated projects, but also the horizontal and vertical stakeholders and those in various sectors (academia, the private sector, civil society organizations). In addition to the actors in each strategic area, the Province also describes the multilevel, multiple-actor governance mechanisms that are in place and the importance of their role in the localization of the Goals.

Multilevel mechanisms for coordination with the national level are used by the SDG Federal Network, the Social Participation Forum and other entities to forge links with the private sector. Provincial officials sit on various federal councils and work with local (municipal and communal) governments, mainly through the Provincial-Municipal Desk, to address local and regional issues. The Province enters into voluntary cooperation agreements with groups of municipalities for the joint development of plans for localizing the Goals on the basis of an open government paradigm involving the participation of civil society, academia and other territorial actors.

Intersectoral (horizontal coordination) mechanisms of the Province of Córdoba include the Inter-Agency SDG Panel, in-house provincial councils and sectoral provincial offices. Horizontal coordination with external entities is conducted through various subnational regional integration forums. Coordinated efforts are undertaken with stakeholders in the private sector, academia and civil society through public-private agencies, sector-specific clusters of companies and institutions, liaison offices and provincial councils, which promote the participation of interest groups in different spheres of public policy.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Córdoba Province, *Informe voluntario local: Córdoba*, 2023, [online] https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/08/cordoba_2023_es.pdf.





3. Awareness-raising and socialization

Not everyone knows about the Goals. Efforts therefore need to continue to be made to promote their socialization, to raise awareness about them,⁷ to provide relevant training⁸ concerning their importance and to convey the message that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is something that all sectors and all persons need to work towards. These efforts need to be pursued on an ongoing basis both internally and externally. If a local government wishes to raise public awareness about the Goals, then that government's officials first need to be fully informed about everything related to the 2030 Agenda and the voluntary local review preparation process.

Awareness-raising and training are necessary tools for encouraging other actors to join in the effort and to leverage their participation. In order for people to become involved in a participatory process such as this, they need to be interested in the relevant issues and to be aware of how important they are. They also need to have enough information and know-how in order to be able to take part in an effective manner on an equal footing with other participants (Williner and Tognoli, 2023).

Subnational bodies have a number of formats to choose from for their awareness-raising and socialization efforts. They may use their webpages for this purpose, hold in-person gatherings for the specific purpose of providing information about voluntary local reviews, or they may use other meetings or events attended by local officials as an opportunity for informing the persons in attendance about the voluntary local review preparation process.



A worksheet on awareness-raising, socialization and training is provided in annex A3.

Box 2

Building officials' technical capacity: State of Yucatán, Mexico

One of the problems that local governments may encounter as they conduct voluntary local reviews is a lack of sufficient technical capacity and know-how. In order to provide support for this process, the State of Yucatán developed a manual on the preparation of voluntary local reviews for the municipalities of the State of Yucatán. This manual summarizes the contents of a manual on the development of voluntary local reviews prepared by the national government. At a later date, training was provided to planning officials of municipal governments in Yucatán interested in carrying out such reviews.

One of the issues that territories need assistance from national agencies to resolve is the issue of indicators. In order to provide the necessary support, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) and the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) have provided recommendations concerning indicators that can be disaggregated at the municipal level which will be useful in calculating baselines and measuring the progress made by the municipalities of Yucatán.

⁷ Awareness-raising campaigns can employ various channels of communication, both physical (public spaces and places open to the public, schools, neighbourhood associations, public entertainment venues) and virtual (radio, television, social networks) in nature and usually target the general public (A. Williner and J. Tognoli, "Guía para el diseño de estrategias de resiliencia territorial frente a desastres socionaturales", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2023/191), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2023, p. 37).

⁸ Training for local stakeholders is generally tailored for a specific group of them, since the training is designed to provide theoretical and/or practical tools to key actors that will take part in the different stages involved in managing community initiatives. Consequently, the trainees need to acquire certain types of knowledge in order to carry out their assigned activities successfully. Trainers may be local instructors or may be brought in from outside the community (Williner and Tognoli, 2023, p. 37).

At a later date, the checklist provided on page 13 of the manual for municipalities was used in organizing virtual weekly follow-up meetings and in-person visits to each of the municipal liaisons (municipal planning officials) to provide advisory services and feedback at every stage along the way to the production of the final document.

The key actors involved in this process were:

- The Technical Secretariat for Planning and Evaluation of the Government of the State of Yucatán (mailing out invitations to municipal council presidents to conduct their voluntary local reviews and coordinating with municipal liaisons to assist them in preparing these reviews)
- The Regional and Municipal Development Institute of the Government of the State of Yucatán (support for the dissemination and reinforcement of the message for the presidents of municipal councils)
- Municipal governments (designation of the municipal liaison tasked with preparing the voluntary local review)
- The Biocultural Inter-Municipal Board of Puuc (JIBIOPUUC) (specialized support for the preparation of voluntary local reviews by Muna, Oxkutzcab and Tzucacab)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of information provided at a workshop for officials and consultants responsible for preparing voluntary local reviews. For further information, contact the [Technical Secretariat for Planning and Evaluation](#).



4. Guiding principles: policy coherence, participation, a rights-based approach, sustainability and the creation of public value

The adaptation and prioritization of the Goals are necessary steps for their proper implementation at the territorial level. Voluntary local reviews need to adhere to certain cross-cutting guiding principles in this connection.

The concept of **public policy coherence** refers to the fact that all components of public policy—starting from the project planning and territorial intervention stages and continuing on through to long-term planning/direction-setting instruments such as national development plans and sectoral development strategies— should be formulated in keeping with one another and in line with the Goals as a guide. Subnational governments should review how their different policies, plans and projects line up with major national policies and plans with a view to identifying complementarities, checking that they form a coherent whole and detecting any duplications or overlaps that may exist.

In addition, **participatory processes** should be promoted at all levels, including informational, consultative, decision-making and co-management processes, and opportunities for both ad hoc and ongoing participation should be designed in order to motivate all civil society actors. The groupings or structures organized for the preparation of voluntary local reviews should be replicated for the development of other planning processes and instruments.

The declaration made in the 2030 Agenda embodies a **rights-based approach** according to which the quest for sustainable development is only possible by means of economic, social and environmental systems that uphold fundamental rights. This means that voluntary local reviews must take into account the situation of vulnerable groups, which should in all cases be the central focus of territorial actions.

The **creation of public value** has also become an essential element of this new approach to public management. The creation of public value through results-based management helps to overcome the problems that are holding back the development process, such as corruption and the unsuitable distribution



of income, and to promote innovative mechanisms that will boost growth and trust in public institutions. Voluntary local reviews are an ideal platform for encouraging and publicizing good practices that can then be adapted by others.

Ever since the issuance of the Brundtland Report, sustainable development has been the path followed by humankind in seeking to recapture the balances that have enabled the inhabitants of this planet to survive. The concept of **sustainability** has evolved from a narrow focus on the need to support ecological systems into a broader concept that encompasses the incorporation of sustainable consumption patterns. Voluntary local reviews can highlight sustainable practices that will speed up progress towards the Goals and promote sustainability at various jurisdictional levels.



A worksheet on guiding principles is provided in annex A4.

Box 3 Policy coherence: Jamaica

Jamaica has integrated its long-term national planning instruments with the Goals in its Vision 2030 Jamaica. This enables the country's ministries, departments and agencies to implement the Goals by aligning their corporate and operational plans with the national development plan. The country's local sustainable development plans are in step with the Vision 2030 Jamaica, and local governance mechanisms embedded in municipal corporations and the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development oversee their implementation. The Vision 2030 Jamaica thus promotes policy coherence by ensuring that the Goals and the country's long-term national objectives permeate its multilevel and multisectoral planning apparatus.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Government of Jamaica, "Vision 2030 Jamaica" [online] <https://www.vision2030.gov.jm/>.



5. Institutional arrangements

From the moment that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted, the involvement of local governments and other stakeholders became imperative in order for the 17 Goals to be achieved. The Agenda represents a technical and political consensus and, as such, has to be applied at the territorial level. This political commitment, made at the highest possible level, is the first step towards incorporating the 2030 Agenda into the entire public administration cycle and having public authorities engage the entire population and each nation's institutions in this undertaking.

The 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have set up a mechanism to coordinate efforts to fulfil the 2030 Agenda and to track the progress made towards that objective. The advances made in that direction have been documented year after year by the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. The regional map⁹ reflects the desire of the countries of the region to have a governmental institutional framework for monitoring the work being done to fulfil the commitments that were assumed upon the adoption of the Goals.

⁹ See [online] <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/en/sdgs>.

This generally multisectoral, multi-actor institutional framework needs to be replicated at the territorial level. It is therefore recommended that subnational bodies be established that can rally different territorial actors and maintain a dialogue with centralized mechanisms around national priorities and the progress made at the national level.

Voluntary local reviews should therefore tie in with voluntary national reviews and generate synergies between the two instruments. In other words, the two instruments should have similar structures and use similar indicators. Monitoring mechanisms also need to be identified that will strengthen partnerships at all levels (among territorial actors, between different levels of government and between different global entities). Further commitments also need to be entered into in order to speed up progress towards the achievement of the Goals, particularly in areas that have been identified as national and subnational priorities. The existence of national planning systems that have multilevel coordination mechanisms and the involvement of local technical planning and management offices in the preparation of voluntary local reviews will help to ensure greater coherence among the planning tools and reports of the different levels of government.

In countries with federal systems, because of their size, it will probably be necessary to replicate national institutional arrangements at subnational levels and to ensure the representation of multiple stakeholders and sectors within that framework. In addition to being responsible for implementing the Goals and tracking the advances made in that direction, those bodies also contribute to the voluntary national review preparation process.

In some countries, the preparation of voluntary national reviews is not the exclusive responsibility of the institutional mechanism tasked with the implementation and monitoring of the Agenda. In some cases in the Caribbean, committees composed of various governmental and non-governmental actors have been created specifically to prepare voluntary national reviews. In Dominica, for example, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development, Climate Resilience and Social Security is in charge of implementing the Goals, but a special committee has been set up to provide strategic guidance for the preparation and review of the country's voluntary national reviews. This committee is composed of representatives of the public and private sectors, civil society organizations and United Nations bodies.

At the local level, responsibility for the Agenda's implementation is mainly borne by the local authority. However, the creation of special committees not only allows for the involvement and commitment of more actors and sectors, which is essential if the 2030 Agenda is to be fulfilled, but also helps to ensure the continuity of commitments and actions aimed at attaining those Goals.

In line with the foregoing, it is suggested that the governance of the Goals be institutionalized at the subnational level or at least that a **multidisciplinary team** be organized to work with the authority responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level. That body can then examine similar experiences with a view to the early identification of possible obstacles that could hinder the preparation of voluntary local reviews, such as a lack of inputs for the report, a lack of knowledge about the 2030 Agenda at the subnational level, and a shortage of human and/or financial resources. An effort should also be made to identify agencies or organizations that could contribute to the process, such as international cooperation agencies, United Nations bodies or other peer groups that have experience in preparing voluntary local reviews. United Nations agencies can help to put different groups in contact with one another and to bring together multiple stakeholders.



A worksheet on institutional arrangements is provided in annex A5.



Box 4**Forming a team to work on the Goals: Filadelfia, Paraguay**

The municipality of Filadelfia was the first local entity in Paraguay to prepare a voluntary local review. It was drawn up by a technical team created specifically for that purpose. The team was made up of representatives of three offices of the municipal government that are responsible for the key areas of finances, education and social development. The work was divided into three stages: initial preparation and organization; information gathering and processing; and the finalization of the survey itself.

The municipality made a concerted effort to show how municipal policies fed into national policies and to detail what impact sectoral programmes had on the municipality. It is advisable for voluntary local reviews to explain how subnational levels contribute to national policies or plans and what impact those policies and plans have on the territory in question.

The team also provided an in-depth analysis of different stakeholders and of how they related to the Goals. The voluntary local review that it prepared provides a brief description of each of the main actors in the local government, civil society and international cooperation agencies that were involved. The team also drew attention to the existence of various participatory platforms for collaborative efforts that were used to gauge the extent to which different stakeholders participated in the work on the Goals, as well as identifying shortcomings and potential solutions and tracking the advances made.

Finally, for each one of the Goals, the municipality identified the steps being taken to help to reach the different Goals and the actions that should continue to be pursued to that end.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Municipality of Filadelfia, *Informe local voluntario, Filadelfia, Paraguay, 2022* [online] https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-04/filadelfia_ods_02-03-23_v03.pdf.



6. Linkage of the Goals with plans, policies and projects

The 2030 Agenda is a global agreement and, as such, is not a new construct but rather the outcome of decades of sectoral negotiations that then needed to be merged into a common development agenda. Thus, the establishment of the Goals did not start from zero; instead, they focus on improving on what the countries have been doing by encouraging them to coordinate their efforts and to use transparent mechanisms for seeking out partnerships and resources.

The Goals are not a set of objectives whose achievement will require some new and different planning tool that subnational entities do not already have. All that these entities have to do is link up their development plans, policies and project portfolios with the Goals in a clear-cut manner. The purpose of doing this is not only to identify which of the measures that they are implementing will help achieve the Goals, but also to quantify existing gaps so that they can then be narrowed and to pinpoint challenges so that ways of overcoming them can be found.

At this stage, in addition to explicitly establishing the ways in which territorial planning instruments are linked to the 2030 Agenda, subnational governments should also match up their planning instruments with national planning instruments and with global agendas (the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development) so that they can contribute to progress towards strategic national and international objectives.



A worksheet on the linkage of plans, policies and projects is provided in annex A6.

Box 5

Integrating agendas: Montevideo, Uruguay

Montevideo has now conducted its third voluntary review. In that review, the 17 Goals serve as a frame of reference for the department's management, in which priority has been assigned to 99 of the 169 targets for the Goals, in line with the department's capabilities and responsibilities. The long-term perspective of the Agenda is a good fit with the management style of the Intendency of Montevideo. Between 2018 and 2019, the Intendency engaged in a forward-looking exercise aimed at arriving at a vision of Montevideo in the year 2050 as a sustainable, solidary, inclusive and resilient city that has embraced global agendas (the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change). In addition to aligning itself with global agendas at the international level, in 2021 the Intendency rolled out its strategy for the localization of the Goals and established the explicit linkages between the Goals and the Intendency's five-year strategic planning instruments and annual work plans.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis Montevideo City Council, *Montevideo y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible: tercera revisión voluntaria 2023*, Montevideo, 2023 [online] https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/09/montevideo_2023_es.pdf.



7. Prioritization

The voluntary national reviews presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development cover actions regarding the Goals that have been prioritized for that year, but countries are also free to report on efforts undertaken in connection with other Goals as well, and some countries report on all of them. Some subnational governments also choose to report on all the Goals in their voluntary local reviews. In other cases, local governments report only on their priority Goals as determined by their realities, jurisdictions and delegated areas of authority, which narrows down the range of indicators and targets that they commit to and prioritize. Nonetheless, subnational entities should strive to contribute to the targets pursued at the national level as well.



A worksheet on prioritization is provided in annex A7.

Phase 2 • Preparation of the report

The preparation of the review should be an **ongoing process**, and an effort should be made to maintain the same structure throughout. The **compilation of information** is one of the most difficult tasks, and an information-gathering strategy should therefore be developed if a lack of sufficient data for use in the voluntary local reviews becomes a problem.

The frequency with which voluntary local reviews are prepared will vary from territory to territory, but it is suggested that local reviews be carried out at least once every two years. Doing so will not only help to create a **culture of accountability** but will also contribute to the national and global reporting processes for various international forums.¹⁰

¹⁰ For example, High Level Political Forum [online] <https://hlpf.un.org/2023>; Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development [online] <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2023/en>; United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) [online] <https://uclg.org/>; UN-Habitat [online] <https://unhabitat.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews>.



The **methodology to be used should be participatory in nature** and can be based on the available guidelines for participatory processes. Information on this subject is available on the websites of United Nations bodies and other organizations.¹¹



8. Definition of the structure of the document and of a road map

At the international level, there are a number of different manuals and handbooks on the preparation of voluntary local reviews.¹² Based on a review of those guidelines, the following general format is suggested:

- (i) **Executive summary.** A brief description of the document's contents.
- (ii) **Statement of political commitment by the highest local authority.** A statement identifying the territory's institutional structure for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the resources available for putting specific measures into place that will further progress towards the Goals. This statement should also indicate how local efforts tie in with national efforts to achieve the Goals.
- (iii) **Profile of the territory.** An overview of the social, economic and demographic characteristics of the territory.
- (iv) **Description of the methodology.** A brief description of how the voluntary local review was prepared, the agencies that headed up the effort to prepare the voluntary local review and the groups or persons who worked on it. The description of the methodology should cover at least the following points:
 - The process involved in prioritizing the Goals
 - The selection of indicators
 - The process involved in identifying the groups or persons who did the work and a description of their involvement throughout the voluntary local review preparation process
 - The compilation of the data
 - The selection of the actions to be taken, which will provide evidence of the contributions made by the different sectors (see point (v) below)
 - Future commitments

¹¹ Block C. Participation Set-up. Our City Plans Toolbox, Central America; UN-Habitat; A. Naser, A. Willinier and C. Sandoval, "Participación ciudadana en los asuntos públicos: un elemento estratégico para la Agenda 2030 y el gobierno abierto", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2020/184), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2021; T. R. Villasante, "Historias y enfoques de una articulación metodológica participativa", Red Cimas, 2010.

¹² *European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews 2022*, European Commission; *Guidelines for the Development of Voluntary Local Reviews in the ECE Region* Economic Commission for Europe, 2021; *Global Guiding Elements for Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) of SDG implementation*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; *Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines on Voluntary Local Reviews*, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2020; *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines*, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; *Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 1: A Comparative Analysis of Existing VLRS 2020*, UN-Habitat; *Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews volume 2: Towards a New Generation of VLRS: Exploring the Local-national Link*, UN-Habitat, 2021.

- (v) **Evidence-based report.** Presentation of the data on all the Goals or on those identified as most important for the cities, with special emphasis on those that have been assigned priority in the reporting territory. The section on each Goal should describe the contribution being made by the territory through various actions (policies, plans, programmes and projects) to the effort to attain the various targets for that Goal. This section should describe both the actions taken by the subnational entity and the contributions made by other sectors. For each of the Goals being covered, the actions taken to address the areas in which progress is lagging should be detailed. In addition, the results for the indicators for each of the targets prioritized by the territory should be outlined, and the areas in which improvements have been made in compiling the relevant information should be pointed out. As many different types of contributions will have been made by those involved, each territory should determine what criteria will be used to decide which actions will be covered for each sector based on its circumstances and the available evidence.
- (vi) **Key aspects of the preparation of the voluntary local review.** The voluntary local review should identify urgent needs for funding and other resources to speed up progress towards the Goals that are at risk of not being met. The review can also highlight local or outside programmes, projects or initiatives that could serve as an example of ways to overcome factors that have caused progress to lag. Voluntary local reviews can generate synergies among territories facing similar issues that call for integrated solutions. Coverage can also be given to lessons learned that could be helpful for other entities.
- (vii) **Conclusions and future commitments.** Finally, the voluntary local review should provide an assessment of the advances made, areas in which progress has stalled and areas in which the situation has grown worse instead of better. This should be followed by the identification of ways of making improvements and moving forward in the short, medium and long terms.



A worksheet on the definition of the structure of the document is provided in annex A8.



9. Compilation of inputs from the preceding phase and measurement of progress in statistical terms

The work done during the preliminary stage (phase 1) are important inputs for voluntary local reviews, not only because they show that the work was participatory in nature and attest to the contributions made by those involved but also because they delimit the review to the identification of relevant targets for local priorities and the indicators to be used for an **evidence-based assessment** that can also serve as a basis for monitoring trends and progress towards the stated objectives.

Identifying the statistical data needed to quantify achievements and remaining gaps at the local level is not an easy task. This is chiefly because of two factors:



- (i) **Adaptation of the global/national framework of indicators for the Goals to the local dimension:** The use of statistics to track progress towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Goals is based on the use of 231 indicators for 169 targets, but a number of those indicators were designed for use at the global, regional and/or national levels and are not suited to the local level, and, in a number of cases, their conceptual and methodological frameworks are not applicable to a subnational territory. In addition, the identification of inherently local targets and priorities gives rise to the need for suitable metrics that can supplement the framework defined by international bodies. This type of situation may also arise in connection with the interface between the national framework for such indicators and the local one. Some national priorities that call for the definition of national targets that complement the global targets may not be applicable or relevant at the local level.
- (ii) **Availability of sufficient data for calculating the selected metrics:** In conjunction with the above, there is another factor that plays a decisive role in determining what can and what cannot be measured. Most statistical operations are defined at the national level, and these operations are what underpin the data collection mechanisms of the international statistical system that permit the calculation and dissemination of the indicators of the global framework. The international statistical community is constantly working to expand the amount of accurate data available for robust statistical monitoring of the processes involved in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda, but there are still many hurdles to be overcome in this respect, especially with regard to Goals 5, 11 and 13. At the national level, most indicators are calculated and provided by public agencies that are part of the national statistical system. These agencies determine what data are necessary and ensure their production, consistency, quality, dissemination and use. However, many of these operations do not allow for disaggregation at a sufficiently granular territorial level to permit the calculation of local indicators. This makes it even more difficult to obtain timely data that can be used for the statistical monitoring of efforts to fulfil the 2030 Agenda at the subnational level.

Given these two situations, quantitative aspects of the procedures used to track progress towards the Goals need to be developed at the local level. This task includes the review of proposed targets, identification of relevant metrics and analysis of possible official sources of information that national agencies (primarily the national statistical office and the national statistical system) can provide or sources from local institutions that gather and generate relevant data for their policies, programmes and actions. At all events, it is important for national and local agencies to work together to seek out suitable information sources and to promote synergies among them so that the fullest possible use can be made of the available data. All supplementary information that may be used to track the official indicators for the Goals should be presented as such rather than used in place of the official metrics in order to avoid any inconsistencies in the information employed by global, regional, national and local bodies.

The use of consistent sets of statistics and indicators will enrich the assessment through the addition of comparative analyses which can be used to contextualize the local situation within national, regional and/or international settings



A worksheet on the compilation of inputs and measurement of progress is provided in annex A9.

Box 6**The data availability challenge: Government of the City of San Justo, Argentina**

When the City of San Justo began to prepare its voluntary local review, it found that obtaining the necessary data was a challenge. Some of the steps it took in order to address this challenging situation are summarized below.

The first step was to interview the officials in charge of the areas relating to each of the Goals prioritized by the city. With that as a starting point, the baseline could be delimited and it became clear what information was in fact available. Where the necessary information could be obtained, the city's government proceeded to collect and process that information in order to generate the necessary data. Where the needed information was not available, statistical techniques were used to estimate the necessary data based on national or provincial official sources and then to construct the data for the indicators pertaining to the targets of the prioritized Goals.

Key roles in this process were played by the following persons and bodies:

- The officials in charge of the areas pertaining to each of the Goals prioritized by the city's government, who were tasked with setting the baseline and confirming what information was available on each of the programmes to be covered in the voluntary local review.
- The national or provincial agencies or institutions that generate official data or statistics that were used in the relevant estimates.
- The team of technical specialists that provided advisory assistance and orientation throughout the preparation process.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of information provided during a workshop held with officials and consultants involved in preparing the voluntary local review. For further information, see the report [online] https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2022-08/rvl_sanjusto_digital.pdf or contact the Intendency of San Justo.

**10. Drafting and validation of voluntary local reviews**

Once all the necessary information has been compiled, the actual drafting of the document can begin. It is suggested that a format that includes various graphic devices be used in order to enhance the document's readability.

Once the voluntary local review has been drawn up, having it validated will facilitate its later dissemination and socialization.

It is suggested that the review be validated with all the parties involved in its preparation. It is therefore important to allow for a sufficient length of time for the validation phase in the voluntary local review preparation timetable.



A worksheet on the drafting and validation of voluntary local reviews is provided in annex A10.

Phase 3 • Follow-up action

11. Official presentation of the voluntary local review and its multimedia dissemination

A voluntary local review should not be confined to a print or digital format. It is the result of a collaborative, multidisciplinary effort that should culminate in its official presentation and dissemination to the greatest number of people possible via all available channels. This will also make it possible to socialize the Goals themselves with more people and to encourage members of the local community to take an interest in what progress has been made towards honouring the commitments that have been made.

At the international level, there are various assemblies where voluntary local reviews can be presented. Voluntary national reviews are presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, but the Forum also provides an opportunity for local actors to give presentations on their efforts and the advances they have made towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. At the regional level, there is the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and the ECLAC Community of Practice on Voluntary National Reviews,³³ which has held various heavily attended events on the territorialization of the 2030 Agenda.



A worksheet on the official presentation and dissemination of voluntary local reviews is provided in annex A11.



12. Tracking of indicators and follow-up of commitments

Voluntary local reviews are an input for monitoring and evaluation systems, since the conclusions they reach and the future commitments that are made will have an impact on the originating subnational entity's projects and/or plans, as the necessary adjustments and measures will have to be introduced to bring those projects or plans back on course, take advantage of opportunities and close existing gaps in order to achieve their proposed objectives. Thus, voluntary local reviews contribute to a continuous learning process and generate valuable information that can help to redirect territorial efforts to promote sustainable development.

The establishment of online platforms for the dissemination of voluntary local reviews and for monitoring the relevant indicators will provide a larger audience for their findings and will contribute to transparency and accountability. Such platforms can be linked to other local or national platforms in the same country or to local platforms in other countries that have relevant characteristics in common.



A worksheet on the tracking of indicators and follow-up of commitments is provided in annex A12.

³³ The Community of Practice is an informal forum for the exchange of good practices and lessons learned regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in general and the preparation of voluntary national reviews in particular.

Annexes

The following annexes contain worksheets to facilitate the process of preparing a voluntary local review by providing a way to check whether all important elements have been considered. Each question can be answered by “Yes”, if the item in question has been fully considered; “No”, if it has not been addressed at all; “P” (for “partially”), if some, but not sufficient, progress has been made in that respect; and “N/A” if, for some valid reason, the question is not applicable to the subnational government in question. The more affirmative answers there are, the greater the extent to which the steps suggested in this manual have been followed.

Some of the worksheets include a list of methodological resources or examples that may be of help in answering the questions on the forms.

Annex A1 Worksheet on the delimitation of objectives

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Has the highest local government authority clearly delimited the objectives of the voluntary local review and the voluntary local review process?				
2	Are the objectives set forth in the voluntary local review and the defined objectives of planning instruments aligned?				

Note: P = partially.

Methodological resources

- A. Naser and A. Ramírez, “Plan de gobierno abierto. Una hoja de ruta para los Gobiernos de la región”, *Manuals series*, No. 81 (LC/L.3802/REV.1), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2017 (see section III.B).
- A. Naser, V. Fideleff and J. Tognoli, “Gestión de planes de acción locales de gobierno abierto: herramientas para la cocreación, el seguimiento y la evaluación”, *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2020/78), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020 (see section II.E).

Annex A2 Worksheet on the involvement of stakeholders

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Have the stakeholders in the territory been identified?				
2	Have the roles and responsibilities of the various persons and organizations that will be involved in the participatory voluntary local review preparation processes been defined?				
3	Have the forms of participation in each of the voluntary local review preparation stages been defined and made known?				
4	Have steps been taken to ensure the participation of groups that have traditionally been excluded from decision-making processes?				

Note: P = partially.



● Methodological resources

- A. Williner and J. Tognoli, "Guía para el diseño de estrategias de resiliencia territorial frente a desastres siconaturales", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2023/91), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2023 (see section III on tools for securing community involvement).
- Our City Plans Toolbox, UN-Habitat (see the section on [mapping of stakeholders](#) and Participation and Committees Formation in Block C).
- Our City Plans Toolbox, UN-Habitat (see [Participation Set-up in Block C](#)).
- *Metodologías Participativas*, Red Cimas.
- A. Naser, A. Williner and C. Sandoval, "Participación ciudadana en los asuntos públicos: un elemento estratégico para la Agenda 2030 y el gobierno abierto", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2020/184), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2021.
- T. Villasante, "Historias y enfoques de una articulación metodológica participativa", Red Cimas, 2010.

Annex A3

Worksheet on awareness-raising, socialization and training

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Has the subnational government designed and implemented an in-house training programme on the Goals and voluntary local reviews?				
2	Has a campaign to raise awareness of the goals and socialize the voluntary local review preparation process in the community been designed and launched?				
3	Has the above-mentioned awareness-raising and socialization campaign employed various media (social networks, webpages, workshops, radio, in-person events and others) in order to ensure that it reaches everyone?				
4	Has a training programme for the various parties involved in preparing the voluntary local review been designed and implemented?				

Note: P = partially.

● Methodological resources

- Use of this manual and other guidelines developed at the national or intermediate levels in the country (if working at the local level).
- Our City Plans Toolbox, UN-Habitat (see the [Communication Strategy in Block C](#)).

Annex A4

Worksheet on guiding principles

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Have the main national and subnational planning tools been identified?				
2	Have the internal coherence and complementarity of the territory's planning tools been analysed?				
3	Have the coherence and complementarity of the territory's planning tools with national planning tools been analysed?				
4	Has the coherence of the territory's various sectoral policies been analysed?				
5	Has the territorial government met with the national planning agency to request advisory assistance with the policy coherence review?				
6	Have steps been taken to ensure the involvement of a range of stakeholders throughout the voluntary local review preparation process?				
7	Have policies for ensuring that all of the fundamental rights of members of the population will be respected been reviewed and have any necessary adjustments been made?				
8	Have all policies aimed at ensuring that the process is a people-centred one been reviewed?				
9	Have all development policies been reviewed to ensure that a proper balance has been struck among economic, social and environmental considerations?				

Note: P = partially.

● Methodological resources

- Review all manuals and resources made available by each country's national planning agencies.
- A. Williner y M. F. Martínez, "Políticas públicas integrales: el caso de las políticas de desarrollo territorial", *Territorial Development series*, No. 22 (LC/TS2023/90), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2023.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *OECD Knowledge Platform on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development*.
- *Driving Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: Accelerating Progress on the SDGs*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2023.
- See also the methodological resources listed in annex A2 of this manual.



Annex A5

Worksheet on institutional arrangements

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Are representatives of the intermediate and local subnational levels part of the national mechanism for implementation of the 2030 Agenda?				
2	Does a multi-actor mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda exist at the subnational level?				
3	If not, is there a subnational government unit, division or office in charge of implementing actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?				
4	Is there a team tasked with preparing the voluntary local review? (This may be the same team or unit that is in charge of implementing the 2030 Agenda.)				
5	Has the voluntary local review team met with representatives of the national mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (and, if they are two separate teams, with the team in charge of preparing the voluntary national review)?				
6	Have the members of the mechanism in charge of implementing the 2030 Agenda at the subnational level been designated by decree or by some other type of legal document?				
7	Does the 2030 Agenda implementation mechanism clearly define the roles of its members and have bylaws?				

Note: P = partially.

Annex A6

Worksheet on the linkage of plans, policies and projects

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Are the objectives and targets of the subnational government's chief planning instruments linked to the objectives, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda?				
2	Does the subnational government identify and link its objectives to those set out in other global agendas (the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement)?				

Note: P = partially.

● Methodological resources

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Guía metodológica: planificación para la implementación de la Agenda 2030 en América Latina y el Caribe* (LC/TS.2018/63), Santiago, 2018.
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "The territorial dimension in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A methodological guide for strategic planning in a territory", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2019/58), Santiago, 2019.
- Efforts of different territories to implement the 2030 Agenda and work towards the Sustainable Development Goals.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA)*, 2017.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "The SDGs in Action", 2017.
- Urban and Cities Platform of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Platform to contribute to the regional follow-up of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

Annex A7

Worksheet on prioritization

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Has the subnational government identified which of the Goals are priorities for the territory?				
2	Has the subnational government identified the main gaps and challenges to be overcome in order to achieve the priority Goals?				
3	Was the prioritization of the Goals a participatory process?				

Note: P = partially.

● Methodological resources

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Guía metodológica: planificación para la implementación de la Agenda 2030 en América Latina y el Caribe* (LC/TS.2018/63), Santiago, 2018.

Annex A8

Worksheet on the definition of the structure of the document

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Has the executive summary been written?				
2	Has the highest subnational government authority written a statement setting out the territory's commitment to the achievement of the Goals and establishing the principal objectives of the voluntary local review?				
3	Has a profile of the territory been written up that describes its geography, population, main economic activities and other characteristics?				
4	Has the voluntary local review preparation process been documented and has a written account of that process been drawn up?				
5	Have all the territory's contributions to progress towards the targets of the priority Goals been systematized and written up?				
6	Have the indicators prioritized by the territory been systematized and has an evidence-based presentation of those indicators been made?				
7	Has a section on key aspects of the voluntary local review preparation process been written?				
8	Has a section been written on conclusions and future commitments based on areas where progress is lagging and on advances made towards reaching the targets established for the Goals?				

Note: P = partially.



Annex A9

Worksheet on the compilation of inputs and measurement of progress

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Have the indicators that are relevant for the region been reviewed and have the ones that are most important for the territory been identified?				
2	Has your country's platform for monitoring progress towards the Goals been reviewed?				
3	Does your subnational government have a tracking system for monitoring development indicators that can be used as an information source?				
4	Has support from your country's national statistical office been requested?				
5	Have the indicators that will be reported on been identified and has the nature of the data that will be needed been determined? ^a				
6	Have reliable, up-to-date sources of information for each indicator and the areas where information is lacking been identified? ^b				
7	Has this subject been discussed with other subnational entities and municipal associations in order to learn from others' experiences?				
8	Have meetings been held and agreements concluded with academic and civil society organizations that have information that would be useful for measuring the relevant indicators?				
9	Do you have qualitative and quantitative indicators for your measurements of progress towards the Goals?				
10	Has all the information been compiled and processed?				

Note: P = partially.

^a Data are relevant if they are useful for decision-making. Analysing various information sources and constructing new indicators can be very costly.

^b It is important to determine whether the data are generated by the subnational government itself or whether they need to be generated or furnished by the central government, other public institutions, academic institutions, civil society organizations or international agencies.

● Methodological resources

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Report on the Prioritization of Indicators for Regional Follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/CE.17/3)*, Santiago, 2018.
- Prioritized Set of Indicators for Regional Statistical Follow-Up to the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), *Review of the implementation of the programmes of work 2018-2019 and 2020: Sustainable smart cities. Economic Commission for Europe Protocol on the Evaluation of City Performance Against the Key Performance Indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities (ECE/HBP/2020/5)*.
- National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico (an example of how indicators for subnational (federative and municipal) entities are identified at the national level).
- United Nations, "SDGs Indicators" and published reviews.
- City Prosperity Initiative, UN-Habitat.
- Good Practices and Resources on Sustainable Development Goals Monitoring website.
- United Nations, *Practical Guide for Evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews*, 2022.
- United Nations, "SDG Localization and the Voluntary Local Reviews", Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- UN-Habitat (on voluntary local reviews).

Annex A10

Worksheet on the drafting and validation of voluntary local reviews

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Have all the inputs needed to complete the voluntary local review been compiled?				
2	Has a draft containing all the material been drawn up?				
3	Has a complete draft of the voluntary local review been provided to all the parties involved in its validation? (Copies should be provided, as a minimum, to the highest local government authority, planning technicians, technical experts specialized in tracking and monitoring, and the members of the institutional arrangement established for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the territory and/or the group tasked with preparing the voluntary local review.)				
4	Have the inputs provided for the sections on progress towards the different targets for the Goals been validated with the parties concerned?				
5	Has the entire section on indicators been validated with the national statistical office?				

Note: P = partially.

Annex A11

Worksheet on the official presentation and dissemination of voluntary local reviews

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Has a formal in-person or virtual presentation been made to the most senior territorial authority?				
2	Has an announcement been posted on the subnational government's webpage together with a link where the review can be downloaded? (If the subnational government does not have a webpage, then the review should be published using other available media.)				
3	Have the document and a letter of thanks been sent to everyone who took part in preparing the voluntary local review?				
4	Has the document been sent to the national mechanism tasked with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?				
5	Has the document been sent to dsdg@un.org so that the voluntary local review can be posted on the SDG Localization and the Voluntary Local Reviews webpage [https://sdgs.un.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews].				
6	If the subnational government wishes to participate in the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, has the webpage been reviewed and, if appropriate, has the subnational government registered with it? (See the registration form under "Event Information" at https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2024/en . The form can also be accessed at: https://eventos.cepal.org/event/126/registrations/ .)				

Note: P = partially.



Annex A12

Worksheet on the tracking of indicators and follow-up of commitments

No.	Question	Answer			
		Yes	No	P	N/A
1	Have institutions and units been assigned responsibility for all the commitments made in the voluntary local review?				
2	Have all the institutions and units assigned responsibility for those commitments incorporated them into their planning instruments? If the commitments have been made by the subnational government, then they should be incorporated into such instruments as the development plan, the territorial development policy, the land use management plan, the institutional management plan and others.				
3	Have deadlines been set for the fulfilment of all the commitments?				
4	Have funding proposals been prepared for all the commitments?				
5	Has a timetable been set for reviewing progress towards fulfilling the commitments?				
6	Following the incorporation of the commitments made in the voluntary local review into other planning instruments, are the efforts to fulfil those commitments being monitored by the subnational government's oversight system? (This will entail the definition of indicators for measuring advances in this connection, reviewing progress, and making adjustments in the plans and other decisions on the basis of the pace of progress.)				
7	Are the advances made in respect of all the commitments being systematized after each progress review?				

Note: P = partially.

● Methodological resources

- Our City Plans Toolkit, UN-Habitat (see Implementation [Work Plan](#) and [Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy](#)).



Just six years away from the date set for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an unprecedented level of concerted action is called for. All stakeholders will have to strengthen their resolve to find and put in place lasting solutions. Although the Sustainable Development Goals are global in scope, their achievement will hinge on the ability to make their attainment a reality at the subnational, local and territorial levels, including individual towns, cities and regions. The purpose of this manual is to share lessons learned and to support local governments' efforts to territorialize the 2030 Agenda based on the preparation of voluntary local reviews.