

GOLD V 2019

The Localization of the Global Agendas

How local action is transforming
territories and communities



Fifth Global Report
on Decentralization and Local Democracy



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Foreword

The year 2019 constitutes the first major milestone in the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. Four years into one of the most ambitious global agendas ever agreed upon, this is the opportunity to assess the progress made. For the constituency of local and regional governments that United Cities and Local Governments represents, the 2030 Agenda is the epitome of a new social contract that needs to allow us to co-create a sustainable future for the planet. The ambitious vision and concrete targets of this agenda fill us with hope and show that we all know what needs to be done. We need collectively to steer a path away from development models that have led us to the current climate emergency and to increasingly unequal and exclusionary societies.

At the end of the first quadrennial cycle of the 2030 Agenda, the conclusion is that we are not on track. The unprecedented global consensus in 2015-2016 at the outset of this new agenda paved the way for our societies to transition towards a more sustainable and inclusive development cycle. Yet today this is in desperate need of renewal.

We are convinced, and we hope this report demonstrates, that new impetus needs to come from local action at the level of the communities we serve and represent.

As President of UCLG, I have carried the torch for localization in the fora of the international community and at the highest levels of discussion and consultation. I have been proud to support the representation of our entire constituency through the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments. This has been the tool and platform to convene our constituency following Habitat-III.

It gives me great pleasure to see the growing local-global movement that is accelerating localization. Local and regional governments

have embraced the challenges of achieving the global agendas, and mobilization is increasing throughout the world.

The Fifth GOLD Report builds on fifteen years of knowledge. It gives our World Organization with a chance to showcase our constituency's progress with regards to the contribution of local governments to the global agendas, and to place the highest value on the daily actions of local and regional governments, showing how just how important these have been and are.

GOLD V brings together the expertise of local and regional governments and their organizations, researchers from different geographical regions, as well as the UCLG Committees and partners through a participatory process. It assesses local, regional, and national strategies for the implementation of the global agendas in each world region. It does so by analysing the evolution of institutional frameworks for local, metropolitan and regional governments, paying special attention to local governments' efforts to achieve the Goals and drive transformative change.

The Report demonstrates that cities and territories are the backbone of social, economic, environmental and cultural development. It showcases their commitment and contributions to addressing the climate emergency while sharing the lessons learned with their peers worldwide.

Our organization provides a set of policy recommendations based on the findings of the report which are also included in this publication. **We put special emphasis on building coalitions, defending the commons, and placing local level public service delivery at the heart of the investments needed to realize the development agenda.**

We also call for all spheres of government and all stakeholders to embolden their ambitions and support us in developing a 'whole-of-society' approach through localization.

We will need the commitment of national governments to empower local governments and communities through the development of enabling environments, both legal and financial, that can help us fulfil our responsibilities.

This report shows that well-resourced localization can be a decisive instrument to make the 'acceleration decade' a reality.

We hope you will also see the great potential of this tool — one that we are investing in and using in service to our constituency, the citizens, and the international community, to enhance partnership and action. ☉

Mpho Parks Tau

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

A

ACHM – *Asociación Chilena de Municipalidades* (Chilean Association of Municipalities)
ADB – Asian Development Bank
AEBR – Association of European Border Regions
AER – Assembly of European Regions
AfDB – African Development Bank
AICCRE – *Associazione Italiana per il Consiglio dei Comuni e delle Regioni d'Europa* (Italian Association for the Council of European Municipalities and Regions)
AIMF – *Association Internationale des Maires Francophones* (International Association of French-speaking Mayors)
ALGA – African Local Governments Academy
AL-LAs – *Alianza Euro-Latinoamericana de Cooperación entre Ciudades* (Euro-Latin-American Alliance for Cooperation between Cities)
AMA – Accra Metropolitan Assembly
AME – *Asociación de Municipalidades de Ecuador* (Association of Municipalities of Ecuador)
AMM – Association of Municipalities of Mali
ANAMM – *Associação Nacional dos Municípios de Moçambique* (National Association of Municipalities of Mozambique)
ANCB – *Association nationale des communes du Bénin* (National Association of Municipalities of Benin)
ANMCV – *Associação Nacional dos Municípios Caboverdianos* (National Association of the Municipalities of Cape Verde)
APEC – Asia-Pacific Economic Community
ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASPAC – Asia-Pacific

B

BC – British Columbia (Canada)
BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
BRT – Bus Rapid Transit
BTVL – *Bureau Technique des Villes Libanaises* (Lebanese Cities Technical Office)

C

C40 – C40 Cities Climate Leadership
CAMCAYCA – *Confederación de Asociaciones de Municipios de Centroamérica y el Caribe*

(Confederation of Associations of Municipalities of Central America and the Caribbean)
CAN – Canadian dollars
CAP – Common African Position
CBA – Community-Based Approach to Local Development Programme (Ukraine)
CCR – carbonn Climate Registry
CDS – City development strategy (Africa)
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEE – City Enabling Environment
CEMR – Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CIDP – County Integrated Development Plan (Kenya)
CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
CLGF – Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CNCPS – National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies (Argentina)
CNM – *Confederação Nacional de Municípios* (National Confederation of Municipalities, Brazil)
CO₂ – Carbon dioxide
COFOG – Classification of the Functions of Government
CoG – Council of Governors (Kenya)
CONGOPE – *Consortio de Gobiernos Autónomos Provinciales del Ecuador* (Consortium of Provincial Autonomous Governments of Ecuador)
COP – Conference of the Parties
CoR – European Committee of the Regions
CORDIAL – *Coordinación Latinoamericana de las Autoridades Locales* (Coordination of Latin American Local Authorities)
CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
CSCC – Cross-Sectoral Coordinating Centre (Latvia)
CSO – Civil society organization
CT – Connecticut (United States)
CUI – Canadian Urban Institute

D

DFI – Development financial institution
DG – Directorate General (European Commission)
DILG – Department of Interior and Local Government (Philippines)
DMP – Disaster Management Plan
DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

E

EaPTC – Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation
EC – European Commission
EDSL – European Days of Local Solidarity
EESC – European Economic and Social Committee
EIB – European Investment Bank
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency (United States)
EPSU – European Public Service Union
ERDF – European Regional Development Fund
ESF – European Social Fund
EU – European Union
EUR – Euro

F

FCM – Federation of Canadian Municipalities
FEDOMU – *Federación Dominicana de Municipios* (Federation of Municipalities of the Dominican Republic)
FEMP – *Federación Española de Municipalidades y Provincias* (Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces)
FLACMA – *Federación Latinoamericana de Ciudades, Municipios y Asociaciones de Gobiernos Locales* (Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations of Latin America)
FMDV – Global Fund for Cities Development
FNVT – *Fédération nationale des villes tunisiennes* (National Federation of Tunisian Cities)

G

GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council
GCoM – Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy
GDP – Gross domestic product
GG – General government [expenditure]
GHG – Greenhouse gas
GIS – Geographic information system
GIZ – German Society for International Cooperation
GOLD – Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization
GTA – Greater Toronto Area
GTF – Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments

H

HDI – Human Development Index
HF – Housing First project (United States)
HLPF – United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

I

IAEG-SDGs – United Nations Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators
ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
ICT – Information and Communications Technology
IDB – Inter-American Development Bank
IDP – Integrated Development Plan
ILO – International Labour Organization
IMF – International Monetary Fund
IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISTAT – *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* (National Statistics Institute, Italy)
IT – Information Technology
IUDF – Integrated urban development framework

K

KCCA – Kampala Capital City Authority
Km – Kilometre
KRG – Kurdistan Regional Government
KS – *Kommunesektorens organisasjon* (Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities)

L

LAI – Local Autonomy Index
LALRG – Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
LDP – Local development plan
LED – Local economic development
LGA – Local government association
LGBTQIA+ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual and other gender identities
LGCP – Local Government Capacity Programme (Palestine)
LGDG – Local Government Development Grant (Tanzania)
LGDK – Local Government Denmark
LGFI – Local government finance institution
LGSAT – Local Government Self-Assessment Tool (Armenia)
LMTA – Lagos Metropolitan Transport Authority
LNG – Liquefied Natural Gas
LRG – Local and regional government
LRT – Light Rail Transit

Abbreviations and Acronyms

M

MDG – Millennium Development Goal
MDLF – Municipal Development and Lending Fund
ME – Maine (United States)
MEWA – Middle East and West Asia
MINURVI – Forum of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean
MLG – Multilevel governance
MSDW – Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife (Sri Lanka)
MTAD – Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development (Eswatini)
MW – Megawatts

N

NALAG – National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana
NALAS – Network of Associations of Local Authorities
NAP – National Action Plan (Viet Nam)
NARMIN – National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal
NDC – National Development Council (Azerbaijan; Tajikistan)
NDCs – Nationally-Determined Contributions
NDP – National development plan
NDPPS – National Decentralized Participatory Planning System
NDS – National development strategy
NEDA – National Economic and Development Authority (Philippines)
NESDP – National Economic and Social Development Plan (Cuba)
NGO – Non-governmental organization
NHS – National Housing Strategy (Canada)
NLC – National League of Cities (United States)
NSDS – National sustainable development strategy
NUA – New Urban Agenda
NUP – National urban policy

O

ODA – Official Development Assistance
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
O&M – Operation and maintenance

OIF – *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (International Organization of French-Speaking Countries)
OSI – *Organismos de Seguimiento e Implementación* (SDG Follow-up and Implementation Office)

P

PEP BA – Participative Strategic Plan Buenos Aires 2035
PIT – Personal Income Tax
PLATFORMA – European Platform of Local and Regional Authorities for Development
PNDES – *Plan national de développement économique et social* (National Plan of Economic and Social Development, Burkina Faso)
PPP – Public-Private Partnership
PPPP – Public-Private-People Partnership
PSB – Presidency of Strategy and Budget (Turkey)
PSI – Public Service International

R

RAD – SDG action plan (Indonesia)
RAI – Regional Autonomy Index
RALGA – Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities
REFELA – *Réseau des Femmes Elues Locales d’Afrique* (Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa)
RIAFCO – African Financial Institutions for Local Government
RFSC – Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities

S

SADC-RISDP – Southern African Development Community and Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SALGA – South African Local Government Association
SDC – Sustainable Development Council (Sri Lanka)
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
SDI – Slum Dwellers International (Africa)
SDSN – United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network

SENPLADES – National Secretariat for Planning and Development (Ecuador)
SEZ – Special economic zone
SID – Small Island Developing State
SIDA – Swedish International Development Agency
SME – Small and medium-sized enterprise
SNG – Sub-national government
SOE – State-owned enterprise
SRD – Strategy for Responsible Development (Poland)

T

TALD – Territorial approach to local development
TDC – Territorially Determined Contribution
TOD – Transit-Oriented Development

U

UAE – United Arab Emirates
UCCI – *Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas* (Union of Iberic-American Capital Cities)
UCLG – United Cities and Local Governments
UCT – *Union des communes du Togo* (Union of Municipalities of Togo)
UK – United Kingdom
ULGA – Ugandan Local Government Association
ULI – Urban Land Institute (Canada)
UMT – Union of Municipalities of Turkey
UN – United Nations
UNCDF – United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDESA – United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR – United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECLAC – United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGL – *Unión Nacional de Gobiernos Locales* (National Union of Local Governments, Costa Rica)
UN-Habitat – United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR – United Nations Refugee Agency

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNPAN – United Nations Public Administration Network
UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (Palestine)
UNSG – United Nations Secretary-General
UNV – United Nations Volunteers
U.S. – United States
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
USD – U.S. dollar
USGS – United States Geological Survey
USSR – Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
UT – Union Territory (India)
UTC – Unified Territorial Communities (Ukraine)

V

VLR – Voluntary Local Review
VNG – Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (Association of Netherlands Municipalities)
VNGi – VNG International
VNR – Voluntary National Review
VVSG – *Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten* (Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities)

W

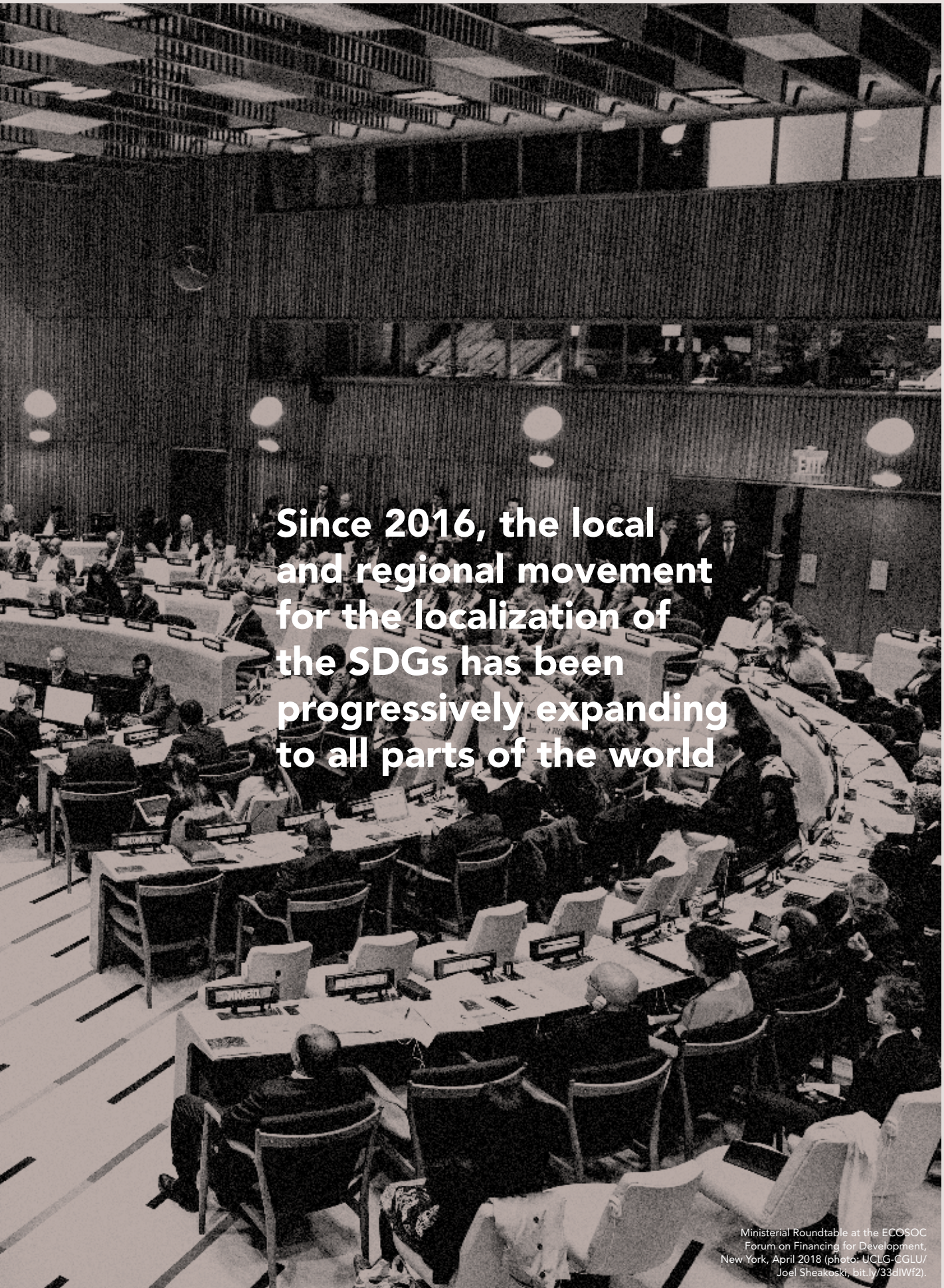
WALD – World Academy for Local Government and Democracy
WCCD – World Council on City Data
WHO – World Health Organization
WIEGO – Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing
WISP – Western Cape Industrial Symbiosis Programme
WWF – The World Wild Fund for Nature

#

100RC – 100 Resilient Cities Project
3R – Reduce, reuse and recycle



Introduction



Since 2016, the local and regional movement for the localization of the SDGs has been progressively expanding to all parts of the world

Ministerial Roundtable at the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, New York, April 2018 (photo: UCLG-CGLU/Joel Sheakoski, bit.ly/33dlWf2).

1. Global context

In 2015 and 2016, world leaders came together to set a historic milestone in multilateral cooperation with the adoption of global agreements towards sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development all showcased a global will to respond to today's global challenges through the adoption of a firm rights-based approach.

Local and regional governments (LRGs) have risen to the scale of the challenge, demonstrating their commitment to the realization of the global agendas by putting in place elaboration, adoption and implementation processes. From their perspective, the global agendas are interlinked and cannot be achieved in isolation: all sustainability actions to address the highly interrelated challenges affecting our territories and cities must be fully integrated and comprehensive. The 2030 Agenda has been widely embraced across territories and represents a significant step forward in terms of ambition, universality and complexity with respect to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides, on the one hand, our best shot at tackling the multi-dimensional challenges facing our societies. On the other, it requires a significant step up in policy-making efforts and the adoption of a truly integrated approach that ensures that 'no one and no place are left behind' — in other words, the UN **'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach** to development (see Box 1), encompassing a truly **multilevel** and multi-stakeholder **governance** system that puts people at the centre of development (see Box 2).

We currently stand at the end of the first quadrennial cycle of implementation of the SDGs, which means that the worldwide state of implementation of each SDG has been evaluated at least once. Consequently, the international community is taking this time to take stock of the progress made, the trends that have emerged and the challenges encountered over these past four years, and these will be discussed at the

Box 1

'Whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approaches

Multilevel and collaborative governance frameworks that emphasize the need to approach policy-making processes in an integrated way, factoring in all government bodies and members of society. Adopting these approaches is critical for advancing sustainable development, since they constitute the basis for policy coherence (see Box 7) by requiring policy-making to happen in an integrated manner beyond institutional siloes, promoting synergies and improving public accountability. Putting governance frameworks in place requires the establishment of adequate coordination and participation mechanisms that ensure that sub-national governments (SNGs) and members of society take part effectively in policy design, implementation and monitoring processes at all levels of government.

Source: UNPAN; GTF, UCLG (2019). 'Towards the Localization of the SDGs'.

SDG Summit in September 2019. According to the UN's quadrennial Global Sustainable Report and the UN Secretary-General 2019 Special Report, positive trends have emerged at the aggregate global level, in particular regarding the implementation of SDGs 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11 and 14.¹ Extreme poverty, child mortality rates and share of the urban population living in slums continue to decrease, while progress has been made with respect to health, certain gender equality targets and access to electricity in poor territories. However, the shift towards a new sustainability paradigm is not taking place at the pace and scale required to trigger the necessary transformation to meet the Goals by 2030. The incidence of hunger has continued to spread in 2019, a trend observed since 2016. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, 70% of which cities are responsible for, also continue to increase, while the loss of biodiversity continues to accelerate dramatically as the intensity of climate change worsens.² Despite the progress made in poverty reduction, rising inequality continues to fuel the exclusion of discriminated and disadvantaged populations (such as the poor, women, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic and sexual minorities, amongst others). Moreover, although the means of implementation are progressing, finance for sustainable development remains an ongoing issue. Institutions often depleted by territorial conflict are not robust enough to respond to the magnitude of the inter-related interrelated challenges they face.

As stressed by the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), the current social, economic and environmental trends that are shaping the world have a major impact on the realization of the SDGs and present a daunting challenge in terms of meeting the Goals in the mandated time. The UNSG identifies five such trends — urbanization, demographic change, climate change, protracted crises and frontier technologies.³ The interactions, synergies and trade-offs between these trends give rise to highly complex and interconnected policy-making environments at local, national and international levels. One of the main objectives of this report has been to examine how LRGs are contributing to the achievement of the global agendas in the face of such trends. These agendas — and the commitment of LRGs to achieving them — are changing our societies and promoting the evolution of good governance and citizen participation in highly diverse contexts all around the world. It is therefore critical to take this time to better understand where LRGs stand with respect to SDG implementation, and to revisit policy-making processes in order to take full advantage of the mutually reinforcing potential of global agendas and local processes as catalysers for change. The aim of this report is to contribute to such an endeavour, looking at

how to promote integrated policies and actions that meet today's challenges from the local and regional perspective.

The report highlights how, as part of their day-to-day responsibilities, LRGs are implementing policies and carrying out actions which although not always officially 'SDG-labelled', have a direct impact on populations' access to infrastructure, services and life opportunities. As acknowledged by the UN General Assembly, the UNSG and the Habitat III consensus, the decarbonization of our economies and ensuring access to energy, water, food, transport and infrastructure will ultimately be achieved through project-level investments that take place mostly at the sub-national level and that are led by LRGs.⁴ It is thus crucial to build up a critical mass of knowledge about how territories and cities are progressing towards sustainability, what initiatives are being put forward and what obstacles are being encountered if we are to achieve the SDGs and other global agendas.

One of the main transformations humanity is experiencing is the rapid urbanization of society, and in this respect LRGs find themselves increasingly at the centre of many crucial challenges. The percentage of the world's population living in urban areas is expected to rise from 55% to nearly 70% by 2050 — an effective increase of 2.3 billion urban dwellers likely to be concentrated in low and lower middle-income territories where urbanization is happening at the fastest rate. Changes in population growth, age composition and migration patterns heavily impact urbanization pathways and those of the surrounding territories, cutting across a wide range of SDGs — for example poverty eradication, access to food and water, health, gender equality, economic growth and decent work, the reduction of inequalities and promoting sustainable cities

Box 2

Multilevel governance

A decision-making system based on coordination mechanisms that allow the allocation of competences and responsibilities of government both vertically and horizontally in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity (see Box 6), respecting local autonomy. This system recognizes that there is no optimal level of decentralization (see Box 5) and that implementation and competences are strongly context-specific: complete separation of responsibilities and outcomes in policy-making cannot be achieved and different levels of government are interdependent. Multilevel governance necessitates all levels sharing information and collaborating fully, so that every level can publicly and accountably lead horizontal relations with respective stakeholders to optimize policy outcomes.

Source: UCLG (2016). 'Fourth Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization. Co-creating the Urban Future'.

that are better articulated with their hinterlands — which significantly influences the prospects of SDG implementation. At the aggregate level, world population growth has slowed compared with ten years ago, and stands at an annual growth rate of 1.1%.⁵ However, such figures mask highly heterogeneous demographic patterns between regions and urban and rural territories.

While more than half the growth forecast between 2019 and 2050 (estimated at two billion people) is expected to take place in Africa, Asia is expected to grow by 650 million people, Latin America by 180 million whilst Europe's population is expected to decrease.⁶ Population growth will concentrate in the least economically developed regions, which will make it even harder for those territories and cities to eradicate poverty and hunger and improve the provision of education, health and basic services. Moreover, the number of persons aged over 60 is expected to rise to 1.4 billion by 2030, although the pace at which the population is aging varies greatly between world regions. By 2050, all regions of the world are expected to have more than 25% of their populations aged over 60 — with the exception of Africa, which is expected to concentrate the world's largest share of population aged between 15 and 19. Aging territories and cities will face increasing fiscal and political pressures to provide the elderly with pensions and social protection. At the same time, it will be critical for territories and cities with swelling youth populations to provide adequate healthcare, education and job opportunities to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Climate and environmental challenges are profoundly reshaping our territories and have a direct impact on cities. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 Special Report, the world has already

warmed by 1°C above pre-industrial levels and, at the current rate of warming of 0.2°C per decade, global warming will reach 1.5°C by 2030. This report stresses the pivotal role played by cities in climate change mitigation and in reaching the agreed goal of limiting climate change to 2°C, and if possible 1.5°C. Allowing global warming to reach 2°C will critically endanger natural and human systems and will particularly affect the most vulnerable populations and territories. Since 1990, climate-related extreme disasters have more than doubled. This, together with drastically changing weather conditions, is causing unquantifiable suffering and loss of human life and the destruction of infrastructure, aggravating resource scarcity and forcing the displacement of populations. Existing tensions act as risk multipliers for violence, putting additional pressure on often fragile political systems and resources. Since 2010, state-based and non-state-based conflicts have risen by 60% and 125% respectively, while the number of globally displaced people has doubled over the past 20 years to reach 65 million.⁷ The deterioration of global peace constitutes a fundamental threat to the rule of law and good governance and, consequently, to the cornerstones of sustainable development.

In the face of such challenges, it is imperative that we scale up and accelerate action before it is too late. In order to do so, we need to think differently about the strategies of development and adopt an evidence-based approach to sustainable development that reflects the reality of today's world. Urbanization, the development of frontier technologies and connectivity are some of the defining features of our contemporary societies, and although they pose challenges to governance, they are also the key to achieving the SDGs and preserving life for future generations. ◉



The Local and Regional Governments' Forum, organized by the Global Taskforce, during the United Nations' SDG Summit in New York, on September 24, 2019 (photo: UCLG-CGLU/Ege Okal, bit.ly/2naVvsb).

2. Why SDG localization?

Purposes and goals of the report

The purpose of the GOLD V Report is to propose how these ambitious Global Goals and objectives can be met through policies, actions and initiatives designed and put in place by the territories and communities that make up cities, towns and regions. The report suggests that this cannot be done unless urban and territorial planning, strategic design, institutional environments and political roadmaps are fully embedded in the territories, i.e. 'territorialized', taking full advantage of local potentialities, involving all local stakeholders and building on local needs and demands. In other words, these goals can only be achieved through a fully-fledged, co-owned and accountable process of localization of the global agendas (see Box 3).

Territories and cities can lead transformational processes that promote development models that are both respectful of the environment and put people first. Territorialized development strategies based on integrated planning have the power to transform cities and territories, foster inclusion, reduce resource usage and GHG emissions, and improve rural-urban linkages. When coupled with cutting-edge technologies, the economies of scale facilitated by cities and their ability to attract innovation become major catalysts for the achievement of the SDGs, allowing for the development of alternative patterns of production and consumption, decentralized renewable energy systems, individualized healthcare, natural disaster detection solutions, and stronger bonds between cities, towns and their hinterlands. The possibilities are endless. As shown throughout this report, such localized development strategies, developed from and suited to local realities, also have an impact on the global process of transforming development, which in turn reinforces sustainable local

processes. The transformational potential of a **territorial approach to local development (TALD)** is enormous (see Box 4). Yet, in order to fully unleash it and ensure the implementation of the global development agendas, important challenges must be tackled. Significant efforts have been made since 2015 to implement the 2030 Agenda's provisions and advance towards the achievement of the Goals. However, given the multi-dimensional challenges our societies are facing, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs call for a move beyond narrow targeted policy-making towards revisiting governance culture and

Box 3

Localization

The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the need for an inclusive and localized approach to the SDGs. Localization is described as 'the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and sub-national sustainable development goals and targets.' More specifically, it takes into account sub-national contexts for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets to determining the means of implementation and using indicators to measure and monitor progress.

Source: GTF, UCLG (2019), 'Towards the Localization of the SDGs'; GTF, UNDP, UN-Habitat (2016), 'Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Sub-national Level'; UN Development Group (2014), 'Localizing the Post2015 Agenda' (outcome of the global UN dialogue process realized from June 2014 to October 2014).

institutions. As will be discussed in this report, existing national strategies and institutional frameworks for SDG implementation, as well as the state of **decentralization** and the means available for local implementation of the global agendas, determine the transformational strength that local action can achieve (see Box 5). Questions thus arise: can the SDGs both inspire local action and influence such institutional environments?; and can local action arising from the cities and territories translate into global change?

Box 4

Territorial approach to local development (TALD)

National development policy that recognizes local development as being endogenous, incremental, spatially integrated and multi-scalar, and which acknowledges the primary responsibility of local authorities for planning, managing and financing such local development — in other words, development that enables autonomous and accountable local authorities to leverage the contribution of actors operating at multiple scales to produce public goods and services tailored to the local reality, which in turn brings incremental value to national development efforts.

Source: European Commission DEVCO (2016), 'Supporting decentralization, local governance and local development through a territorial approach'.

Box 5

Decentralization

The existence of local authorities, as distinct from the state's administrative authorities, to whom the legal framework allocates powers, resources and capacities to exercise a degree of self-government in order to meet the allocated responsibilities. Their decision-making legitimacy is underpinned by representative, elected local democratic structures that determine how power is exercised and make local authorities accountable to citizens in their jurisdiction.

The World Observatory on Sub-national Government Finance and Investment proposes the following definition: 'decentralization consists of the transfer of powers, responsibilities and resources from central government to sub-national governments, defined as separated legal entities elected by universal suffrage and having some degree of autonomy'.

Source: UN Habitat (2009), 'International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Access to Basic Services'; UCLG (2008), 'Decentralization and Local Democracy in the World, First Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization'; OECD-UCLG (2019), 'World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investments'.

This is important for shedding light on a number of related issues affecting (and changing) development policy globally. As stated previously, this study primarily aims to show the state of progress of SDG achievement in the territories and emphasize its critical importance for the realization of the global agendas. On the one hand, it is widely acknowledged that fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda requires the full engagement and commitment of all levels of governance including LRGs, civil society and local stakeholders such as the private sector, social partners, academia and grassroots organizations. On the other, territories and local communities are where implementation is taking place. The key question addressed by the report is the extent to which towns, cities, provinces and regions have been able — through their actions and initiatives — to become part of the solution to the fundamental and historic challenges they face. Analysing the progress that local governments are making in the implementation of the Goals and their 'localization' — bringing them down to the local level, rethinking and re-designing them so that they fit with the characteristics and demands of citizens and territories — is an indication of how well the SDG framework itself is developing, and how much there is still left to do.

The report also aims to provide an updated picture on the current state of decentralization around the world. Achieving the SDGs and the other global agendas at the local level will not be possible unless territories, communities, and local authorities at different sub-national levels are adequately empowered, supported and funded. This implies strengthening and improving decentralization of the political system, promoting the devolution of competences and powers, ensuring respect for the principle of **subsidiarity** and making local governments responsible and accountable (see Box 6).

The report is structured into different regional chapters. Each chapter includes an analysis of national strategies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and how LRGs are being engaged in this process, whether the institutional framework enables LRGs to be proactive in the implementation of these agendas, and the status of decentralization in the region. The report aims to answer questions on decentralization trends and the development of a truly multilevel understanding of policy-making: are LRGs more empowered and active than they used to be?; have the SDGs and the other global agendas driven any change in institutional relationships and vertical/horizontal cooperation?; are national planning and decision-making mechanisms and systems more open, sensitive to and aware of LRGs and their unique potential within territories and communities to effect change?

Looking at decentralization and providing up-to-date mapping of how this trend has evolved are all the more essential in studying territorial and municipal authorities, given that rapid (and often uncontrolled) urbanization has become a worldwide phenomenon and is a fundamental challenge facing local governance. Urbanization has had a crucial impact on several dimensions of local and regional governance: from urban and territorial planning, to the provision of basic public services; from socio-economic equality to marginalization and informality in housing and work; from the inevitable impact of climate change to the creation of new social and cross-cutting alliances to improve democracy, transparency and the quality of life in cities and territories. However, any advances in these fields raises fundamental questions of sustainability and viability. The global agendas were agreed in the expectation that LRGs would act as accelerators and catalysts in the process, but how is this pressure altering the political balance? What room is there for LRGs to see their competences, powers, capacities, financial and human resources grow and improve, making them more aware, responsible and able to play an active role in the global quest for sustainability, prosperity and inclusiveness? What kind of financial autonomy is really granted to local and regional governments? There are plenty of financial and management instruments (climate and green bonds, Public-Private-People Partnerships — PPPPs — and remunicipalizations, amongst many others) that are changing the way actors are empowered — at all levels — to become drivers of change and leaders in policy-making. In what way are these new opportunities accessible to local governments? And how can those that are more visionary and long-sighted fund and sustain their policies and agendas in the long term?

Monitoring systems, indicators and the ability of LRGs to report on their policies and actions is also problematic since it is currently limited by a substantial lack of data, indicators and measurement which historically has not been devolved or disaggregated enough (with the partial exception of larger and wealthier regions and cities), hindering the capacity to grasp the huge potential at the local level for the localization and achievement of the Goals.

Ultimately, the responsibilities that LRGs are assuming in the localization of the SDGs and other agendas are raising fundamental questions of local democracy, accountability and transparency, representation and the place occupied by the local level in the current global system. Can LRGs be catalysts for change in politics and development policy? Do LRGs have the means and capacities to ensure that ‘no person or place is left behind’? Can effective intergovernmental cooperation across all levels of governance improve performance, boost **policy**

Box 6

Subsidiarity

The principle according to which public responsibilities should be exercised by those elected authorities closest to citizens. The central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those responsibilities or tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level. Subsidiarity requires that local governments have adequate financial, managerial and technical and professional resources to enable them to assume their responsibilities to meet local needs, carrying out a significant share of public expenditure. Local governments should be granted the authority and power to raise local resources in line with the principle that authority be commensurate with responsibility as well as the availability of resources. The principle of subsidiarity constitutes the rationale underlying the process of decentralization.

Source: UN Habitat, 'International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Access to Basic Services' (2009); UCLG (2013), 'Third Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization. Basic Services for All in an Urbanizing World'.

coherence (see Box 7) and help make the SDGs and the global agendas a reality, with positive effects on the quality of life of territories, cities, communities and society? Can the SDGs trigger a new model of development — urban, territorial, social, economic and human — which starts at the local level? Each chapter provides inputs, answers and critiques of these points, as well as exploring other relevant issues. The Conclusions and Policy Recommendations provide a common vision and understanding of the way forward for LRGs. **o**

Box 7

Policy coherence

An approach to sustainable development that calls for the integration of economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions in the policy-making process, acknowledging the critical interlinkages that exist between the SDGs. It aims to foster synergies, promote partnerships and balance transboundary and intergenerational policy impacts in order to identify and manage the relationships between SDGs in a way that limits and overcomes any potential negative impact resulting from their implementation.

Source: OECD (2019), 'Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development 2019'.

3. Structure and analytical approach of the GOLD V Report

The main body of the GOLD V Report is structured into eight chapters. Seven chapters address localization processes in each of the UCLG regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and West Asia, and North America. An eighth chapter, consistent with the approach traditionally adopted by the GOLD reports, will deal specifically with the metropolitan

phenomenon, exploring whether the specific context of metropolises has an impact on the implementation of the SDGs and the global agendas. The metropolitan chapter is coordinated with Metropolis, the global organization representing metropolitan areas, with a membership of 138 cities from all regions of the world.

All chapters follow the same structure in order to make cross-chapter reference easier and the information more comparable across different regions. Each chapter consists of a short introduction in Section 1, followed by Section 2 which provides an overview of national arrangements for SDG implementation: national strategies and plans, their degree of alignment with the 2030 Agenda and other global agendas, and the mechanisms that ensure the coordination and follow-up of the SDGs at national level but that also allow LRGs to be involved in the localization process. Where available, for example in the chapter on Europe, this section considers regional strategies and mechanisms. Section 2 also highlights the **enabling environments** for sub-national action and initiatives (see Box 8); change and evolution in the institutional framework (e.g. decentralization processes), and a thorough overview of the territorial organization of the countries in each region and the financing available to LRGs. Finally, Section 2 analyses the institutional and governance mechanisms that regulate the relationship between different levels of governance and that either hinder or facilitate cooperation in the implementation of the SDGs. Section 3 explores in more detail the actual contribution of LRGs to the localization

Box 8

Enabling environment

The combination of policies, laws, institutions and systems of governance, fiscal autonomy, and levels of public engagement that hamper or unleash LRGs' potential to function more efficiently, competitively and flexibly to define a development pathway and carry out actions that contribute to achieving the SDGs. UCLG Africa, UCLG ASPAC and Cities Alliance have assessed the institutional enabling environment for local governments by comparing the 'constitutional framework, the legislative and regulatory framework, the share of public finances between central government and local government, local governments' own revenues, local democracy, human resource capacities of local government administrations, local government delivery and management performance, existence of a national and/or local urban policy/strategy, provisions for transparency and accountability mechanisms, provisions for citizen participation and women's participation.'

Source: UCLG-ASPAC, Cities Alliance (2018), 'City Enabling Environment Rating: Assessment of the Countries in Asia and the Pacific'; UCLG Africa, Cities Alliance (2015), 'Assessing the Institutional Environment of Local Governments in Africa'.

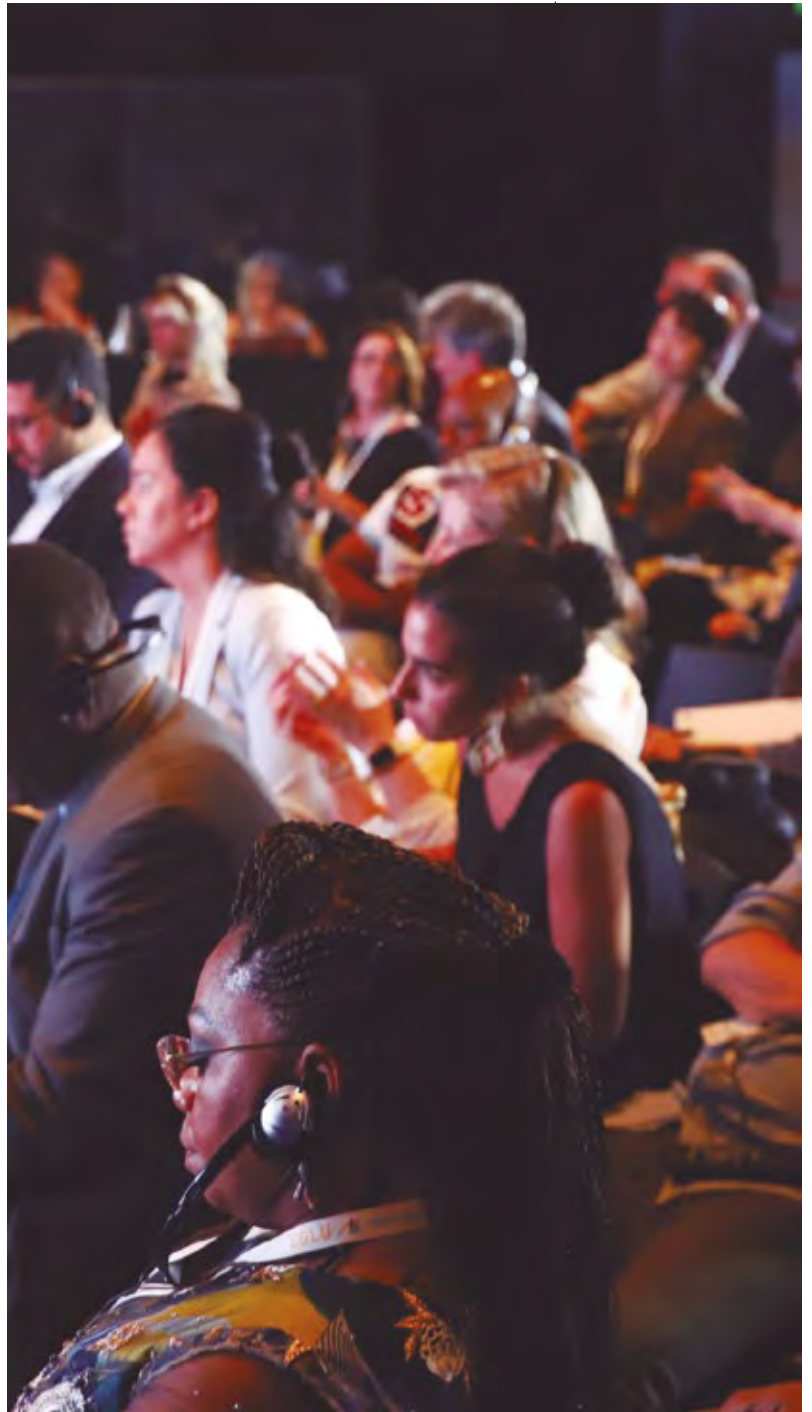
and implementation of the SDGs. Specifically, it provides information on awareness-raising and dissemination activities to improve ownership by SNGs; the alignment of local plans and strategies with the SDGs and the impact they have on local engagement and proactiveness; and the initiatives, policy actions and experiences of LRGs in their territories and communities in implementing the Goals from the bottom up, as well as issues of coordination, monitoring and funding.

The chapters have been designed in such a way as to allow the reader to approach the GOLD V Report from different perspectives and with different goals in mind. The report can be read in a linear fashion to provide a broad overview of the role of LRGs in the localization of the Global Goals. Those readers more interested in the concrete actions and initiatives put in place by LRGs and with a bottom-up perspective can refer to Section 3 in the various chapters. Similarly, those interested in the evolution of decentralization and the enabling environments that have made localization possible in the first place can refer to Section 2 and the information it provides on institutional balance and opportunity in different contexts.

The chapters were developed by an international group of renowned experts — 18 authors from 13 different institutions — with backgrounds in urban and territorial planning, local development, economics and financial studies, urbanization and development, and geography. Moreover, the GOLD V Report has relied significantly on first-hand information available within UCLG and its constituency. The report builds on the findings of the three editions of LRGs' report to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which UCLG has curated with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) since 2017. In turn, much of this information and knowledge was gleaned from international surveys distributed across these networks and which gathered hundreds of replies, promoting direct contact with local administrations, national local government associations (LGAs), academia and civil society.

The chapters have been through a thorough process of political validation with UCLG's members and networks. The chapters build on information provided directly by cities, regions and associations that are members of UCLG, with content from experts also reviewed by the membership to verify its reliability.

Finally, the conclusions of the GOLD V Report provide an overview of the chapters and a summary of the main findings. More importantly, they provide a platform for debate and conversation on the main trends shaping development and growth across the world: demographic change, decentralization and local



Audience at the proceedings of UCLG's Culture Summit, Buenos Aires, Argentina, on April 4, 2019 (photo: Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, bit.ly/2pDD5kN).

democracy, climate change and resilience, rapid urbanization, funding local development and local autonomy, and the creation of the city of the future and the future of cities. These lie at the heart of the recommendations put forward by the GOLD V Report: a set of guidelines and a roadmap to make localization a reality, to fully achieve the SDGs and other global agendas at the local level, and a call for territories and communities to 'leave no person or place behind'. 🌐

01



Africa

Regional chapter



Street show in eThekweni-Durban, Kwazulu Natal, South Africa (photo: Xiaojun Deng, bit.ly/2M26fCD).

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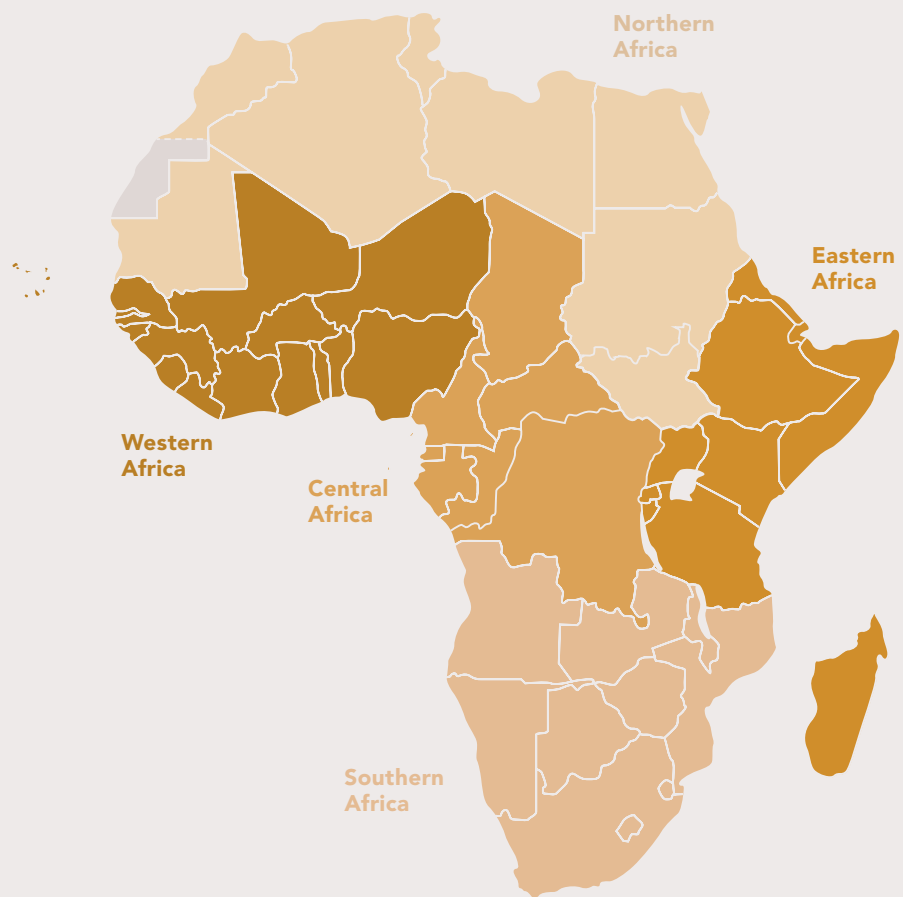
3.1 Role of local government associations and local and regional government networks in the localization of the SDGs

3.2 Local and regional government efforts to align the 2030 Agenda with local policies

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Northern Africa

Algeria
Egypt
Libya
Mauritania
Morocco
Sudan
Tunisia

Western Africa

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cape Verde
Côte d'Ivoire
The Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Liberia
Mali
Niger
Nigeria
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Togo

Eastern Africa

Burundi
Comoros
Djibouti
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Kenya
Madagascar
Malawi
Mauritius
Rwanda
Seychelles
Somalia
South Sudan
Tanzania
Uganda

Central Africa

Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Congo (Rep. of the)
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
São Tome and Príncipe

Southern Africa

Angola
Botswana
Eswatini
Lesotho
Mozambique
Namibia
South Africa
Zambia
Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, African governments have joined other countries across the world, first in lobbying for and then in adopting a number of global development policy commitments. These include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on financing for development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the New Urban Agenda. This global policy realignment by Africa is rooted in a continent-wide policy shift towards sustainable development, as formulated in the Africa Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. This shift reflects a growing recognition of the role of cities and territories as key sites and actors of development, and the African region as a major hub of the global transition to a predominantly urban world. Thus, it will not be possible to

achieve sustainable development at a global level without sustainable urbanization in Africa. Urbanization is key to economic development and growth in Africa, with cities combining labour, skills, knowledge and capital. However, fulfilling the potential of sustainable urbanization in Africa will depend on overcoming significant challenges, ones that are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹

Driven by natural population growth, as well as increasing rural-urban migration, Africa's urban growth rate is currently almost 11 times higher than Europe's (although growth rates vary across this vast continent).² In 2018, the African population was estimated at approximately 1.3 billion people, with a large youth population.³ The urban population is estimated to be 587 million and is expected to grow three-fold by 2050. Most growth



Sierra Leone (photo: Annie Spratt, bit.ly/2pApj25).

occurring in middle-sized, intermediary cities with between 50,000 and one million inhabitants and the majority of city inhabitants are under the age of 35. Economic performance in terms of jobs, growth and inequality varies across the region, but overall the number of decent, productive and secure jobs is low, while the levels of poverty and informality remain high.⁴ At the heart of the lack of structural economic transformation in Africa is the absence of basic infrastructure and services in a context in which on average over half of urban dwellers still live in informal settlements.⁵

In addition, the region remains one of the most unequal in the world, undermining global progress towards poverty eradication. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Africa's 'African Poverty Clock'¹⁶ provides real-time poverty forecasts for every country in Africa and, overall, shows more people entering than escaping poverty. As of August 2019, an estimated 34% of the region's population were living in extreme poverty (residing in Sub-Saharan Africa), earning less than USD 1.90 per day,⁷ of

which 49% were children.⁸ In some countries, the effects of conflict and an increase in natural disasters associated with poor urban planning and climate change are hampering economic progress even further. There is an urgent need to plan, manage, finance, as well as monitor and report on urban and territorial growth and development, in this context in an inclusive, coherent and sustainable way. Furthermore, the potential role of local and regional governments (LRGs) as policy stakeholders must be fully realized. This will require radical institutional reforms that support and strengthen the creation of stronger, more competent LRGs.⁹

The establishment by African leaders of the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa in 2016 to support SDG implementation in line with Agenda 2063 is testament to the commitment and approach to SDG implementation that characterizes the region. The Sustainable Goals Center is based in Kigali and works to create partnerships across the SDGs. In 2018, it launched the Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report,¹⁰



and released a three-year 'Reality Check', which concluded that: 'where progress was assessed, only three goals (SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 15 on life on land) are likely to meet the 2030 Target. Of the 13 goals that have sufficient data (after 2015), it is considered likely that ten goals will not be achieved by 2030. In relation to these goals, countries are not just underperforming; the reality is that achieving them appears virtually impossible'.¹¹

Structured in two main parts, the overarching aim of this chapter is to present the challenges and opportunities from an African perspective of the implementation of the SDGs and related development agendas by LRGs. The first part of the chapter demonstrates the support for and engagement with the SDG agenda at the national level. At the same time, it shows that the participation of LRGs in SDG implementation frameworks remains limited, although with notable exceptions. This reflects the differences between intergovernmental frameworks and ongoing

In Africa, 'where progress was assessed, only three goals (SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 15 on life on land) are likely to meet the 2030 Target'.

decentralization reforms across the continent. The second part of the chapter gives examples of those 'frontrunning' LRGs and associations in the region that are supporting localization, as well as partnerships between civil society, academia and the private sector. It shows how the creation of an environment to support, harness and upscale such initiatives, as well as capacity to generate locally embedded spatially disaggregated data on these efforts, is crucial to monitoring and to achieving progress towards the implementation of the SDGs in Africa. ☉



View of Oran, Algeria
(photo: K YA, t.ly/egLb3).

2. National and local institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

There is strong commitment to the implementation of the SDGs at the national level in Africa, reflecting a shift towards sustainable development that has local action at its core. Among African leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals and scholars, there is also growing recognition of the role of cities and territories as key actors of development and the need for an African urban agenda that takes into account the potential and particularities of Africa's rapid urbanization.¹² In this context, the localization of the SDGs and the role of LRGs therein, are of increasing importance.

The views of African countries on the SDGs were represented within the G77+China grouping, contributing to intergovernmental negotiations and the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals that preceded the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.¹³ Moreover, Africa was the only region in the world to articulate a 'common position' on the 2030 Agenda in the run-up to Habitat III, through its Common African Position.¹⁴

Many objectives in the raft of policies of the 2030 Agenda adopted in 2015 include a commitment to localization — a position that is at

the core of the African Agenda 2063, a document approved even before the adoption of SDG 11 or the New Urban Agenda. Agenda 2063 sets out Africa's vision for 'institutions at all levels of government [to be] developmental, democratic, and accountable' and for 'cities and other settlements [to be] hubs of cultural and economic activities, with modernized infrastructure, and [...] access to affordable and decent housing including housing finance together with all the basic necessities of life such as water, sanitation, energy, public transport and ICT'.¹⁵

African institutions such as the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB), have established numerous initiatives and strategies for an enabling institutional framework for the monitoring and implementation of Africa 2063 alongside the global agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda.¹⁶ Development agendas such as continent-wide East African Community Vision 2050 have moreover been adopted at the regional level. Furthermore, African countries are exploring the creation of a draft harmonized regional framework for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the region.¹⁷



A staffer of UNDP's Africa Bureau sets up the stage for the high-level event on "Implementing Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030", New York, September 2016 (photo: Lei Phyu/UNDP, bit.ly/2o5vNpl).

2.1 National institutional frameworks

At the national level, the commitment to implement the SDGs is evidenced by the presentation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) by a number of African countries to the annual UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). To date, 35 out of a total of 54 African UN Member States have presented a VNR during the first four-year cycle of the HLPF (2016-2019).¹⁸ Some have done so several times. Togo, for instance, reported annually in 2016-2018. Others, such as Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles and Zambia, have committed to present their first VNRs in 2020. This report also includes information available for countries that have not yet committed to submitting VNRs. These include Angola, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, São Tomé e Príncipe, Somalia and South Sudan.

Many of those African countries that have presented their VNRs have made significant progress in incorporating the SDGs in their national plans and strategies, raising awareness and involving stakeholders to create ownership of the SDGs, as well creating and establishing institutional mechanisms and means of implementation, as per the UN guidelines for VNRs.¹⁹ A review of localization processes across the continent shows that SDG implementation

experiences and contexts vary considerably (see Table 1), but there are a number of emerging patterns.

Firstly, the majority of countries are focusing on the **alignment with or adaptation of national development plans (NDPs) to the 2030 Agenda**, and continental and sub-regional level development agendas. The latter include South Africa (the Southern African Development Community and Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan — SADC-RISDP), Rwanda (East African Community Vision 2050), and Cape Verde and Mauritius (Small Island Developing States — SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action — the SAMOA Pathway). A few countries have developed their own SDG plans. Countries, such as Mali, where national planning cycles did not coincide with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, are revising their NDPs to align them with the SDGs. Countries such as Botswana, Kenya and Uganda have specific SDG roadmaps setting out guidelines to adopt the SDGs in key areas. Morocco has a national sustainable development strategy (NSDS) aligned with the SDGs. Sudan has an NSDS and implementation plan, but with a timeline until 2020 only. As well as these efforts, almost all countries in Africa have made their national commitments to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, with a view to fulfilling obligations related to the Paris Climate Agreement.²⁰ Benin, for example, has put in place various national strategies and legislation aligned with the Paris Agreement on climate change, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Its institutional framework, similar to that in countries such as Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa, also includes local governments. However, Benin's level of commitment is still an exception in the region — indeed in the world.²¹ It is notable also that, in 2018, most African countries with national urban policies (NUPs) had not yet explicitly aligned these with the SDGs.

Benin has put in place various national strategies and legislation aligned with the Paris Climate Agreement, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Secondly, while other sub-national arrangements can be found, **national institutional mechanisms to coordinate and lead SDG implementation tend to exist at the highest political level.**²² These include inter-ministerial entities with leadership by the head of state or government (e.g. Egypt, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Togo); inter-ministerial entities with ministerial leadership (e.g. Algeria, Botswana, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Ghana, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa); a head of state or government office (Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Sudan); and a specific ministry (Benin, Central African Republic; Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Uganda).

Some countries, for example Kenya, have incorporated SDG implementation into budget processes. Rwanda meanwhile has a strong monitoring and evaluation framework. Neither the organizational structure of the state nor the system of government appear to be determining factors in institutional follow-up. Three federal states have implemented institutional follow-up under the leadership of either the head of state (Nigeria), or a specific ministry (Ethiopia), or an inter-ministerial committee under the leadership of the head of state (South Africa, considered quasi-federal). Similarly, the three constitutional monarchies in the region (Eswatini, Lesotho and Morocco) have opted for different models of coordination, either chaired by the Prime Minister or coordinated by specific ministries.

Like South Africa, many coordinating bodies, such as national commissions or high-level councils to facilitate the coordination and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, are relatively new structures. Alternatively, they may involve the adaptation of former structures, as with the National Council for Evaluation in the Republic of the Congo. In other countries, coordination relies directly on the existing planning system which needs to be reformed to ensure the follow-up of both the national plan and the SDGs (e.g. the Steering Committee for the National Development Plan in Burkina Faso; the High-Level Ministerial Committee in Ghana, or the National Steering Committee for the National Development Plan and the SDGs in Chad). Namibia stands out for extending its coordination and reporting mechanisms to include a Development Partners Forum to provide coordination oversight of SDG implementation.²³

Thirdly, a variety of stakeholders, such as civil society, private sector and academia, tend to be included in coordinating and committees (e.g. Rwanda's SDG Taskforce, Côte d'Ivoire's National Steering Committee and Mauritius's SDG Steering Committee). However, **among those countries that reported to the HLPF, very few such structures include LRG or national local government association (LGA) representation.**



Port Louis, Mauritius (photo: air babble, bit.ly/305v209).

In fact, only nine countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania, South Africa and Togo)²⁴ reported that these multi-stakeholder structures explicitly include or consult with local government representatives in the HLPF coordination mechanism. Moreover, LRG representatives were involved in the consultation process for the preparation of the VNRs **in only 15 out of the 35 countries that presented their VNRs** between 2016 and 2019.²⁵

UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), **play an important role in supporting SDG localization efforts.** On the one hand, UN agencies directly support LGAs, (see Section 3.1). On the other, UNDP has been instrumental in supporting rapid integrated assessments of the extent of mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda into national development frameworks; providing support for the preparation of VNR reports; developing national roadmaps for the 'domestication' of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and assisting in convening national stakeholder workshops and conferences on SDG implementation,²⁶ the latter involving LRGs and LGAs. A total of 18 African countries have also benefitted from UNDP mainstreaming acceleration and policy support (MAPS) missions that have been deployed to support SDG implementation.²⁷

To summarize, **the participation of LRGs in the reporting and coordination mechanisms (only 47% for VNRs and 31% for coordination)²⁸ needs to be strengthened to ensure the national process is truly inclusive.** ☉

Table 1 National strategies and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SDGs

Algeria

National Strategy for Environment and Sustainable Development (2019-2035). Inter-ministerial committee coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. No mention of LRG participation.

Benin

Action Plan of the Government developed under the 'Ownership agenda for the SDGs'. Directorate-General for Coordination and Monitoring of the SDGs supervised by the Ministry of Planning and Development. LRG participation.

Botswana

The National Vision 2016-2036. National Steering Committee (multi-stakeholder) co-chaired by the government and the UN; Technical Task Force (multi-sectoral). Although they are involved in the SDG alignment process, no mention of LRG participation.

Burkina Faso

National Economic and Social Development Plan. National Steering Committee of the National Plan chaired by the Prime Minister; National Technical Committee; 14 sectoral committees; 13 regional committees. LRG participation.

Cape Verde

Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development (2017-2021). Inter-sectoral body on Sustainable Development; technical implementation body on SDGs under the coordination of the National Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Finance; four thematic groups on the SDGs. LRG participation.

Cameroon

2035 Vision and the 2010-2019 Strategy for Growth and Employment. Technical Monitoring Committee of the National Development Strategy coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Planning; regional and municipal technical committees (sub-national follow-up). LRG participation.

Central African Republic

Peacebuilding and Recovery Plan 2017–2021. National committee set up by the Department of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. No mention of LRG participation.

Chad

Vision 2030, le Tchad que nous voulons. National Coordination for Monitoring the SDGs (intersectoral and inter-ministerial) under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Planning. Limited participation of LRGs.

Republic of the Congo

National Development Plan 2018-2022. National Council for Evaluation (including Steering Committee, technical coordination, Permanent Technical Secretariat and departmental coordination). No mention of LRG participation.

Côte d'Ivoire

National Development Plan 2016-2020. National Steering Committee (inter-ministerial) + Permanent Technical Committee attached to the Ministry of Planning and Development and Multi-stakeholder Committee. LRG participate.

Egypt

Egypt Vision 2030. National Committee for the follow-up of the implementation of the SDGs; inter-ministerial national committee supervised by the Prime Minister and under the coordination of the Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform. No mention of LRG participation.

Eswatini

Vision 2022 in the National Development Strategy (NDS) and Strategy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth 2030. Technical working team and Steering Committee. The SDGs Secretariat is under the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. No mention of LRG participation.

Ethiopia

Second Five Year Growth and Transformation Plan 2016-2020. Coordination: Council of Ministers and House of People's Representatives and National Planning Commission. Regional government participation; no participation of local government.

Ghana

An Agenda for Jobs: Creating Prosperity and Equal Opportunity for All, 2017-2024. Coordination: National Development Planning Commission, supported by 16 regional coordinating councils; the High-Level Inter-Ministerial Committee; the SDGs Implementation Coordinating Committee; and National Technical Committee. Limited participation of LRGs.

Guinea

Guinea's National Economic and Social Development Plan 2016-2020 and the national Vision 'Guinea 2040'. Coordination: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Technical Monitoring Committee supported by eight thematic dialogue groups. No mention of LRG participation.

Kenya

Vision 2030 – Second Medium-Term Plan. SDG Coordinating Department led by the Ministry of Devolution and Planning; Inter-Agency Technical Working Group and SDGs liaison office in the Secretariat of Council of Governors. County government participation.

Lesotho

National Vision 2020 and National Strategic Development Plan II 2018/19-2022/23. National Oversight and Advisory Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister. The Minister of Development Planning coordinates the Cabinet Sub-Committee on the SDGs and National Technical Steering Committee (multi-stakeholder). No mention of LRG participation.

Liberia

'National Vision, Liberia Rising 2030' and Agenda for Transformation currently being revised. National Task Force and technical working group that will develop the implementation strategy. No mention of LRG participation.

Madagascar

National Development Plan (2015-2019). Orientation and Monitoring Committee headed by the Prime Minister; and Technical Committee headed by the Ministry of Economy and Planning. No mention of LRG participation.

Mali

Strategic Framework for the Economic and Sustainable Development Recovery 2019-2024. National Coordination and Monitoring Committee attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and under the responsibility of the Prime Minister. Limited participation of LRGs.

Mauritania

Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity for 2016-2030. Inter-ministerial steering committee chaired by the Prime Minister and Technical Coordination Committee. LRG participation.

Mauritius

Vision 2030 and roadmap for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. SDG Steering Committee chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade. No mention of LRG participation.

Morocco

National Strategy for Sustainable Development. A Steering Committee follows-up the national strategy and Strategic Committee on Sustainable Development monitors the SDGs. The latter is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the High Commissariat of Planning. No mention of LRG participation.

Mozambique

The Economic and Social Plan and Government Five-Year Plan (2015-2019). National Commission for Sustainable Development chaired by the Prime Minister. LRG participation.

Namibia

Fifth National Development Plan. Development Partners Forum (coordination and oversight) and National Steering Committee (multi-stakeholder) and National Planning Commission. Weak participation of LRGs.

Niger

Five-Year Development Plan for Social and Economic Development (2017-2021). Council of Ministers; Steering Committee of the Development Plan (chaired by the Prime Minister). Coordination ensured by the Minister of Planning, assisted by a National Technical Committee and sectoral and regional coordination units. No mention of LRG participation.

Nigeria

Vision 2020 and the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan for 2017-2020. Presidential Committee on the SDGs; the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the SDGs; the Inter-Ministerial and Non-Governmental Core Working Group. Regional government participation, no participation of local governments.

Rwanda

Vision 2050 and the National Strategy for Transformation (2017-2024). SDG Steering Committee, facilitated by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning; district-level Joint Action Development Forums. LRG participation.

Table 1 National strategies and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SDGs

Senegal

Plan for Emerging Senegal. Directorate-General of Planning and Economic Policy within the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Planning, in collaboration with the Prime Minister. Limited participation of LRGs.

Seychelles

Long-Term Vision 2018-2032 and the National Development Strategy for 2018-2022 under preparation. National Oversight and Strategic Committee for the Implementation of Regional and Global Commitments, chaired by the Minister of Finance, Trade and Economic Planning. Limited participation of LRGs.

Sierra Leone

Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023). Ministry of Planning and Economic Development ensures SDG coordination; Regional Planning Offices of the Ministry being installed. No mention of LRG participation.

South Africa

National Development Plan: Vision 2030. Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation coordinates the national coordinating mechanism which includes the Cabinet and its committees, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development Agendas (the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and SADC-RISDP) and an interdepartmental implementation committee with working groups. Presidential Coordinating Council and a National Sustainable Development Stakeholders Forum. LRG participation.

Sudan

Sustainable Development Implementation Plan (2017-2020). The Higher Committee for Sustainable Development chaired by the Vice-President and the Secretary-General of the National Population Council. Limited participation of LRGs.

Tanzania

Long-Term Vision 2025 for Mainland and 2020 for Zanzibar. In Mainland: Coordination Steering Committee supported by the Coordination Secretariat, comprised of the Deputy Permanent Secretaries of key ministries. Implementation and monitoring is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and Planning. No mention of LRG participation. In Zanzibar: Zanzibar Planning Commission includes LRGs.

Togo

National Development Plan (2018-2022). National Steering Committee on Development Policies, chaired by the Prime Minister; Stakeholder Commission for the National Development Plan, chaired by the Ministry of Development Planning and Development. LRG participation.

Tunisia

Five-year Development Plan 2016-2020 (national socio-economic). Ministry of Foreign Affairs (diplomatic) and Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation (technical) in charge of SDG coordination. Limited participation of LRGs.

Uganda

National Development Plan 2015/16–2019/20. Coordination: Ministry of Development. SDG Policy Coordination Committee; SDG Steering Committee; SDG National Task Force; and five SDG technical working groups. No mention of LRG participation.

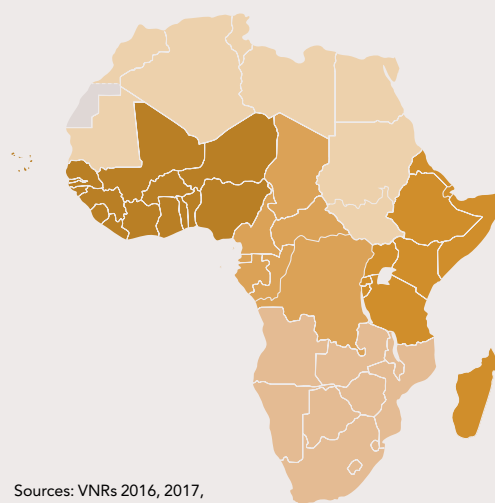
Zambia

Seventh National Development Plan (2017-2021). SDG Sub-Committee for SDG Coordination under preparation which relies on National Development Coordinating Committee, Cluster Advisory Groups, Provincial Development Coordinating Committees and District Development Coordinating Committees. No mention of LRG participation.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation. Steering Committee at Ministerial Level (chaired by the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet); Technical Committee with stakeholder participation. No mention of LRG participation.

Africa



Sources: VNRs 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (UNDESA 2017 and 2018); 'Compendium of national Institutional Arrangements for Implementing the 2030 agendas for Sustainable Development'; GTF Surveys 2016-2019.

2.2 Local and regional governments' institutional frameworks in the region

The mixed participation of LRGs in SDG implementation frameworks in Africa is a reflection of the uneven strength and quality of sub-national government (SNG) institutional frameworks across the continent.

Between 2012 and 2018, overall there was improvement in the enabling environments for LRGs in Africa. However, countries and regions vary significantly, with the East Africa region performing best among regions in Africa in terms of advances in enabling environments for LRGs, and the Central African region performing worst.²⁹

Decentralization trends

In terms of their formal political structures, most African states — except for Eswatini, Lesotho and Morocco, which are monarchies — are presidential, semi-presidential or parliamentary republics with a multi-party government system. Most African countries are unitary states, except for Comoros, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, which are federal states, and South Africa generally regarded as a quasi-federal state.³⁰ Most constitutions in force in Africa are relatively new, having either been created or revised in the 2000s. Exceptions are Benin, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, South Africa and Tanzania, whose constitutions have been in force since the early 1990s.³¹

There is significant variation between countries and regions in Africa in their commitment to and process of accelerating decentralization. As is the case in many regions of the world, in Africa de jure decentralization or the distribution of powers and functions to sub-national structures as defined by law does not reflect de facto decentralization or the actual position of LRGs in multi-scale governance configurations and policy deliberations.

One example of this is the criteria of the UCLG Africa and Cities Alliance Assessment on the Institutional Environment of Local Governments.

The 12 criteria represent a legal framework: out of 53 countries, only five constitutions make no provision for local government participation (Botswana, Ethiopia, Liberia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone) and seven make detailed provisions for their role and responsibilities (Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, São Tomé e Príncipe, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe). In the remaining countries, LRG responsibilities are set by legislation, which could be interpreted as contradictory to the constitution, unstable or not commensurate with adequate resources, both financial and human.

A delegation from the United Nations Security Council meets with South Sudan Civil Society in Juba, the capital city (photo: UNMISS, bit.ly/2p7kj4H).



Moreover, decentralization may often not cover all of a nation's territory; mandates of local government are sometimes ambiguous/unspecified; and critically, administrative decentralization do not always have a fiscal dimension or the political commitment to realize the vision of multi-scale collaborative governance necessary for SDG implementation. It is generally held that a wave of decentralization hit Africa in the 1990s. Since then, the push to enhance the power of public action at the local level has been coupled with a more general drive towards democratization.³² Both endogenous processes and international drivers have contributed to supporting, but also at times weakening, decentralization in Africa. Decentralization can be understood as a response to the social demand for popular participation and the democratization of society. In many countries during the 1990s, decentralization reforms were initially made in the context of the structural reforms of the state at that time, as well as in response to regional conflicts and demands for autonomy that in some countries threatened the unity of the state.

In some cases, the relatively little power assigned to the local level comes from national political interests: thus, decentralization is used to strengthen the power of central government while, especially in capital cities, devolution is blocked to prevent local governments and opposition parties becoming a threat to national government and the ruling party.³³ In other cases, decentralization is designed along ethnic boundaries. For example, the two Ethiopian charter cities Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa are devolved as special cases, with special levels of autonomy, because of their diverse ethnic composition, and they do not report to the regional level but only to national federal government.³⁴ At the same time, their special status functions as a power-sharing arrangement to keep possible ethnic tensions in check.³⁵ A similar logic was behind the reform of the local governments system in Kenya in the aftermath of election violence in 2007. Since the adoption of a new constitution in 2010 and the enactment of the Urban Areas and City's Act of 2012, decentralization is concentrated at the regional provincial level (47 counties). Before this reform,

there were 174 decentralized local authorities. However, this reform may have shifted the ethno-politics that characterize national politics in Kenya to the county level, undermining the promise of peace and inclusion.³⁶

In some countries, the government holds special regional elections to address underrepresented interests in regional and local assemblies of some groups of the population, although this does not guarantee local autonomy. This is the case in Algeria, where the national government held special regional elections to address underrepresentation of Berber interests in regional and local assemblies. However, local autonomy remains weak and regional governments are still a mix of appointed executive and elected councils (with limited powers).

This combination of appointed and elected representatives exists in several countries in the region. The power distribution and way in which these two parts of municipal government relate to each other varies from country to country. In Egypt or in Algeria, for example, governors and executive positions are appointed, and have a dominant position in elected local councils. This has changed in Morocco since the adoption of the 2011 Constitution and the 2013-2015 reforms. In the tradition of some Anglophone countries, there is an appointed city manager with an executive role and strong decision-making powers — often appointed by the local council or the national government — while the mayor, although elected, plays a limited role. In Lusophone Angola, provincial government representatives are appointed by national government, and municipal administrators by provincial governors, although this needs to be signed off by national government.

Furthermore, across Africa a complex web of interfaces between elected local government and customary governance arrangements makes the overall picture of urban and territorial rule very difficult to read — or indeed reform. In Botswana, the *kgotla* (assemblies of tribes) function as a platform connecting communities to the public administration. Likewise, chiefdom councils in Sierra Leone, represent the first level of administration, but may have stronger connections with national parliaments and coordinated power-sharing with LRGs. The example of the constitutional reform of the *tinkhundla* system in Eswatini is another example of this complexity (see Box 2).

International organizations have also played an important role in promoting and supporting decentralization and the creation of institutions to support good governance and new democratic arrangements. Nevertheless, at the same time, international donors and financial institutions continue to back policies that recentralize resources in central governments, thereby weakening LRGs and capacity-building and strengthening this level of government.

Decentralization efforts at the continental level include the adoption of the African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development in 2014.

Table 2 Overview of crucial legal and institutional decentralization reforms over the past ten years (2009-2019)

Country	Reforms and City Enabling Environment (CEE) Assessment rating	
Angola	Since 2008, local governments have become budget units and the 2010 Constitution explicitly mentions local governments as spheres of government. In 2018, the Decree 40/18 increased, de jure, fiscal autonomy and decentralization of skills.	22
Benin	In the Constitution, decentralization is linked to local free administration and a multi-party system. Since 2009, departmental plans for inter-sectoral development have been formulated within the decennial national policy of decentralization and deconcentration. In 2017, the government initiated the review of the policy and laws on decentralization.	31
Botswana	In 2016, a new policy outlined the roles and responsibilities of all levels of government in the process of achieving sustainable local development. The country is still developing legislative tools to articulate the decentralization policy. The Constitution is neutral on the topic.	25
Burkina Faso	The General Code of Local Authorities identifies 11 blocks of local government responsibilities which were progressively transferred until 2015. A new reference framework was adopted in 2018 launching a ten-year decentralization strategy and five-year action plan.	28
Burundi	Decentralization is addressed in the 2018 Constitution. The country ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development in 2016. Since 2017, decrees to decentralize responsibilities have been proposed.	28
Cameroon	Since the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, a National Council for Decentralization has monitored the roll-out of decentralization policies. In 2018, the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development was created.	26
Cape Verde	The Constitution recognizes autonomy of local power and in 2010 the government adopted a Decentralization Framework. A new law on regionalization is underway.	n.a
Chad	The legal framework acknowledges the principle of subsidiarity and the 2018 Constitution recognized the 'autonomous local governments'. A capacity-building strategy for decentralization was formulated in 2013. In 2017, recommendations were presented to the High Committee on Institutional Reforms to improve financing of local governments.	24
Côte d'Ivoire	A new decentralization process has been underway since 2011. The general territorial organization is being reshaped with a corresponding general framework for decentralized administration: regional and municipal councils. Decentralization of responsibilities and resources is recognized in the 2016 Constitution.	26
Eswatini	The reforms mentioned in the 2005 Constitution had not been implemented five years later. Building on the national decentralization policy of 2006, a bill was presented to parliament in 2015 to replace the Urban Government Act that had been in place since 1969.	27
Ghana	The objective of decentralization reforms are enshrined in the 1992 Constitution. Since 2010, a quadrennial National Decentralization Action Plans (curr. 2015-2019) are factored within the 2016 amendment of the Local Government Act.	31
Guinea	In 2012, the government approved the National Policy Letter on Decentralization and Local Development and its action plan. This is a practical strategic instrument. Since 2015, the vast majority of elected representatives have been replaced by special delegations appointed by the central level; the last municipal elections were held in February 2018.	22
Kenya	The 2010 Constitution led to three major devolution laws in 2012: the Transition to Devolved Government Act; the Intergovernmental Relations Act; and the County Government Act. In 2017 a new Devolved System of Government Policy was adopted to clarify division of tasks between national and county levels. Both other devolution laws are under revision. In 2015, the Makeni County became the first LRG in Africa to instate financial commitments on climate change in law; other county governments are doing the same.	31
Madagascar	Together with the enactment of the 2010 Constitution, new legislative and regulatory provisions governing local governments were adopted in 2014. Although elections were held in 2015, according to legal and electoral frameworks, regions and provinces are still under the supervision of appointed chiefs. In 2017, the country ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development.	26
Malawi	The 1994 Constitution formalized the decentralization policy. From 2005 to 2014, local councils and executive bodies were appointed. In 2014, elections took place for heads of councils. The 2017 Local Government (Amendment) Act led to a change of wording replacing 'local authority' with 'local government authority' wherever it appeared in previous acts.	26

Table 2 Overview of crucial legal and institutional decentralization reforms over the past ten years (2009-2019)

Country	Reforms and City Enabling Environment (CEE) Assessment rating	
Mali	The Algiers Peace Agreement, signed in 2015, launched a process of renewing the Constitution. The constitutional review process has currently been suspended but new 'decentralization', 'territorial administration' and 'elections codes' were adopted in 2017. Stakeholders are currently addressing issues raised about the condition of the free LRG administration and the new Local Government Code. In 2019, the country ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development.	26
Mauritania	In 2010 the principles for a decentralization reform were presented and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2010-2015) consequently assigned additional responsibilities to the administrative regions. In 2017, the Constitution was amended (new Article 98 Title X) to establish regions as a decentralized self-government with political and financial autonomy — changing the system established in 1968.	26
Morocco	The 2011 Constitution (introducing direct elections for regional councils) and three organic laws of 2015 were conducive to the current territorial division and the assignment of competences to different layers of government. Regional and local elections, held in September 2015, are a milestone of the new de-concentration and decentralization process. Several administrative legal texts have been adopted since.	33
Mozambique	The 2004 Constitution provisions putting deconcentrated state services on an equal footing with local government services have been met with some ambiguity. In 2018, the Constitution was amended to recognize the political and administrative autonomy of provinces in relation to deconcentrated bodies.	19
Namibia	Decentralization is mentioned in the 1990 Constitution as are LRGs. Since 2010, the national government increased its regional presence and appointed regional governors. In 2016, no functions have yet been devolved to regional councils and the decentralization policies do not match local government responsibilities to local resources. The country ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development.	27
Niger	Local self-government is enshrined in the 2010 Constitution. The 2013 National Policy for the Modernization of the State has made limited progress; of the institutional mechanisms described, only the National Agency for the Financing of Local Authorities has been initiated. LRG elections scheduled in 2016 were postponed several times until 2019 and, most recently, the 2016 General Policy Statement makes little mention of decentralization.	26
Nigeria	The Constitution recognizes three levels of government and leaves decentralization to the discretion of the federated states. While elections were held in 2015, many mayors are still appointed by the governors. The most recent attempt at local government reform was made in 2017 with the Fourth Alteration Bill N°6.	23
Rwanda	Decentralization policy was implemented in phases. The third and current phase started in 2011. It focuses on the 'fiscal and financial decentralization' component of the Rwanda Decentralization Strategic Framework (RDSF). LRG responsibilities, competences and fiscal powers were established by a series of institutional acts in 2013. In 2018, as part of the national reform of local taxation, a new Property Tax was enacted.	32
Senegal	The General Local Government Code of 2013 consecrates Act III of the decentralization. It defines new legal, institutional and financial frameworks and clarifies distribution of responsibilities. In 2016, a guide for measuring the performance of local governments was adopted and tested.	32
Sierra Leone	In 2010, Sierra Leone's National Decentralization Policy set the goals to be achieved by December 2016. Yet the Ebola epidemic (2014-2016) disrupted the process at all levels. In 2016, a recommendation from the Constitutional Review Committee to include a Local Government Chapter relaunched the process. Meanwhile, ministries have kept control of the 'coordination' of non-devolved functions at the local level.	29
South Africa	Local governments are enshrined in the Constitution. Provincial and municipal governments are responsible for the roll-out of the Integrated Urban Development Framework adopted in 2016. This is South Africa's national urban policy (NUP), coordinated by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.	40
Tanzania	From 2008 to 2013, the second phase of the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) was implemented through decentralization by devolution. In 2013, after allegations of irregularities in the implementation of the Local Government Development Grant (LGDG), development partners decided to stop their contribution altogether. Since then, reforms were sought to relaunch a revised LGDG and the decentralization process as a whole. This process of local government reform is still ongoing.	34
Togo	The 1992 Constitution acknowledges decentralization but from 1987 until June 2019, no local elections were held. This is the result of various initiatives, such as the 2016 national roadmap for decentralization and local elections, the territorial reforms creating municipalities (2017-2018) and the creation of the National Decentralization Monitoring Council responsible for steering the process.	21
Tunisia	The 2014 Constitution marks a new era in the decentralization process. It takes into account the principles of electing local councils, independent administration, and the functional and financial local autonomy. The constitutional provisions are reinforced with the 2018 Code of Local Self-Government and the local election held the same year. The territorial reforms between 2014-2018 resulted in the creation of 86 municipalities, bringing the total number of municipalities to 350.	27

Country	Reforms and City Enabling Environment (CEE) Assessment rating	
Uganda	In 2009, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing published a Decentralization Implementation Plan to operationalize the main elements of the decentralization policy adopted in 2002. In 2013, this policy was reviewed and relaunched. Key revisions within the revised decentralization policy included the recognition and emphasis on public participation and traditional authority within local governance.	37
Zambia	Together with the enactment of the 2010 Constitution, new legislative and regulatory provisions governing local governments were adopted in 2014. While elections were held in 2015 according to legal and electoral frameworks, regions and provinces are still under the supervision of appointed chiefs. In 2017, the country ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development.	30
Zimbabwe	Since 2013, local government derives its authority from the Constitution. It also establishes provincial/metropolitan governments, granted with more powers and greater independence from the central government as compared to local authorities, and ten members of the provincial councils, as well as their chairs, are now democratically elected.	31

Source: Reforms per country, OECD/UCLG (2019); and CEE assessment rating of UCLG Africa and Cities Alliance (2018). There are four groups assessed. Ratings of 30 and above are countries with an environment that is most favourable. Ratings between 25 and 30 are countries whose environment is overall favourable but require certain improvements. Ratings between 20 and 25 are countries that require significant reforms towards a favourable environment. Ratings below 20 are countries with an environment that is globally unfavourable.

Decentralization efforts at the continental level include the adoption of the African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development in 2014. This seeks to ‘promote, protect and act as a catalyst for decentralization, local governance and local development in Africa’.³⁷ As of 2018, four African countries (Burundi, Madagascar, Mali and Namibia) had ratified the African Charter on Decentralization.³⁸ It has been adopted by the heads of state and government of the African Union and is awaiting their final signature and ratification before becoming an important instrument of governance for that organization. Nine other countries signed in 2015-2016 but the ratification process has yet to be completed.

Table 2 gives an overview of decentralization reforms in the past decade. However, some general trends can already be seen showing the wide disparity in the state of decentralization in the African region. Broadly, these correlate with the four categories of countries grouped according to assessment ratings that show the quality of their national institutional environments. These reveal wide variations ranging from those countries with the most favourable environment for the action of cities and regions, to those where the environment is found to be considerably unfavourable.³⁹

An analysis of the state of decentralization and reforms across the continent (Table 2), shows that despite improvements, and even when countries are meeting institutional criteria, in practice the governance space for LRGs may still be limited and even decrease over time. This is due either to the actions of national government, or because of external events, such as conflict (Mali), epidemics (Sierra Leone) or natural disasters, that are beyond the control of both national government and LRGs.

Such factors point specifically to the challenges faced in achieving **SDG16** — on peace, justice and strong institutions — but apply to all of the SDGs.

Some countries in Africa represent frontrunners that have already completed a major programme of local government reform, generally dating back to the 1990s. These include **South Africa**, which scores highest on the quality of its enabling environment by having one of the world’s most highly devolved systems of government. However, it is important to note that even here, devolution remains asymmetric. The so-called, category ‘A’ or metropolitan municipalities, have far more autonomy than smaller category ‘B’ or local municipalities, or the category ‘C’ district municipalities. Interestingly and directly relevant to the objective of expanding local capacity to deliver the SDGs in the South African experience, has been that it is much easier to strengthen and extend the capability of already strong and robust municipal structures than it is to reinforce weak structures or build new local government institutions from scratch.⁴⁰

Morocco is currently implementing a regionalization reform that has been formulated by a regionalization consultative commission and is the cornerstone of a new socio-economic and environmental development model that aims to reshape the coherence between national, regional and local development policies. **Uganda** and **Tanzania** perform well in terms of their institutional enabling environments. But local governments have been subject to the recentralization of power and authority by the central government in Uganda, while in Tanzania the process of local government reform is still ongoing and fraught with major challenges, particularly relating to sound funding streams to local governments.⁴¹

In other countries, formal/constitutional decentralization reforms are more recent, occurring in the last five to ten years. For instance, **Zambia** reviewed and relaunched its Decentralization Implementation Plan as the National Decentralization Policy in 2013. Key revisions include the recognition of and emphasis on public participation and traditional authority within local governance. These principles of collaborative governance are also in the current Zambian constitution adopted in 2016 that sees the creation of new council districts. However, operationally these new districts still lack the power or authority necessary to decentralize decision-making and resource mobilization effectively.⁴² Similarly, in 2017, countries such as **Benin** and **Kenya** started to revise decentralization policies and laws that had been enacted and implemented in the previous decade. However, as in **Senegal**, LRG performance in those countries is still not properly assessed and/or is patchy.

Meanwhile, **Kenya** has made substantial progress since the Constitutional Reform of 2010, the reforms of 2012 that transferred devolved powers to counties and the Devolved System of Government policy adopted in 2017. **Burundi**, **Ghana** and **Rwanda** have also made significant progress: national governments have implemented regular assessments of LRG performance and enacted important fiscal reforms. Along the same lines, the latest governance reforms in **Burkina Faso** in 2018 are aimed at boosting decentralization (a third cycle of decentralization), with financial programming

of resources to be transferred to LRGs, thus more closely aligning fiscal transfers and the real needs of LRGs and their constituency.

A number of countries still require significant reform efforts to begin to foster an environment that is favourable to LRGs. For instance, **Botswana** has one of the oldest decentralization policies in Africa but it is still in the process of developing a legislative tool for its decentralization policy and fiscal transfers from central to local government are unpredictable.⁴³ In **Guinea Conakry**, decentralization is guided by the National Policy Letter on Decentralization and Local Development and Action Plan from 2012, but although municipal elections were held in 2018, local governments still lack the administrative and fiscal power to act autonomously. In **Niger**, while complete municipalization of the national territory was adopted in 1999, municipal and regional elections have not been held since 2011 and the General Policy Statement of 2016 makes little mention of decentralization. The same is the case in countries such as **Cameroon** and **Angola**, where the President still holds executive power over local authorities. In Cameroon, local elections have been postponed since 2017 and regional councils, established by the 2008 Constitution, remain inactive. In Angola, parliament has approved a plan for the first local elections to be held in 2022. In countries such as **Côte d'Ivoire** and **Mali**, the functions of local government, as well as reforms, have been delayed or restricted by civil conflict. In the former, a new constitution was adopted in 2016 specifying the principle of local self-government and the country has reported that it actively involves LRGs in its SDG National Steering Committee and Standing Technical Secretariat.⁴⁴ In Mali, legal reforms are currently underway, including a new constitution, and the country recently ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development. In **Tunisia** the adoption of the Code of Local Self-Government, as well as new regional and local electoral laws, have been major milestones in the country's transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy.

Nonetheless, in other countries, decentralization reforms have stagnated or worse, regressed. There, the institutional environment for LRGs is unfavourable. This includes countries where local elections have yet to take place.⁴⁵ In **Egypt**, the last local elections took place in 2008 but the country has been functioning without local councils since 2011, when a court dissolved the ruling party after the popular uprising that ended the rule of President Hosni Mubarak. In **Sudan** and **Somalia**, there has been insufficient stability to date to improve existing institutional environments for LRGs. Power in such countries thus remains highly centralized and the space for participatory and transformative delivery demands associated with

A man walks in Bein-al Qasreen street in downtown Cairo, Egypt (photo: PnP!, bit.ly/33avN6k).



the 2030 commitments to have any prominence, is therefore limited. **Mozambique and Togo** fit into this category. Nonetheless, Mozambique adopted a new constitutional provision in 2018 intended to strengthen decentralization processes vis-à-vis deconcentrated public administration. This should result in the head of provincial executive bodies being directly elected at the next general elections to be held in October 2019. On another encouraging note, Togo has seen some positive developments including its first local elections in 32 years, which took place in June 2019.⁴⁶

State decentralization is only one part of the African localization challenge however, albeit a crucial axis for the delivery of the SDGs.

Territorial organization: structure of local and regional government

Sub-national government (SNG) arrangements are highly diverse across the continent and reflect the wide variety of LRGs, ranging from those in vast metropolitan areas to those in middle-sized cities or small towns, as well as rural municipalities, regions, counties and departments. These all represent different levels of power, capacity or resources for SDG engagement. In many countries, legal and territorial reforms for LRG and citizen participation are recent or ongoing. According to the Observatory on Decentralization of UCLG Africa, there is no evidence of a link between rates of urbanization and the number of LRGs in the country. A full overview of LRG systems and territorial organization can be found in Table 3.

A number of general patterns can be discerned. Francophone countries tend to have three or more tiers of SNG (although some of these can be administrative divisions, not elected local governments), while Anglophone countries tend to have two. A large number of countries have different arrangements for rural and urban areas. These include Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Mali, which distinguish between urban and rural municipalities. In Benin, a distinction is made between ordinary municipalities and the three main cities in the country that have special status. Guinea, Malawi, Niger, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe also give special status to specific cities or urban municipalities. Both Ghana and South Africa make distinctions between metropolitan areas, as well as regular municipalities and districts. Nonetheless, the diversity of the African experience in terms of the allocation of powers and functions once again mitigates any broad generalization.

Additionally, regionalization reforms have been implemented in the last decade.⁵⁰ As mentioned above, since 2015 within the framework of 'advanced regionalization', the regions in Morocco are self-governing entities. In Mauritania, in 2018, although still incipient, 15 administrative regions in six regions merged, with a regional council elected which in turn elects governors. In Ghana,

Box 1

Gender equality in local politics

Countries that have created legal provisions and platforms for citizen and community participation in local government, with a particular focus on gender equality include Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Eswatini, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Women's equal participation and representation in local decision-making processes is critical for prioritizing women's practical needs and interests and for shaping local government's agendas to accelerate local economic development (LED) and localization processes.

Countries that have legislated for candidate gender quotas in their constitutions or adopted the parity principle in electoral laws already in place tend to have higher levels of women representation in their councils. In 2018, out of 49 countries assessed,⁴⁷ only six had implemented more than one gender-responsive electoral policy. Rwanda is a frontrunner on the continent, with the highest level of participation of women in national parliament (63.8%), as well as about 40% of councillors, following local elections in 2016.⁴⁸ Moreover, in spite of the high proportion of youth in populations across the African continent, youth participation in formal civic and political processes remains low, especially amongst young women.⁴⁹ The rights of citizens identifying as Lesbian, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and all other sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBTQIA+) to participate fully in civic life are not protected in most African countries, and in some cases are still criminalized.

the national referendum of December 2018 established six new regions, bringing the total number of regions to 16. These are headed by deconcentrated regional coordinating councils. In Cape Verde, a law on regionalization currently being finalized should establish regions in the near future. Likewise, in Mozambique, provincial governors should be elected in the aforementioned general elections of 2019. Conversely, in Senegal, Phase III of decentralization has led to the suppression of the regions and granted 45 departments local government status, reclassifying municipalities as urban and rural.

On the other hand, progress has been somewhat slow in countries such as Chad, Cameroon and Namibia. In the latter, appointed regional governors should improve coordination between central government and elected regional councils, but central government functions have yet to be devolved to regional councils. Likewise, regional councils in Cameroon are still not active since being established de jure in 2004. Finally, in Chad, 12 years after establishing the status of regions, departments and municipalities, the first local elections were held in 42 (out of 365) municipalities — the appointment of the mayors in all other municipalities remains the responsibility of the national government.

Table 3 Territorial organization and number of LRGs by country (2018)

2018	System of government / form of state	Total n. of LRGs	1 st level (municipal)	2 nd level (intermediary)	3 rd level (regional/state)
Algeria	Republic/unitary	1,589	1,541	48	
Angola	Republic/unitary	181	163		18
Benin	Republic/unitary	77	77		
Botswana	Republic/unitary	16	16		
Burkina Faso	Republic/unitary	364	351		13
Burundi	Republic/unitary	119	119		
Cape Verde	Republic/unitary	22	22		
Cameroon	Republic/unitary	370	360		10
Central Africa Rep.	Republic/unitary	181	174		7
Chad	Republic/unitary	507	377	107	23
Comoros	Republic/unitary	57	54		3
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Republic/unitary	337	311		26
Congo (Rep. of the)	Republic/unitary	18	6		12
Côte d'Ivoire	Republic/unitary	234	201		33
Djibouti	Republic/unitary	8	3		5
Egypt	Republic/unitary	407	380		27
Equatorial Guinea	Republic/unitary	30	30		
Eritrea	Republic/unitary	56	56		
Eswatini	Constit. monarchy/unitary	68	68		
Ethiopia	Republic/unitary	927	916		11
Gabon	Republic/unitary	97	50	47	
The Gambia	Republic/unitary	122	114		8
Ghana	Republic/unitary	254	254		
Guinea	Republic/unitary	350	342		8
Guinea-Bissau ⁵¹	Republic/unitary	(46)	(37)		(9)
Kenya	Republic/unitary	47	47		
Lesotho	Constit. monarchy/unitary	86	86		
Liberia	Republic/unitary	102	102		

2018	System of government / form of state	Total n. of LRGs	1 st level (municipal)	2 nd level (intermediary)	3 rd level (regional/state)
Libya	Republic/unitary	120	120		
Madagascar	Republic/unitary	1,723	1695	22	6
Malawi	Republic/unitary	35	35		
Mali	Republic/unitary	763	703	49	11
Mauritania	Republic/unitary	233	218		15
Mauritius	Republic/unitary	143	130	12	1
Morocco	Constit.monarchy/unitary	1,625	1,538	75	12
Mozambique	Republic/unitary	64	53		11
Namibia	Republic/unitary	71	57		14
Niger	Republic/unitary	262	255		7
Nigeria	Republic/unitary	811	774		37
Rwanda	Republic/unitary	30	30		
Sao Tome and Principe	Republic/unitary	9	7		2
Senegal	Republic/unitary	602	557	45	
Seychelles	Republic/unitary	25	25		
Sierra Leone	Republic/unitary	22	22		
Somalia	Republic/unitary	n.a.	n.a.		6
South Africa	Republic/quasi-federal	266	257		9
South Sudan	Republic/unitary	115	83		32
Sudan	Republic/unitary	154	136		18
Tanzania	Republic/unitary	200	169		31
Togo	Republic/unitary	161	117	39	5
Tunisia	Republic/unitary	374	350		24
Uganda	Republic/unitary	169	169		
Zambia	Republic/unitary	103	103		
Zimbabwe	Republic/unitary	102	92		10
TOTAL		14,854	14,246	289	319

Key functions and responsibilities of sub-national governments

Most African countries recognize the establishment of LRGs and have administrative divisions at the provincial and regional level. However, the territorial divisions at the regional, municipal and sub-municipal level are not always clear or recognized in the constitution or other legislative texts. Moreover, for many countries, detailed information on intermediary levels, municipal and lower administrative divisions in terms of governance, functions, power and responsibilities are ambiguous or unspecified. Clarity around functional mandates and jurisdictions is necessary for successful SDG localization, but in such a way that it recognizes their multifaceted nature and takes in the local realities on the ground.

In that regard, it is important to take into account the role of intermediary cities. On the one hand, these play a critical function connecting rural and urban areas through the provision of services and facilities, although this is often not reflected in their formal service delivery mandates. On the other hand, metropolitan city governments are often faced with the challenge of administrative boundaries that cannot be adjusted quickly enough to keep up with sprawling informal urban areas — thus affecting their implementation of the SDGs.

The capacity of LRGs to deliver services is also frequently hampered by the disproportionate share of natural hazards and disasters associated with climate change that impact on cities, and the fact that cities paradoxically have neither the funding nor the mandates to plan or deal with the costs of disaster prevention and response. Countries such as Sierra Leone have recently experienced extreme flooding washing away infrastructure and disrupting service provision. In Liberia, Guinea and more recently, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, local governments have moreover been affected by the Ebola emergency. The burden that climate adaptation and disaster risk and mitigation represent for municipalities not even managing to keep pace with basic service delivery demands of their residents cannot be underestimated.

There are important differences between countries and sectors in the extent to which local governments across Africa have direct control or decision-making power through ownership

or direct management of infrastructure and the services they have to deliver as part of the functions allocated to them.⁵² This has major implications for how much they are able to plan for and deliver on targets related to the urban **SDG 11**, such as waste collection, public transport, and housing, but also services such as health (**SDG 3**), education (**SDG 4**) or water (**SDG 6**), since cities are the main delivery sites of these services. Often such functions are controlled at the national or regional level or through national public utilities or state-owned enterprises (SOEs). As the number of SOEs and other agencies involved with urban infrastructure and development increases, so the governance and administration costs grow and coordination of planning, customer relations and urban development becomes more difficult.⁵³ In this regard, there is a need to improve multilevel governance (MLG) of infrastructure and services through the reform of SOEs and innovative actions in the transport, water, waste and ICT, and energy sectors, adapted to each particular context, to ensure more efficiency and, overall, access to quality public services for all. The successful reform of Uganda's National Water and Sewerage Corporation is a case in point, which turned a loss-making company into a highly effective service provider. Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Zambia have also demonstrated success in reforming their water utilities, experimenting with private sector participation and improving their internal governance through performance-based contracts and third-party monitoring. However, in other countries, SOEs in the utilities sector continue to underperform and efforts to reform them have been unsuccessful (e.g. ESKOM in South Africa).

Informal providers in these sectors also represent a critical, but poorly documented, component of service delivery to some of urban Africa's poorest citizens. With about 55% of urban dwellers in Africa living in informal settlements, according to UN-Habitat (rising to as much as 90% in Central African countries such as Central African Republic and Chad), it is simply impossible to improve service delivery without taking informal actors into account. Acknowledging the importance of community actors provides an opportunity for upscaling and building alternative decentralized models of service delivery in ways that build local ownership and are more economically and environmentally sustainable. Important examples of success can be found in countries such as Egypt and Ghana where informal waste pickers have been integrated into the solid waste management sector; or in Kenya or Benin where local organizations have extended water and sanitation infrastructure into unplanned urban areas and manage the collection and billing in these areas on behalf of the water and sewerage utility company (see Section 3).

Clarity around functional mandates and jurisdictions is necessary for successful SDG localization, taking into account their multifaceted nature and the local realities on the ground.

Among the most important set of actors in roles that are auxiliary to local government in Africa are chiefs and traditional authorities. Their role in governance is in some instances legally recognized and incorporated by national government, such as in Botswana, Sierra Leone, Zambia or Eswatini (see Box 2). However, in the majority of cases, the developmental role of chiefs is not recognized, regulated or funded — with the resultant challenges in formative areas such as land allocation, control and management. This is a crucial difference between the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development (2014), which recognizes their role, and the previous African Charter on Democracy (2007), which does not.⁵⁴

Other local structures and associations that play a crucial role in the delivery of services at the neighbourhood and community level in Africa include resident and street committees, neighbourhood watch groups, home-based childcare facilities, but also large corporations (e.g. mining), as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or international organizations. All of these structures play a key role in contributing to service delivery at the most local level but in ways that are not always recognized, supported or democratically accountable.

There is a need to adequately acknowledge the role and contribution of all stakeholders across multiple levels and harness them towards the fulfilment of the SDGs through modes of co-production via grassroots or community engagement or through Public-Private-People Partnerships (PPPPs) and delegated management models, while safeguarding inclusiveness and accountability. Such partnerships can have impacts that go beyond the mere delivery and management of services and infrastructures, also contributing to strengthening urban adaptiveness and resilience. For instance, the experience from community organizations such as Slum Dwellers International (SDI) shows the potential of these collaborations with organized communities for achieving slum upgrading but also urban risk reduction and resilience-building at the same time (see Section 3).⁵⁶ The 'Know your City' campaign and programme launched by SDI and UCLG Africa, with the collaboration of the Cities Alliance, is a good example of such partnership contributing to the implementation of SDG 11.

Local and regional government finance

Finance is one area in the region where local government can rarely act alone, yet the fiscal needs in Africa are the highest of all regions. Overall infrastructure needs in Africa are estimated at between USD 130 billion and USD 170 billion per year.⁵⁷ This is based on current models of service

Box 2

The SDGs and traditional authorities in Eswatini

In the past decade, the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini has embarked upon significant local government reforms. One major policy shift in line with the 2005 Constitution and 2006 Decentralization Policy has been the incorporation of the traditional authorities or *Tinkhundla* into administrative government. This has been accomplished through the establishment of the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development (MTAD) created in 2009. Key responsibilities of MTAD include improving the capacity of regional *Tinkhundla* and chiefdoms to plan, implement, manage and monitor social development programmes and the delivery of basic services for their constituencies. With 55 *Tinkhundla* that cover the length and breadth of the country, these structures bring the monarchy closer to its citizens. However, the policy reforms that have been initiated fall short of the mandate of the 2005 Constitution which calls for fully accountable and joined up local governments, since chiefs are accountable not to their communities but to the King or *Ngwenyama*.⁵⁵

delivery, although the cost of alternative and more decentralized solutions should be explored.

The limited fiscal resource availability for African LRGs severely hampers autonomous policy impact. Thanks to the efforts of LRGs in promoting the importance of localizing financing for sustainable urbanization, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) makes provision for the appropriate assignment of autonomous fiscal functions at the sub-national level (paragraph 34). This is crucial for the implementation of wider global development agendas on the continent. The extent to which LRGs can effectively mobilize revenues, control expenditure priorities, and engage in borrowing activities are all fundamental to the fiscal autonomy and effectiveness of LRGs and their ability to innovate on SDG implementation.

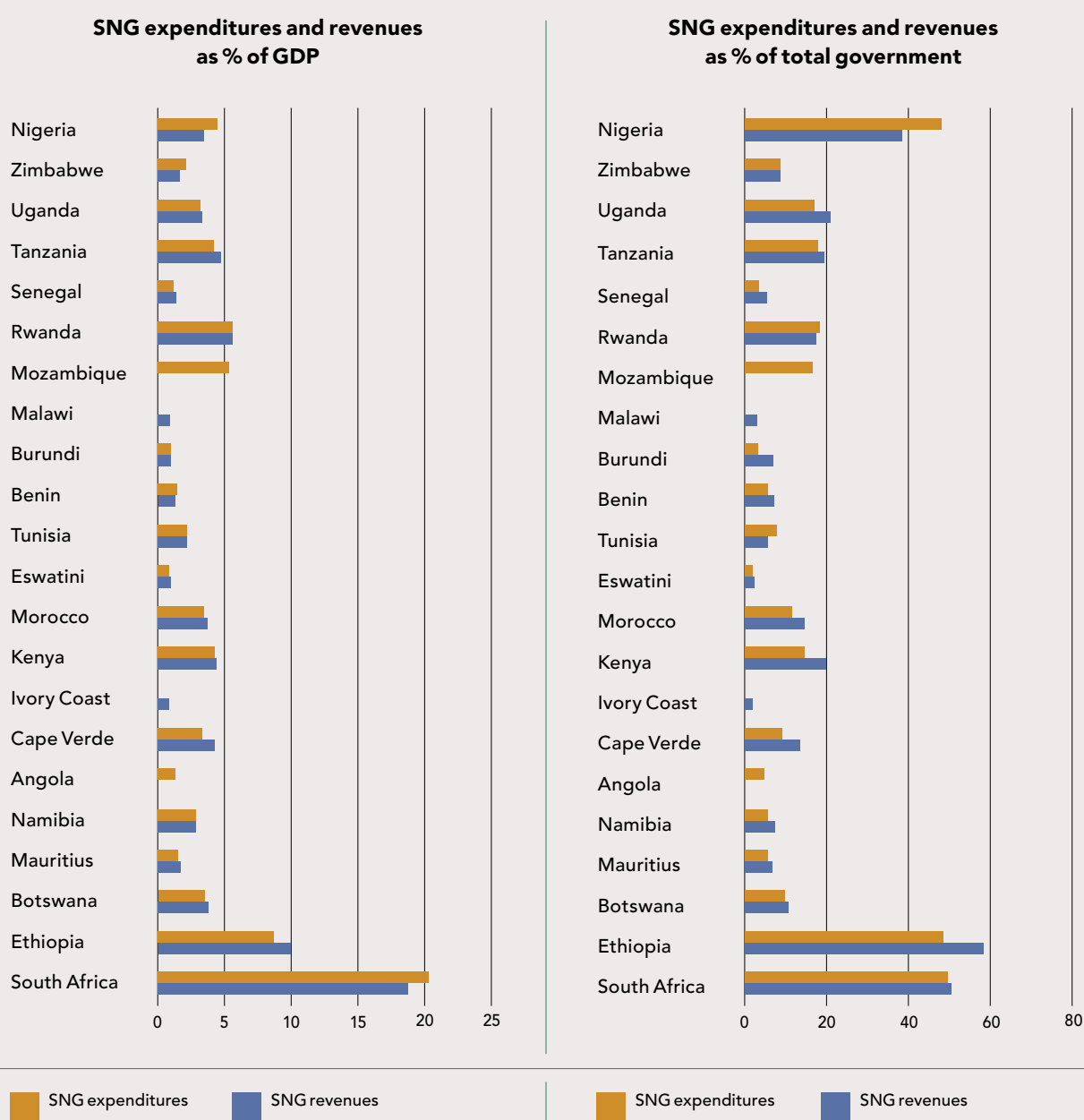
Notably, sub-national fiscal data for many African countries is difficult to access.⁵⁸ A few countries have complete and reliable data available online (e.g. South Africa, Morocco). Several countries have laws that require making fiscal documentation publicly available, for example Botswana and Kenya. Many countries have undertaken extensive processes of documenting their public finances at the sub-national level. According to UCLG Africa, at least 151 LRGs since 2016 underwent a Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment. This includes all provinces of South Africa (2013-2017); the regions of Ethiopia (2007-2015) and Nigeria (2008-2017); and capital

cities such as Douala, Cotonou, Ouagadougou, Antananarivo, Nouakchott, Dakar, Johannesburg and Tshwane, Tunis and Kampala. Despite these legal fiscal frameworks, challenges around data availability persist. Almost all African countries (except for South Africa) rank as limited or low on the Budget Transparency Index, suggesting that even when data is collected, other factors might limit transparency.⁵⁹

Where data is available for comparison between countries, there is wide variation in LRG

finance (see Figure 1). It is however important to single out federal countries (Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa) where LRGs control around half of state revenues and expenditures. Significantly, this is mainly concentrated at the level of federated states or provinces, and not at the local level. For example, in Nigeria, states are responsible for 37% of total expenditure (more than 55% of total public investment) and 26.9% of public revenue. Meanwhile, local governments are responsible for 11% of total public spending.

Figure 1 Expenditures and revenues of sub-national governments (% of GDP and % of total government, 2016)



Source: OECD/UCLG (2019).

Expenditure. Table 4 further illustrates the wide variations among cities and countries. From this table, it is not however possible to see the breakdown in revenue types (for example between own-source collections and grants). It is important that this is understood since own-source collection can be improved through local enhancement measures (such as updating the cadastre) and allows for expenditure prioritization at the local level. In contrast, grants depend on national contributions and may have conditions attached to them. Thus, higher levels of own-source collection may indicate higher levels of sub-national autonomy.

From an urban perspective, city authorities have differing levels of autonomy. This depends on how city governments fit into the fiscal architecture of countries and regions. This has implications for how fiscally strong these cities are and their ability to address the challenges of sustainable urbanization. Of note, the fiscal structure of countries is often uneven, with different types of responsibility given to different types of areas (e.g. urban, rural, metro, special economic zones — SEZ etc.). These differences are borne out when comparing primary and secondary cities in the same country. In terms of per capita spending, the UCLG Africa's Observatory on Local Finance data suggests that there is a mix with some countries having higher spending in primary cities and others having higher spending

in secondary cities. For example, Cotonou (which is the economic capital of Benin) spends almost five times more per capita than the city of Nikki; and in Burundi, Bujumbura spends almost four times more than Gitega. In these contexts, the larger cities may be significantly better resourced than smaller urban areas. This is even though their expenditure capacity is still lower than primary cities in the rest of the world, which in turn reduces their capacity to finance the delivery of public services, operation and maintenance of infrastructure and actual investments. In contrast, Kenitra in Morocco spends USD 50 per capita, compared with Rabat, which spends only USD 5 per capita. In cases such as these, there may be biases within the fiscal allocation structure or urban investments are directly financed by the national government so are not reflected in sub-national fiscal data.⁶⁰

Key to the fiscal autonomy of LRGs is control over core expenditure areas. The nature of the expenditure has important implications for the ability of LRGs to shape development processes. Most public expenditure is broken down into roughly three categories. These categories differ in terminology and scope from place to place. On the one hand, generally, staff expenditure (also referred to as personnel or personal emoluments), and operation and maintenance expenditure (O&M) make up the current or recurrent expenditures of LRGs. On the other

Table 4 UCLG Africa, Observatory on local finance 2018, selected cities

Region	Southern Africa		East Africa		West Africa		North Africa		Central Africa
Country	Malawi		Burundi		Benin		Morocco		Congo (Rep. of the)
Cities	Lilongwe	Blantyre	Bujumbura	Gitega	Cotonou	Nikki	Rabat	Kenitra	Brazzaville
Actual operating revenue (million)	3.880	2.201	1.68	0.247	21.393	0.765	12.366	26.377	28.692
Actual operating expenditure (million)	1.292	411.65	1.76	0.159	10.670	0.385	5.972	19.765	18.025
Gross savings (million)	2.587	1.790	0.081	0.088	10.722	0.379	6.393	6.611	10.666
Actual operating revenues/inh	3.53	4.58	4.51	1.16	31.51	6.73	10.22	67.59	6.21
Actual operating expenditures/inh	1.17	0.86	4.73	0.75	15.71	3.39	4.94	50.64	3.9
Capital expenditure/inh	0	0	1.42	1.30	14.63	5.81	0.58	43.71	0
Personnel costs/operating revenues	30.9 %	7.84%	68.73%	62.12%	30.35%	20.64%	46.34%	56.82%	62.72%
Self-funding margin	66.69 %	81.3%	-4.87%	35.53%	50.12%	49.66%	51.71%	25.07%	37.18%
Operating cost coverage rate	33.31 %	18.7%	104.87%	64.47%	49.88%	50.34%	48.29%	74.93%	62.82%

Note: amounts in current USD, budgets from 2015/16.
Source: UCLG Africa (2018), 'State of Local Finance in Africa'.

In Africa, sub-national public investment represented less than 20% of total public investment and 0.9% of GDP on average in 2016. In cities such as Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, the entire municipal budget is as low as USD 0.02 per capita.

hand, LRGs being able to shape investments (also referred to as capital expenditure or development expenditure) in local areas allows for political inclusion of communities. The citizenship finds tangible implications in participating in local elections and pushing for local accountability as well as engaging in participatory processes.

As the LRG finance systems of African nations become more complex, there is more and more variation across the continent (see Figure 1 for examples). There are several extreme cases: in Angola, Eswatini, Burundi, Senegal and Mozambique, for example, data from 2016 indicates that less than 5% of total public expenditure are controlled by local governments. Mozambique is a particularly compelling example. Approximately one third of public sector spending is carried out at the sub-national level, of which 16.6% of total public expenditure are controlled by deconcentrated bodies (districts), and 15.2% by the provincial level (which includes the city administration of Maputo). In both cases, the national government has had a strong oversight role, but this should start to shift with the regionalization trends and elections of provincial governors in 2019. In 2016, municipalities account for 1.6% of total public spending.⁶¹ On the other end of the scale, local governments in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa and Ethiopia, spend more than 15% of total public spending. In Ethiopia, data indicate that local government spending as a share of the federated state ranges from the Afar region where 38% of spending are at *woreda* (district) level to the Tigray region where 56% are at *woreda* level.⁶²

In Africa, sub-national public investment represented less than 20% of total public investment and 0.9% of GDP on average in 2016.⁶³ Resources for capital investment are negligible in most city governments in Sub-Saharan Africa, where in cities such as Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire the entire municipal budget is as low as USD 0.02 per capita.⁶⁴ In some countries, for example Kenya, there are regulations which indicate how much of a budget can be allocated to each priority (to get a budget passed, at least 30% should be allocated for development). This has to be a significant limitation on how much the

local government can do to advance the SDGs. In other countries, local governments have more autonomy to dictate spending priorities.

Similarly, local governments forced to make harsh trade-offs between O&M and capital may have to deal with infrastructure that is not sufficiently maintained (as it is politically more appealing to invest in new projects). Indeed, if many urban public investments are decided and managed by national government or central government utilities, O&M is transferred to local governments that were not part of the original planning or do not have the financial and human resources to cope.

Own revenues. Sub-national revenues are generally a combination of transfers from higher levels of government and own-source revenue collected from taxes, charges and fees. What happens locally is thus the outcome of a complex system of fiscal transfers, conditionality imposed by national government and local revenue practices.

According to public finance theory, transfers are meant to overcome the disjuncture between the ability of LRGs to collect revenue and the expenditure requirements placed upon them. In unitary governments and low-income economies, central government grants and subsidies tend to dominate sub-national revenue sources.⁶⁵ This is the case in most African countries, but with some notable exceptions such as Morocco, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Financial transfers from central government to local and regional authorities are determined in different ways in different countries. As a trend, there is a lack of transparency and predictability, making it difficult for local governments to plan and execute projects.⁶⁶

The relative scale and volume of fiscal transfers to local government vary greatly among countries, as well as between and among the local and regional government within countries. In some countries, larger cities with higher revenue-raising capacity get lower levels of grant transfers than smaller urban centres or rural areas. For instance, Addis Ababa receives almost nothing in national grants while smaller Ethiopian towns get the majority of their revenues from the central state. Similarly, in South Africa, metropolitan governments receive smaller grants per capita relative to secondary cities and towns. Overall, however, South African local governments get a much smaller proportion of their revenue from transfers, compared with most other African SNGs. Importantly, as much as the grant amounts that SNGs receive matter, so too does the nature of the grants. Ring-fenced or conditional grants are not uncommon. They allow for higher levels of oversight, but the highly regulated fiscal flows also constrict the flexibility of LRGs because this expenditure is tied and very tightly monitored, leaving little room for discretion or innovation.

Of note, many African national governments have been resistant to fiscal decentralization, in particular when it requires transferring centrally raised revenue to LRGs or allocating high value revenue streams to LRGs. In fact, according to the Institutional Assessment of Local Governments in Africa, 31 countries do not ensure transfers of resources or do so irregularly, and 12 countries are transferring resources and distributing them among local governments but annual amounts and methods of distribution are neither transparent nor predictable.⁶⁷ The problem is that rising expectations of what local government can and should deliver to residents requires higher levels of expenditure. The SDGs compound this as they place additional requirements on sub-national (and particularly local) governments to deliver on globally set agendas. Increasing responsibilities, coupled with limited revenue streams and partial or fragmented grant allocation processes, result in local governments facing unfunded mandates and insufficient local resources to meet their obligations.⁶⁸ What is emerging across the continent is a municipal fiscal squeeze as local expectations rise, without the matching fiscal resources to meet these expectations.

The fiscal squeeze faced by most LRGs means that they are under increasing pressure to improve revenue generation. All African countries allow LRGs to collect local revenue. This may include taxes, charges and fees of various sorts. In practice, many LRGs are not able to collect own-revenues as budgeted.

In terms of own-source revenue, property taxation is one of the major sources of sub-national collection.⁶⁹ In some cases, property taxation is the single source (i.e. Mauritius) or the outmost (95% of tax revenue in Cape Verde and South Africa in 2016).⁷⁰ In some cities, for example Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, land leasing (rather than property taxation) provides significant flows of revenue to the sub-national level.⁷¹ In both cases, an up-to-date and modernized cadastre system is key. This is a lesson learnt common to both the Financial Director of Cotonou and Ex-Chief Financial Officer of Port Louis.⁷² The Ex-Chief Financial Officer of Port Louis, with the support of central government and the Valuation Office has, since 2012, implemented the self-assessed scheme for property tax and mapped out areas where cadastre values are not up-to-date. The Financial Director of Cotonou implemented an Urban Land Registry in 1991 that became an online tool in 2012. The city government now signs an annual contract with the Directorate-General of Tax to improve tax collection: in Benin in 2016, property tax represented 23.3% of municipalities' tax revenue.⁷³ Similarly, local councils in Sierra Leone were required to implement a property cadastre system in 2017 to facilitate collection.

Moreover, local taxation, and property tax collection in particular, constitute a relationship between citizens and LRGs. Reforms and programmes to strengthen LRG tax revenue include a component of sensitization of the population to ensure high levels of taxpayer compliance. This is particularly the case in Mzuzu, Malawi with the 'My city, my responsibility' campaign. At the end of a five-year Revenue Mobilization Programme (REMOP), the revenues of the city had increased seven-fold to over USD 350 million in 2018.⁷⁴

In cases where key services are controlled by LRGs, their sale can provide valuable sources of revenue. In South Africa, for example, water and electricity charges are critical sources of revenue for metropolitan governments. In Kenya, county governments recently received the right to collect hospital fees, which provide large revenue streams at the sub-national level. However, these sources are more constrained in nature than property tax since they must be used to finance the ongoing provision of the service.

Sub-national revenue collections are small as a proportion of total government revenue, with the exception of South Africa, Ethiopia, Cape Verde and Mozambique whose local government revenue collection is more than 20% of total government revenue. In Morocco, 80% of local budgets come from tax revenues and 7.5% from tariffs and fees.

With sufficient political will, institutional changes, and buy-in from urban citizens, own-source revenue collection could be significantly raised.⁷⁵ An integrated strategy for domestic resource mobilization is necessary to ensure that new provisions in financial law ends unfair competition between territories that currently denies LRGs a significant share of their revenue. Collaborative frameworks between LRGs and national governments are crucial since the LRG share of tax revenue is often redistributed via a shared system, and in many countries national governments have control over tax base and tax rate. The parliament in Rwanda recently passed fiscal reforms to improve property tax collection rates and gradually reduce over-reliance on transfers.

Taxpayer compliance also reflects the quality of the social contract. In Uganda, the experience of Kampala is a compelling example of transformative reforms (see Box 3). Although it has not led to external investment, a common problem, this has helped improve credit ratings and the possibility of Kampala issuing its first municipal bond.⁷⁶ In the aforementioned Mzuzu, Malawi's third largest city, and in the Lagos state government in Nigeria, tax reform contributed to a significant increase in tax generation, allowing the leveraging of finances that could be invested in urban development, transportation facilities, housing, industrial and commercial development.⁷⁷

Box 3

Kampala Capital City Authority Accessing finance for urban infrastructure

In 2009, in an effort to explore ways to improve urban infrastructure and the related delivery of services across the city, the Kampala Institutional and Infrastructural Development Programme commissioned a study to investigate ways of corporatizing the management of the city. This culminated in a clear recommendation to create the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) through an act of the national government, where the authority itself would be responsible for the administration of the city as a management entity separate from the political arm of the city.⁷⁸

KCCA, which began operations in 2011, recognized that, faced with rapid urbanization and limited financial resources, it would need to take decisive steps to boost its organizational robustness and stability. Through careful planning and a commitment to improve both billing and collection efficiency, KCCA was able to increase revenue collection by 89% during a four-year period (2010/11-2014/15); create a strategic plan outlining a vision of the future of the metropolitan area, and set out the projects required over the medium term to achieve this vision.⁷⁹ The Ministerial Policy Statement 2017-2018 shows continued momentum in ever-increasing revenue flows in the city (Figure 2).⁸⁰

Nevertheless, despite increased financial flows and stronger municipal management, KCCA has been unsuccessful in attracting external investment, which is critically important to delivering the magnitude of the city's urban infrastructure needs. Existing legislation prohibits the city from borrowing anything more than 10% of its annual revenues, so amounts are insufficient to deliver on the city's long-term capital investment plan. This inability to access finance for urban infrastructure represents a sort of incomplete financial decentralization, a phenomenon plaguing cities across the Global South.⁸¹

Access to long-term financing. In Africa, the debate about how to retrofit and build new infrastructure, particularly energy and transportation, is a critical to overcoming historical divides and realizing the potential for sustainable urbanization. It is important that initiatives for infrastructure finance not only address the massive infrastructure deficits, but also promote greater regional integration and productivity. Strategic investment programmes must take into account the issue of scale in conjunction with the specific needs of each contextual space. Moreover, LRGs must be able to access long-term finance for LED and support their share of infrastructure investment for GDP growth, and social and territorial cohesion in the region.

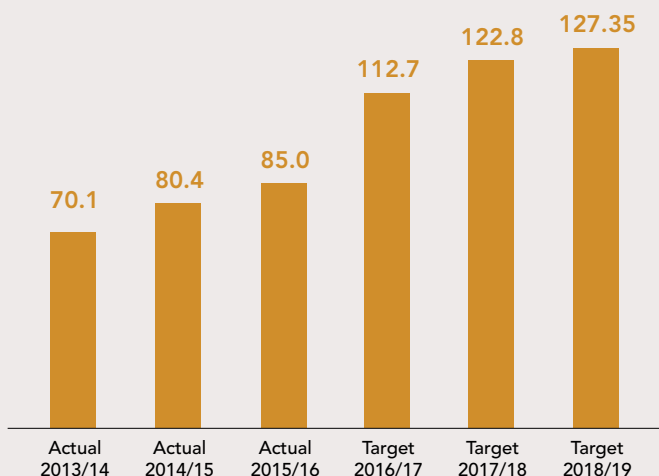
In the context of the SDG framework, several reports have pointed to the declining levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Africa.⁸² Africa has been the largest recipient of ODA in the last three decades although the role of ODA in promoting good governance and supporting an integrated and territorial approach to investment programming has been widely questioned. Moreover, overall commitments to Africa's infrastructure from all reported sources fell to USD 62.5 billion in 2016, the lowest level in five years, due mainly to a reduction in Chinese funding and private sector investments. There are also stark regional differences in terms of the destination of funding for infrastructure, with almost one third going to West Africa, about 20% each to North and East Africa, and only 10% each to Central and Southern Africa. Most funding goes to the transport, water and energy sectors and less than 3% to ICT, which is crucial to enable technology-based innovations for economic growth and development.⁸³

A number of special multilateral funds have been set up in recognition of the need for infrastructure finance. At the national level, some countries are putting financial instruments in place to attract funding and strengthen coherence between national policy, major infrastructure investment and climate.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, these do not have a strong urban focus, nor do they go beyond conventional development finance solutions.⁸⁵ While borrowing is often seen as the best (indeed often the only) way for LRGs to raise capital for infrastructure projects, in many countries LRGs have neither the legal authority to contract debt, nor do their projects match the current feasibility, bankability and risk standards that are required. Consequently, LRGs are not able to access the full range of financing options available locally, nationally or globally.

Even in cases where LRGs can borrow, this is often restricted or tightly controlled (as is the case for South Africa at the provincial level, and for Kenya and Malawi). Eswatini, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa (at the

Figure 2

Local revenue projections (billions of Ugandan shillings)





Road traffic in Kampala, Uganda (photo: Carlos Felipe Pardo, bit.ly/30Sjzhj).

municipal level), have been granted borrowing power with no restrictions but the levels of local government borrowing are unknown due to a lack of available data. Although in many countries LRGs can borrow, they may not be seen as creditworthy by lenders. It is therefore important for cities to communicate to credit institutions so that lenders have a better understanding of local financial contexts and needs.

While the continent has no municipal bank or fund, a number of recent initiatives focus specifically on strengthening the financial means of implementation for the SDGs in Africa at the sub-national level. Ultimately, these show that it is possible for cities to mobilize private reimbursable

resources to finance their development, set examples and learn from them to trigger a virtuous dynamic of transformational change.


With the support of the African Development Bank (AfDB), UCLG Africa has initiated an African Territorial Agency to set up a cooperative fund financed by an initial investment from the continent's main cities (initially some 20 cities).⁸⁶ The programme aims to help cities to raise additional resources from financial institutions and capital markets to finance their investments. UCLG Africa published a call for expressions of interest in January 2019 to mobilize a first group of cities and local governments to be its founding members.

Development banks and international donors can assist governments and cities building the necessary technical capacity and creditworthiness to further unlock and expand access to finance, for instance through the creation of local government finance institutions (LGFIs).⁸⁷ Important work in this area is happening in West Africa (see Box 4). AfDB has also committed to create the Urban and Municipal Development Fund (UMDF) for Africa, to target urban growth management and climate-resilient development in African cities by improving governance and the quality of basic services, including infrastructure. This will be supported by a EUR 4 million grant from the Nordic Development Fund (NDF).⁸⁸

Moreover, case studies of municipal bonds in Johannesburg, Douala, Dakar, Kampala and Nairobi show that the chief obstacle to municipal bond issuance for raising funds is not related to non-eligibility, lack of capacity or lack of creditworthiness, but to regulatory systems or political blockages which prohibit municipalities from issuing bonds.⁸⁹ Hence, national governments, within an MLG approach, have an important role to play in making laws to enable borrowing or supporting intermediary financing institutions. To date, only South African and Nigerian LRGs have successfully created a municipal bond market. In Nigeria, a total volume of EUR 1.186 million was levied against 23 GHG emissions in local currency. Both these cases demonstrate the potential of innovative financing tools that leverage the need for more sustainable and renewable energy through green bonds and local climate change funds.

Furthermore, a number of LGAs provide technical assistance for project preparation to access funding mechanisms for cities, such as the C40 Cities Finance Facility, which supports larger cities to prepare and deliver climate change projects. In Africa, this includes support in the cities of eThekweni and Dar es Salaam.⁹⁰ ICLEI in turn provides support through a range of initiatives that better position LRGs to access finance and to implement innovative local financing mechanisms.⁹¹

LRGs need to be involved in these innovative approaches to mobilize and improve access to finance down to the community level. This can in turn contribute to strengthening participatory local government and an accountable, effective state.⁹⁴ In Kenya, the Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT) provides funding and financial services to the Kenyan Homeless People's Federation (*Muungano wa Wanavijiji*) by using the funds of saving groups as seed capital for revolving funds at the community, city and national scales. The funds offer informal settlers a range of financial products, including community project loans, which allow savings groups to finance social housing, sanitation and basic infrastructure in an affordable way.⁹⁵

Examples from across Africa show the innovative ways in which technologies are used to harness the fourth industrial revolution in ways that include the youth and women and contribute to generating much-needed employment and income generation opportunities. The launch of the software platform *MaTontine* that automates the workings of local savings groups in Senegal is an example of the way in which technology and innovation can improve and expand financial services for low-income populations. This builds on traditional savings circles which can be found across the continent.⁹⁶ Similarly, women in the Nigerian city of Kano are using Whatsapp to communicate with local politicians, accessing information about health and safety, connecting to online study groups, as well as advertising small businesses or services, resulting in income generation and saving opportunities.⁹⁷ 

Box 4

Local government finance institutions in West Africa

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), together with the Global Fund for Cities Development (FMDV), is working in Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali and Niger to identify the most effective ways to sustain and diversify the financial resources of local government finance institutions to reinforce and support local authorities and bolster their financial resources.⁹² This is in partnership with the Network of African Finance Institutions for Local Authorities (RIAFCO) and through the Municipal Investment Finance programme.

Such support is particularly relevant for secondary cities in Africa, which are among those with the most rapidly rising infrastructure needs.⁹³ RIAFCO was created in 2014 by founding members Cameroon, Gabon, Burundi and Mali and now has around ten members, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Niger and Senegal.

2.3 Intergovernmental relations

Given the holistic, interlinked and transversal nature of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Global Goals cannot be achieved through single sector or silo approaches. As an example, SDG target 17.14 calls on all countries to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development, as a cross-cutting means of implementation.⁹⁸ Policy coherence is necessary to ensure that progress achieved in one goal contributes to, rather than undermines, progress in other goals. SDG 17.14 thus entails considering institutional mechanisms for coherence, policy interaction and policy effects.⁹⁹ Such a framework requires effective intergovernmental relations that facilitate not only coherent policy but also fiscal mechanisms and approaches to implementation. This is encouraged by the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development (see Box 5).

Notwithstanding, the continent has a disproportionate number of low-income countries that are aid beneficiaries or dependents of donor support. In relation to the priority given to the localization of the SDGs, it is important to note the opportunity to transform donor methodologies and conditionality to be more supportive of MLG and local development, in particular. In that sense, it is essential to shift assistance away from mainly sector-oriented and nationally-centred budget support to a more decentralized and LRG-centred territorial approach to development (TALD). Moreover, donors, development banks and investors should move away from models that reinforce business as usual, top-down and sectoral approaches (dealing usually with governments at the ministerial level) to SDG localization.

Generally speaking, translating and devolving national policy and expenditure processes around the SDGs to the local level in a coherent and integrated way necessitate not only a change of values but also the recalibration of laws and the budget, along with the reconfiguration of the civil service and the overall structures of government. Furthermore, ensuring greater policy coherence for sustainable development is a responsibility shared across a wide chain of actors, including the private sector, civil society and ordinary citizens.

National urban policies (NUPs) are a useful intergovernmental policy instrument for achieving SDG target 11.a and facilitating the establishment of such collaborative and coherent frameworks across different levels of governance

and between interdependent LRGs and territories, regardless of their size. Various efforts to adopt and implement NUPs are underway across the continent. A narrow definition of NUPs, or the policies resembling them, means a total of 18 African countries have NUPs.¹⁰⁰ A broader definition of NUPs that concurs with the UN-Habitat description of '[a] coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate, government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term', means a total of 38 countries have explicit or implicit NUPs in early or more developed stages.¹⁰¹

Housing and transport are a major focus in these NUPs. However, many explicit NUPs lack resources to deploy comprehensive NUPs and very few countries have the financial and technical

Box 5

African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development

Adopted in 2014, the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development succeeded the African Charter on Democracy (2007) and, before that, the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990). It is the first charter to enshrine decentralization, calling for foundations for democratic local governance and providing an adapted framework for its implementation in the African context and local realities (Art. 8). The charter also provides for the inclusion of marginalized groups and gives them priority in public service delivery (Art. 10).

The charter makes provisions for LRGs to gain expenditure powers and discretionary powers to manage financial resources, including the provision to allow, and properly regulate, LRG access to borrowing (Art. 16). It also recognizes the need to create legal and institutional environments that encourage cooperation between different levels of government (Art. 6 and Art. 11). The territorial approach is moreover evident in specifying that national governments should involve LRGs in policies that directly or indirectly affect them and at the same time, LRGs should involve national governments in developing and implementing local plans. Finally, the charter encourages inter-municipal and horizontal cooperation which includes the right to form LGAs (Art. 17).

capacity to implement their NUPs. In some countries, urban strategies have expired and need to be reviewed.¹⁰² A number of countries, such as Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Africa, have started making headway in creating a 'whole-of-society' approach to the implementation of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda through the creation of MLG frameworks. Notwithstanding, while some challenges have emerged, ranging from lack of follow-up and review mechanisms to incomplete fiscal decentralization and lack of coherence between local policy guidelines and the different global agendas, it is notable that all of these countries have NUPs in place.

These countries are taking advantage of coordination mechanisms (see Table 1) to ensure greater collaboration between their national and sub-national levels of government. A few countries have integrated local governments into localization efforts. They include Benin, which has made significant strides in the integration of the SDGs in national and local plans in ten (out of 12) departments, as well as annual investment plans (including both programmed actions since 2017 and implementation costs). This relies mainly on the mobilization of local governments and civil society: local governments were not only key participants in the development of a roadmap for the implementation of SDGs, but also represented through the Association for Communes in Benin (ANCB) in the Steering Committee, chaired by the Minister of State for Planning and Development for the SDGs, and the Technical Steering Committee, chaired by the Directorate-General for Coordination and Monitoring of the SDGs.¹⁰³ The diagnostic, developed by the AIMF and the ANCB in 2018, did stress the need to strengthen the operations of the Departmental and Local Committees in the follow-up of the SDGs and the need to revise ongoing sectoral plans.¹⁰⁴

Ghana stands out for actively creating institutions and mechanisms for SDG review and implementation, as well as championing the SDGs ahead of presenting its first VNR to the 2019 HLPF.¹⁰⁵ In December 2017, it hosted the High-Level African Roundtable on SDG Implementation.¹⁰⁶ The country has taken advantage of its 'decentralized planning system' to ensure better coordination of the SDGs. National SDG coordination is done through the National Development Planning Commission supported by 16 regional coordinating councils, as well as the SDG Implementation Coordinating Committee. The latter brings together key ministries and agencies (including the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development) as well as other stakeholders.¹⁰⁷ The National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG) cooperates with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). Under the District Assemblies' Common Fund, at least 10% of GDP are transferred to the assemblies.¹⁰⁸

In both Benin and Ghana, local governments are seeking innovation in integrated, multilevel governance through the City Deals approach. Using this approach, cities engage challenges of rapid urbanization by working together in new partnerships. In Kumasi, Ghana, a comprehensive decongestion effort of the city centre is being implemented by an interdepartmental local government team together with other local governments and stakeholders such as market queens, transport unions, and the university. In Sèmè-Podji, Benin, waste management is being addressed by local government together with SMEs, religious authorities, sanitation groups, and line ministries. It ensures an iterative alignment of the policies with upcoming reforms in the waste management sector.

Burkina Faso has also experimented in this area by joining together the mechanisms for the follow-up to the National Plan 2016-2020 (*Plan national de développement économique et social* - PNDES) and the SDGs, from the national to the local levels. Under its National Steering Committee for the PNDES, sectoral committees and 13 regional committees should ensure a regular dialogue at the territorial level, help to coordinate the implementation of the PNDES, and ensure the follow-up of regional and local development plans and annual assessments. The regional committees involve sub-national tiers of government for vertical and horizontal policy coherence. Local governments may choose to prepare local development programmes that are aligned with the PNDES but focus on specific local priorities. At the regional level, implementation of the PNDES is reviewed every six months, by a committee (*cadre régional de dialogue* – CRD) that is chaired by the regional governor, with participation of the president of the regional council, deconcentrated ministerial bodies, local governments, the private sector, civil society and other actors. At the national level, responsibility for the review of the implementation of the PNDES rests with the Office of the Prime Minister and draws on inputs from the regional and local level. However, the extent to which there is a separate follow-up and review structure for such a local development programme is up to the local governments to decide.¹⁰⁹

In Kenya, SDG implementation and monitoring is coordinated by the National Treasury and Ministry of Devolution and Planning. The SDGs Coordinating Department established in 2016 within this ministry serves as the national focal point. An SDGs liaison office was set up within the Secretariat of the Council of Governors to improve coordination between the two levels of government. Focal points have also been identified in all 47 counties. The national government, in collaboration with the Council of Governors, has prepared county integrated development plans

(CIDPs) to guide implementation of the SDGs by local authorities. The monitoring framework is designed to be inclusive and provide for multi-stakeholder participation from local through to national level. At sub-national level, tracking progress towards the achievement of the policies, projects and programmes outlined in each CIDP is undertaken through the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES). However, a number of challenges for the implementation of the SDGs in this framework can still be seen. For instance, despite having the responsibility for many functions, the counties do not always have the financial or technical resources and capacity to fulfil their responsibilities. These challenges are most salient in the country's smaller cities. Moreover, county budgets are often not implemented as planned. Even if the budget aligns with the five-year CIDPs, there is no certainty this will lead to on-the-ground commitments.¹¹⁰


In addition, in Kenya, a multilevel and stakeholder approach has been adopted for the implementation and financing of the SDGs at all levels of government. This was done through the creation of SDG units at national and county level and the involvement of private sector, NGOs and non-state actors under the coordination of the Ministry of Devolution and Planning. The Council of County Governors also participated in the preparation of the VNR in 2017.¹¹¹

In federal countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria or Sudan, on the other hand, LRG involvement is restricted to the regional or state level. In Ethiopia, federal, regional and city administration government representatives were involved in consultations preceding the adoption of the SDGs into the national planning framework through the Growth and Transformation Plans, but are considered mere implementing agencies of the SDGs.¹¹²

In South Africa, the national government is currently working to improve the coordination and coherence of its global, regional, national, provincial and local development plans, particularly with respect to the 2030 Agenda, the African Agenda 2063 and the SADC-RISDP. SDG implementation and coordination have been facilitated through an NDP, medium-term strategic framework (MTSF) and provincial growth and development strategies (PGDSs), as well as integrated development plans (IDPs) at the local level. In addition, in 2016, the national government adopted the integrated urban development framework (IUDF), South Africa's NUP and an initiative coordinated by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in collaboration with other national departments, LGAs and international partners. Together with the NDP, the IUDF represents South Africa's vehicle to

localizing the New Urban Agenda. The IUDF has been promoted not as a policy or plan, but as an approach to activating an 'all of society' approach to implementing the New Urban Agenda and its four strategic goals of spatial integration, inclusion and access, inclusive growth and effective governance. Provincial and municipal governments are responsible for the roll-out of the IUDF through their provincial and municipal spatial development frameworks and strategies. However, clear guidelines and support for the implementation of the IUDF at the local level, and the way in which the IUDF can contribute to other development agendas such as the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, are so far absent. This is because the responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of these agendas lies with other government departments such as the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Finally, among those countries that do not refer to a specific strategy or mechanism to involve LRGs, some have however mentioned developments towards decentralization as policies that could favour the implementation of the SDGs. The Central African Republic emphasizes the need to strengthen the presence of the state throughout the territory by implementing the law on local government bodies, ensuring access to basic services, and creating regional development policies to facilitate and promote decentralization. Mauritania, meanwhile, underlines the need to involve its regional councils (recently created as part of its decentralization policy) in the process of defining the country's NDS. In Tunisia, follow-up on the decentralization process and strengthening the role of the country's regions to 'leave no one territory behind' are also central to its sustainable development policies.¹¹³ Notwithstanding, in these countries, no local government bodies are currently involved in any national coordination mechanisms.

As these examples show, it is only through high-level political support, national reform and institutional change, following a territorial development strategy, that enabling environments can be created to bring LRGs and other relevant stakeholders into the sustainable development process, and such efforts must be well-integrated. Inclusive stakeholder participation is crucial to ensure the SDGs are owned by people, diverse actions are aligned, and resources and knowledge for sustainable development are mobilized. Hence, the quality of intergovernmental relations and policy coherence, and not just a narrow understanding of devolution, is key to overall progress towards the development agendas in Africa. In this context, unless they are tailored to African contexts and supported by domestic institutions, including local governments, NUPs will struggle to overcome the political, financial, and practical barriers to effective, accountable multilevel governance.¹¹⁴ 

3. Local and regional governments' contribution to the localization of the SDGs

The high-level support for the SDGs and related development agendas at continent, regional and national level in Africa has elevated the profile and emphasized the importance of LRGs as leading actors towards more sustainable development. However, as shown in Section 2, this is yet to be reflected in the overall political, institutional and fiscal environment for LRGs.

The limits to locally-driven SDG action in Africa influenced by the intergovernmental framework, the political realities of decentralization, the local impact of macro trends, such as climate change and armed conflicts, and the local consequences of the policies of development actors, such as donors or global finance, have been noted. The analysis now moves to consider the de facto role of LRGs in delivering the SDGs. The localization process refers not only to what the devolved parts of the state need to do to run cities. It also acknowledges that, if the SDGs are to be realized, local buy-in will be imperative and local government, broadly defined, will need to assume even greater responsibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and related development agendas in fostering a territorial development approach. The role of international cooperation and partnerships to support the efforts of LRGs in this regard is crucial to ensure that ‘no one and no place is left behind’.

This section provides an overview of LRG initiatives in the localization of the SDGs. LGAs and LRG networks are playing an important role in supporting the localization of the SDGs across the continent, through the organization of conferences and workshops for SDG exchange and awareness-raising, training, pilot projects or technical support. Important progress is also being made when it comes to the alignment of national and local strategies with the SDGs. LGAs as well as decentralized cooperation and international donors play an important role in building local capacity in this regard.

Looking at practices at the LRG level, there are inspiring examples of SDG implementation



An artist paints in the Centre for Research and Dialogue of Mogadishu, Somalia (photo: AMISOM, bit.ly/30WUXnw).

from across the continent. Some of these predate the adoption of the SDGs and related development agendas, while others explicitly refer to them. Progress in pushing forward an African Charter for Local Gender Equality, based on the principles of Agenda 2063, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda — in particular SDG 5, represents an important example of the kind of actions that can simultaneously address multiple goals and development agendas.¹¹⁵

Recognizing the progress that is being made in terms of efforts towards SDG localization at local level, there is still much scope to strengthen the means of implementation of the SDGs. This is especially needed when it comes to the mobilization of finance to sustainably address Africa’s massive infrastructure deficit and the costs related to climate change adaptation as well as the capacity and locally embedded partnerships required for the production of much-needed data for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. ◉

3.1 Role of local government associations and local and regional government networks in the localization of the SDGs

Local government associations (LGAs) and LRG networks play an important role in the localization of the SDGs in Africa, connecting cities and regions, facilitating peer-to-peer learning and exchange, as well as capacity-building, and directing advocacy towards national governments, regional institutions and international partners for sub-national sustainable development. The specificity and scale of African challenges around SDG implementation and the imperative of finding alternative and increased funding for the new focus makes the strengthening of African LGAs and LRG networks even more imperative.

African networks and regional organizations

Regional and continent-wide institutions are actively working to involve LRGs in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the African Agenda 2063. These include African LRG networks, e.g. UCLG Africa; LRG international networks with strong presence in Africa, e.g. Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF); the Union of Portuguese Speaking Capital Cities (UCCLA), and their partners, e.g. Cities Alliance; as well as regional and international organizations, e.g. the AfDB, the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Southern African Development

Community, UN agencies and European Union (EU) programmes.

In November 2018, with the support of the African Union, UNECA, UN-Habitat and others, the 8th edition of UCLG Africa's major Africities Summit of African local leaders took place in Marrakesh, Morocco with a focus on 'the transition to sustainable cities and territories: the role of local and sub-national governments in Africa'. Through the African Academy of Local Governments (ALGA), as well as UCLG learning programmes, UCLG Africa has in the past year promoted learning, peer-to-peer exchanges and workshops on SDG localization in eThekweni-Durban, Accra, Ouagadougou and Morocco, as well as Cape Verde and Mali. The regional network is also developing strong regional and international advocacy to integrate African LRGs into regional development agendas, and encourage ratification by national governments of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, adopted by the African Union in 2014 (see Box 5).

Furthermore, UCLG Africa's Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) has been active in raising awareness among women mayors on leadership and the implementation of the SDGs, and has been lobbying national parliament around SDG 5 on gender equality. UCLG Africa has initiated a series of major programmes related to the global agendas to reinforce the role of local governments in Africa. These include the Climate Change Task Force; the Global Dialogues on the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs; the Local Economic Development Network (LEDNA); the Knowledge Dialog Sharing Hub; the Observatory on Finance and Human Resources; the Pan African Peer Review Facility; different professional networks (Africa Magnet, Finet and Technet); LGA support, territorial coaching, transparency and integrity; and the African Capitals Culture, as well as the joint initiative with Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and Cities Alliance to support local data collection in slum areas, 'Know your City' (see Box 7).¹¹⁶

The crucial role of international city networks and local leadership for SDG advocacy, learning and innovation must be acknowledged, although the implications for smaller, less affluent and less well-connected cities are as important.

Through Metropolis, the UCLG section representing major cities and metropolitan areas of the world, large African cities such as Accra, Abidjan, Abuja, Brazzaville, Dakar, eThekweni, Johannesburg, Libreville, Rabat and Tshwane have come together as a unified voice in the quest for sustainable development in the Forum of African Metropolitan cities.¹¹⁷ The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) cities programme unites the cities of Bamako, Douala, eThekweni, Lagos, Lusaka, Nairobi and Rabat to debate key issues related to sustainable development, in particular housing and infrastructure development.¹¹⁸ Similarly, the African Capital Cities Sustainability Forum functions as a network for the mayors of capital cities across Africa to achieve those SDGs that are common to all.¹¹⁹

In Central Africa, where capacity among local governments is especially weak, the AIMF provides support to the Association for Central African Mayors (AMCA) for different capacity-building initiatives. This project provides support to the cities of Bangui (capital), Bambari and Bangassou. The AIMF has an advocacy group dedicated to localizing the SDGs and has supported localization and decentralization reviews in African francophone countries. Similarly, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) supports a project on local development and the SDGs in the regions of Thies, Kaffrine and Louga in Senegal and the municipalities of Agbétiko, Kovié and Katanga in Togo.

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) has also been active in building the capacity of its members to localize the SDGs, with a strong focus on local economic development (LED). This forum launched a number of pilot initiatives, mainly in Botswana, Eswatini, Ghana, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, to assess how LED can help local governments deliver the SDGs. The CLGF also developed a range of knowledge products to support SDG localization, including a Commonwealth Local Government Handbook that profiles local government systems in member countries, with a section on how countries are localizing the SDGs.

International city networks such as C40,¹²⁰ ICLEI¹²¹ and the philanthropic initiative of 100 Resilient Cities (100RC)¹²² have moreover been instrumental in supporting climate and resilience initiatives across the continent. For example, the creation of the Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015 is an opportunity to support Sub-Saharan cities in their fight against climate change and in their efforts to ensure sustainable access to clean energy. The covenant has developed guidance on energy and emission data collection in developing cities. One hundred and thirty eight cities across Africa have already joined and nine developed action plans within this framework.¹²³ Together with the World Bank's City Resilient

Programme, the Global Covenant of Mayors announced a USD 4.5 billion at the One Planet Summit for 150 cities in the world, including a cohort of ten cities in Africa.

The African section of ICLEI also seeks to foster dialogue and exchanges on sustainable development issues. ICLEI organized several events, including the Local Climate Solutions for Africa Congress, a platform for local African leaders to build positions and forge partnerships to accelerate local climate action. The meetings and other activities facilitated by these networks also offer key platforms for peer learning and exchanges that can benefit SDG localization.

A number of African cities are members of multiple city networks and alliances, which attract funding opportunities and generate global connectedness, allowing cities to leverage and coordinate their connections to these networks in ways that are complementary and create synergies. The crucial role of international city networks and local leadership for SDG advocacy, learning and innovation must therefore be acknowledged, although the implications for smaller, less affluent and less well-connected cities are as important.

Local government associations' actions at country level

Many local government associations (LGAs) in Africa, as well as the organizations of intermediary levels of governments (regions, counties, districts, departments or provinces) have established a wide range of initiatives to mobilize and support their members around the SDGs, often backed by or in collaboration with regional and international networks.

In **West Africa**, the national LGAs of Benin, Ghana and Togo are the most actively involved in championing the implementation of the SDGs at the local level. In **Benin**, the National Association of Municipalities of Benin (ANCB) developed a roadmap to support the localization of the SDGs. The ANCB also launched benchmarking between municipalities to measure progress and facilitate knowledge exchange on good practices (through a group of 37 out of 77 municipalities) and supported the constitution of committees for the follow-up of the goals at municipal level. In **Togo**, the Union of Togolese Communes (UCT) has initiated, under the Local Governance Enhancement Project for Community Project Management (PAGLEMOC), actions aimed at strengthening the capacity of the communes in the management of water, hygiene and sanitation projects, which links to SDG 6 and 11.¹²⁴ It also undertook training for local officers (for both Benin and Togo, see Section 3.2).

In **Ghana**, the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG) addressed the SDGs at its 2018 regional conference and will have a special SDG focus at its 2019 national

conference. It has undertaken SDG awareness training for staff and its national executive council. It also organized nationwide SDG sensitization workshops in all ten regions in 2017 'to educate our members and the local authorities on what these targets and goals are and why it is important to carry everyone along' and the benefits these have for District Assemblies.¹²⁵ The national association in collaboration with UCLG Africa and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public and Administration organized a training of trainers' workshop in April 2019 to build the capacities of local government officers to localize the SDGs and adopt strategic planning at the local level. The NALAG has also been working with the CSO Platform on SDGs and development partners such as the German Society for International Development (GIZ) and CLGF on SDG localization. The CLGF has been implementing a programme to help align assembly development plans to LED and SDG targets.

In **Mali**, the Association of Municipalities of Mali (AMM) organized an information session on the SDGs for mayors and regional presidents on the National Day of Communes of Mali in 2017. These sessions were attended by nearly one thousand participants, including 703 mayors of Mali.¹²⁶ In March 2019, an EU-funded AMM programme was launched to support the localization of the SDGs in 100 Malian municipalities over a 24-month period. The programme also aims to assist municipalities in formulating participatory budgets at the local level and providing training sessions to local actors to facilitate the appropriation of SDGs. The AMM has also taken measures to address the lack of regular coordination between stakeholders on the SDGs. A taskforce of locally elected officials has been set up there, which serves as an advocacy group to follow-up on the national strategy and on the implementation of the SDGs at the LRG levels. The AMM is also active in many committees that are dealing with SDG-related issues, including the National Committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs.

In **Niger**, the Association of Municipalities of Niger (AMN) disseminated brochures and information on the localization of the SDGs during the National Day of Communes of Niger held in Agadez in July 2018. In **Cape Verde**, the Association of Cape Verde Municipalities (ANMCV) is leading a project in partnership with UNDP to support localization of SDGs in nine municipalities and the development of municipal strategic sustainable development plans using a participatory approach. The municipality of Praia in partnership with UNDP also launched an awareness-raising initiative to promote SDG empowerment among citizens in three of Praia's districts.¹²⁷ In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the Union of Cities and Municipalities of Côte d'Ivoire (UVICOCI) participated on the 15-16 May 2019

to a 'structured dialogue' organized by the AfDB and UCLG Africa on the role of African local governments in the localization of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and access to climate finance (for more information see Section 3.2.).¹²⁸

In **East Africa**, the national associations of Kenya and Rwanda stand out for their efforts to promote SDG localization. In **Kenya**, the Council of Governors (CoG) has established an SDG unit to coordinate SDG implementation and support county governments in mainstreaming SDGs in projects, programmes, strategies and plans. The CoG also takes advantage of social media to sensitize the public to the SDGs. With regard to monitoring activities, CoG members are currently working, in collaboration with the national Monitoring and Evaluation Department, to develop a county monitoring and evaluation handbook that incorporates the SDG indicators. Handbooks have already been produced for the counties of Kericho, Nakuru, Taita Taveta and Kilifi. In addition, the CoG has established the Maarifa Centre as Kenya's premier devolution knowledge-sharing and learning platform for effective governance and service delivery to disseminate experiences related to the SDGs.¹²⁹

In **Rwanda**, the Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) has been undertaking specific awareness-raising and training workshops on the SDGs and SDG localization for its staff and members with support from CLGF/EU and GIZ. In March 2017, the RALGA convened a high-level, multi-stakeholder dialogue that brought together key local government decision-makers, government representatives and other relevant stakeholders. The national association is also leading an SDG localization project supported by the CLGF and the EU, to strengthen the capacity of local governments to adapt the SDGs to their local realities. The project's components include SDG awareness-raising campaigns; providing technical support to three pilot districts (Bugesera, Gicumbi and Ruhango) for the inclusion of the SDGs in their development strategies; and helping monitor SDG implementation in their local development strategies. In addition, the RALGA Inclusive Decisions at Local Level (IDEAL) project, with support from Dutch VNG International, in all six of the country's secondary cities (Musanz Accelere, Rubavu, Huye, Muhanga, Nyagatare and Rusizi), is strengthening local capacities in areas such as planning, inclusive LED, sound local social welfare strategies and services, and gender-sensitive policies.

In **Uganda**, the Local Government Association (ULGA) has started working with UNCDF to raise awareness of the SDGs among politicians in district councils.¹³⁰ As part of the CLGF's Framework Partnership Agreement with the EU, the ULGA is also operational in Uganda's different regions

to localize the SDGs.¹³¹ LGAs have organized training workshops to build the capacities, staff and members to localize the SDGs. In **Burundi**, the Association of Local Elected Officials (ABELO) has organized workshops on local planning and the performance of municipalities in the implementation of the SDGs to help communes prepare local plans for the SDGs. In **Mozambique**, the Association of Local Governments (ANAMM) provides support to municipalities for the planning and introduction of SDG-related projects in different municipalities, placing strong emphasis on resilience, and reducing the risk of disasters. The ANAMM is also empowering municipalities in the fields of local finance, planning and budgeting from a gender and children's rights perspective. At the local level, Pemba City is participating in a two-year project funded by the EU known as 'Shaping Fair Cities', which seeks to spread knowledge about the SDGs to local decision-makers, civil servants, grassroots organizations and citizens.

In **Southern Africa**, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has been raising awareness about the SDGs among its political leadership and members, for example during the National Member's Assembly. It further made active use of the media to disseminate the SDGs, in particular through its 'Voice' magazine. The LGA developed a book, 'Leading change — Delivering the New Urban Agenda through Urban and Territorial Planning' in support of SDG 11. In December 2018, SALGA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UN in South Africa to support South African municipalities in localizing the SDGs. With regards to its monitoring activities, SALGA also developed a 'municipal barometer' web-based portal and works closely with Stats-SA to promote disaggregated local data.¹³² SALGA is also collaborating with ICLEI Africa which in July 2019 organized South Africa's first SDG symposium, bringing together local government representatives to discuss SDG localization.¹³³ In **Zambia**, the Local Government Association (LGAZ) has organized several workshops to train local elected officials in LED. The LGAZ also has plans to introduce a project on 'Building Effective Partnerships for Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Governance', in 2019, with the support of the CLGF.¹³⁴ In **Botswana**, Francistown and Gaborone have held training workshops, with the support of UN-Habitat and the UNECA, to improve their capacities in such areas as monitoring, producing disaggregated data and reporting on SDG 11, using various statistical tools.¹³⁵

In **North Africa**, specific pilot projects and technical support to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs have been put in place. In **Tunisia**, with the support of different partners, the National Federation of Tunisian Municipalities

The South African Local Government Association has developed a 'municipal barometer' web-based portal and works closely with Stats-SA to promote disaggregated local data.

(FNVT) is leading a project to develop strategic plans to contribute to localizing the SDGs (e.g. Madinatouna project, see Section 3.2) and a programme on waste management (Wama-net), involving 20 Tunisian cities. The FNVT organized training labs for its members (Lab'baladiya). A first PRIHQ1 programme for neighbourhood upgrading was implemented in 65 municipalities; a second programme will involve 121 municipalities. The Tunisian association in collaboration with GIZ also launched the 'Citizen Space' initiative to restore trust between the citizens and the municipalities while increasing transparency and accountability at the local level. In addition, the municipalities of Mahdia and El Mourouj have promoted a more integrated and participatory approach to sustainable urban development, through the SymbioCity framework, supported by the international agency of the Swedish Association of Municipalities (SKL International). The city of Sousse has also been active in setting up projects in the fields of citizen participation, energy efficiency, sustainable environment, urban mobility and migration, with support from national and international experts (see Box 9). In **Algeria**, a joint programme of the Ministry of the Interior, the EU and UNDP has been launched, called the Capacity-building Program of Local Development Actors (CapDel) (see Section 3.2).

In **Cameroon** in **Central Africa**, the United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (UCCC-CVUC) organized several workshops to raise awareness on the SDGs held in parallel with national events or conferences (e.g. *Salon sur l'Action Gouvernementale*). In 2017, the national association together with the AIMF organized a national workshop to present the results of a study on the localization of the SDGs in Cameroon and promote decentralization to support the localization of the 2030 Agenda.

Despite these positive efforts, relevant data availability on the SDGs remains weak and continues to impede effective reporting on the Global Goals. As pointed out by UNECA's 2017 assessment of African progress on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, 'approximately six out of every ten SDG indicators cannot be tracked in Africa due to severe data limitations'. 🕒

3.2 Local and regional government efforts to align the 2030 Agenda with local policies

The alignment of national and local strategies to the SDGs

In aligning national and local development strategies, there is also an opportunity to integrate the different global and regional agendas such as Agenda 2063, the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the New Urban Agenda. In many countries across the continent, localization strategies and initiatives around these commitments are still taking place separately. There is thus a need to foster synergies between the different global and continent-level development agendas through synergistic implementation plans and monitoring at the local and regional level.¹³⁶

In Africa, in part as a result the commitment of LGAs and regional networks and in partnership with national governments, important steps were taken to align national and local plans for a coherent implementation of the development goals. In fact, almost all respondents from 19 countries stated that they were undertaking initiatives or specific projects to support the alignment of local development plans with the SDGs.¹³⁷

In **North Africa**, international support has been crucial in supporting SDG alignment at the local level. In **Tunisia**, the FNVT with the support of UNDP, Cities Alliance, GIZ, VNG International and Medcities, has helped eight cities to align

the SDGs with their strategic development plans in the context of the Madinatouna project.¹³⁸ The cities of Beja, Gabes, Jendouba, Kairouan, La Soukra, Medenine, Monastir, Sidi Bouzid and Tataouine have already aligned their development strategies for 2030 with the global agendas. The region of Médénine has promoted a participatory process to elaborate a guiding framework for the localization of the SDGs in the region. In **Algeria**, ten pilot municipalities are currently working on the adoption of a participatory approach to local development planning and the integration of the SDGs into the planning, implementation and monitoring of local strategies. In this context, the municipality of Ouled Ben Abdelkader has made important efforts to adopt a participatory approach through the inclusion of local residents into a Consultative Council for Development. This initiative is part of the CapDel (see Section 3.1) that benefits from a new law on local government adopted in 2018, seeking to foster the implementation of the SDGs at the local level.¹³⁹ In **Morocco**, Chefchaouen mapped the 63 projects belonging to the Communal Action Plan 2016-2022 and municipal budget against the SDG framework. This exercise allowed the city to set priorities and identify the social, economic, environmental, cultural and human aspects of actions and municipal investment for the coming years.¹⁴⁰

In **West Africa**, there is a mix of national leadership and international support across countries, with LGAs and regional networks playing a key role in the alignment process. In **Benin**, as mentioned above, the ANCB is supporting the alignment of the SDGs with local development plans in the municipalities of ten departments, in partnership with the national government. The third-generation local development plans (PDCs) developed in 2017 have largely taken into account the SDGs and their annual investment plans (PAIs), including the programmed actions and related implementation costs. In **Togo**, building on efforts

In Tunisia, the cities of Beja, Gabes, Jendouba, Kairouan, La Soukra, Medenine, Monastir, Sidi Bouzid and Tataouine have already aligned their development strategies for 2030 with the global agendas.



A family outside the Wamba Local Government Primary Health Care Centre in Wamba, Nigeria (photo: Dominic Chavez/The Global Financing Facility, bit.ly/2LYhR9P).

initiated in previous years, the UCT has supported five communes (Tabligbo, Bassar, Pagouda, Kanté and Mango) in the preparation of their local development plans. These have been aligned with the country's national development plan and the SDGs, through participatory and inclusive consultation mechanisms and the creation of a handbook.¹⁴¹ In addition, other local governments have elaborated their local development plans in line with the SDGs (Kpalimé, Kara and Dapaong).

A similar initiative is underway in **Niger**, through a top-down initiative led by the ministry in charge of the country's long-term action plan for SDG implementation together with the Ministry of Community Development and Land Use Planning. This includes the creation of a guide for planning and monitoring the SDGs at the local level and for integrating the SDGs into the country's Communal and Regional Development Plans.¹⁴² In **Nigeria** there is evidence of extensive integration of the SDGs into the main national development policy and planning blueprint (NERGP), as well as within the various state development plans. Many of these plans, including for Benue, Taraba, Yobe, Kaduna, Ebonyi, Kano, Jigawa, Anambra, and Delta States, are aligned to the SDGs.¹⁴³ In **Burkina Faso**, the Association of Municipalities (AMBF) has helped municipalities to draw up local development plans and to align them with both national development strategies and the SDGs. Thirteen intermediary cities will work on their respective master plans and the four

regional capitals will revise their land-use plans.

In **Ghana**, LGAs are required to follow guidelines laid down by the national government and to align their medium-term district development plans and activities with the SDGs. The NALAG works with the Assemblies and the NDPC to assist such alignment 'in order to aid reporting and aid standardization and localization.'¹⁴⁴ In this framework, the CLGF has been undertaking a programme on achieving the SDGs through LED in Ghana. to improve the capacity of four Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to align their development plans to LED and SDG targets.¹⁴⁵ In **Côte d'Ivoire**, LRGs are encouraged to align their local plans, and in particular the Triennial Programme, with new national priorities and the SDGs. The national associations (UVICOCI and the Assembly of Regions and Districts of Côte d'Ivoire — ARDCI) are involved in the process of localization.

In **Sierra Leone**, the Local Councils Association (LoCASL) has organized workshops to streamline the SDGs into local development programmes. This alignment process has also been supported by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, both of which have encouraged the 22 local councils to integrate the SDGs into their district and municipal development plans. The country is replicating an inclusive local governance model, entitled 'The People's Planning Process', led by an NGO. This involves placing chiefdom

The Kenyan Council of Governors has worked with the national government to guide SDG implementation at the local level. To date, all 47 of Kenya's county governments have aligned their County Integrated Development Plans with the SDGs.

and village-level planning at the centre of the formulation and implementation of all development plans and fostering cooperation with local government councils.

In **Senegal**, there are new ongoing mechanisms for integrated regional and urban development plans in several regions (e.g. Area Dakar-Thiès-Mbour), as well as new urban plans (e.g. Dakar Horizon 2035). In **Cape Verde**, in the context of the ongoing project on SDG localization conducted in partnership with UNDP, the ANMCV has organized several training sessions in eight pilot municipalities, to support the creation of thematic committees for local development platforms and the SDGs. Each platform will put together a Strategic Municipal Plan for Sustainable Development for the 2017-2030 period.¹⁴⁶ In **Mauritania**, following the creation of regions

Community work for the protection and management of the Mutsamudu River Basin, Comoros (photo: IWRM AIO SIDS, bit.ly/2MkhQvQ).



and the obligation to integrate the concepts of climate change and sustainable development into various planning areas, the Nouakchott Region has embarked on an environmental resilience and sustainable development project.

In **Central Africa**, the alignment of the SDGs with local and regional development plans is still in its early stages and is mostly encouraged by national governments. In **Cameroon**, the national government has promoted the alignment of the SDGs and of the national development plan with local plans (e.g. the municipalities of Nguelemendouka and Mbona) and, more recently, with the Public Investment Budget.¹⁴⁷ However, the worsening of conflicts in different regions of the country does not aid progress.

In **East Africa**, national leadership has been essential to steer the alignment of county and local plans to the SDGs, in particular in **Kenya**. Indeed, county governments are required to demonstrate how they will mainstream the SDGs and other global frameworks such as the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Management. The Kenyan Council of Governors (CoG), working in collaboration with the national government, has prepared a series of County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) for 2018-2022, to guide SDG implementation at the local level. To date, all 47 of Kenya's county governments have aligned their CIDPs with the SDGs. Thus, the SDGs will be mainstreamed at the local and county level.¹⁴⁸ In **Uganda**, the ULGA has started working with lower levels of administration about contributing to the implementation of the SDGs but it has found that national alignment must cohere to fiscal management reforms so that LRGs are enabled to collect and spend revenue in accordance with local priorities.¹⁴⁹ In **Rwanda**, local development strategies (DDSs) are being aligned with the national agenda and SDG targets through an assessment of the level of integration of SDG indicators with the support of RALGA in three pilot districts (Bugesera, Gicumbi and Ruhango). It is planned to roll out the results in all the other 27 districts of the country, although it will require further expertise and new resources to continue the work on SDG alignment and awareness-raising.¹⁵⁰

In **Tanzania**, the national government has promoted the integration of the SDGs into its local development plans and projects. A strategy for the localization of the SDGs has also been presented to the planning officers of the country's regional secretariats, its district planning officers (DPOs) and the assistant administrative secretaries responsible for coordinating with LRGs. Awareness and sensitization workshops have also been organized for LGAs to help integrate the SDGs and national plans into local plans and budgets. On **Comoros**, the municipalities of Moroni, Mitsamiouli, Wella, Iconi, Foubouni, Mutsamudu,

Ouoini and Nioumachouoi are aligning their local strategies to the SDGs. In **Madagascar**, regional consultations have been organized in three of the 22 regions. At least 18 local governments, including that of Antananarivo, are now beginning to refer to the SDGs in their commitments and policies. In **Mauritius**, following the adoption of a Climate Change Charter in 2015, action has been taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) at the community level. Moreover, all the country's seven districts and five municipalities, as well as the Rodrigo Regional Assembly, have adopted disaster risk reduction strategies.

In **Southern Africa**, local authorities have presented district and urban development plans to align their priorities with the NDP in **Botswana**.¹⁵¹ In **Malawi**, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) has organized regional workshops for local councils in the regions to review local development plans with the objective of aligning the priorities of rural and urban councils with the SDGs.¹⁵² In **South Africa**, progress has been made in terms of aligning national policies to the SDGs, but local policy alignment remains incipient. The metropolitan municipality of eThekweni-Durban represents a frontrunner when it comes to SDG localization at the sub-national level through the alignment of its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (see Metropolitan Chapter Box 3). A similar effort has been undertaken by the City of Cape Town, which has aligned its resilience strategy to the SDGs down to the target level. However, it should be noted that both these cities are metropolitan municipalities and thus are better able to facilitate work around the SDGs than some other cities might be.

As shown above, the alignment of the SDGs with local and regional development plans is gaining ground but at different paces in different countries of Africa. International organizations, city networks and LGAs are crucial in terms of facilitating such activities, especially in the absence of national guidance. However, national government leadership is indispensable in ensuring that alignment and implementation is long-term, covering all territories and scales of government, and also matched with adequate fiscal capacity. This shows that successful SDG localization must be both bottom-up and top-down.

Data availability for monitoring at the local level

Monitoring and reporting (SDG 17.18 and 17.19) are essential for understanding where and why there has (or has not) been progress on the SDGs (as well as on any other global or national policies or goals), and where further action is needed. In spite of continental and national level efforts to improve data collection and monitoring for the SDGs, vast challenges remain. The prevalence

of informality in Africa has implications for the measurement of the SDGs, as targets and indicators rely on official data, which exclude unregulated informal activities.¹⁵³ Therefore, Africa is currently vastly underrepresented in existing global urban databases.¹⁵⁴

A number of initiatives are underway that focus on strengthening the capacity of national governments to collect and monitor data on the SDGs and on urbanization. In 2018, the African Union adopted the (second) Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa 2017-2026, which seeks to support the production of timely, quality, disaggregated and harmonized statistical data across the continent for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of development agendas such as the 2030 Agenda and Africa 2063.

In addition, **some countries have opted for mechanisms to collect sub-national place-based data.** The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) has conducted a review of data availability for SDG indicator production, which has resulted in the creation of the National Data Roadmap, to be implemented through a multi-stakeholder advisory committee.¹⁵⁵ Rwanda provides another

Box 6

SDG monitoring and implementation in Rwanda

SDG monitoring and implementation in Rwanda is being done through various fora and systems that include performance contracting (*imihigo*), which is now being mainstreamed under an online results-based management system. The National Institute of Statistics is responsible for the annual assessment of performance contracts for all government agencies and districts; as well as Citizen Report Cards and an Annual National Dialogue (*Umushyikirano*) attended by top leadership and a cross-section of all leaders, and representation of Rwandans in the diaspora. The Annual National Dialogue is streamed and broadcast live on all media and citizens can provide instant feedback or comments to their leaders.¹⁵⁷

However, one drawback is that these mechanisms do not seem to be directly connected to the National Urban Fora (NUF) that Rwanda has organized since 2008. The NUF are regular multi-stakeholder platforms to support sustainable urban development processes and debates through action-oriented meetings. These meetings address the way in which cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed, through cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and various urban actors.

The purpose of the third of these meetings to be held in 2019 was to assess the progress made and reflect on the continuing implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Rwanda.¹⁵⁸

Slum Dwellers International and data co-production

Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a network of community-based organizations of the urban poor in 32 countries and exists in hundreds of cities and towns across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The network has helped create a global voice for the urban poor, engaging international agencies and operating on the international stage to support and advance local agendas.

SDI's work, specifically their slum dweller federations' use of data, has supported the empowerment of women in slum settlements. As a particularly active member of Cities Alliance, the organization's methodologies of facilitating inclusion and participation of informal citizens in urban management through a gender lens, are now an integral part of all projects being developed by Cities Alliance, and many local governments have their own engagement with SDI outside of donor-funded projects.

SDI has been part of the New Urban Agenda-SDG Joint Work Programme of the Cities Alliance, which focuses on the implementation of the global agendas relevant for cities, and has emerged as possibly the most powerful agent for localization of the SDGs in Africa. Through the momentum created by SDI, African local governments' pivotal role in service delivery and the imperative of bolstering that capacity if poverty is to be meaningfully addressed, has gained significant prominence.

example of where different government levels and stakeholders are involved in monitoring and evaluation for the SDGs albeit with some limitations (see Box 6). The next step is to connect national statistical offices and their regional offices with LRGs. Indeed, unless each local authority in Africa has and is able to utilize its local data,¹⁵⁶ the evidence and knowledge base that informs delivery will be seriously compromised. For instance, Kenya has established the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System; meanwhile Zimbabwe created focal points appointed by local authorities to support the work of the national State Statistical Committee. Interoperable data facilities (that currently exist in only a few of the largest and best-resourced African cities such as the Gauteng region in South Africa) and systems based analyses that reflect and inform the complex choices local government officials face in Africa, will be essential. Only with these will the interplay and linkages between SDGs be understood and managed, and local government be able to maximize its limited capability.

Such processes also need to include and empower local communities, civil society and other stakeholders to understand, contribute and use

data independently in order to hold government to account. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are important in terms of making the voice of groups in society that are not always represented heard in formal decision-making platforms, thus ensuring that 'no-one is left behind'. A prime example of this comes from the work of SDI, which has pushed for a politics of enabling communities to interact directly with local government by making poor communities eligible and ready for improved service delivery. Examples of such innovative efforts include the work of SDI on collecting data with local governments and communities in slums in partnership with UCLG Africa and Cities Alliance 'Know your City' (see Box 7).¹⁵⁹ The CSO African Monitor is also involved in the monitoring and the review of the 2030 Agenda by working together with youth organizations and networks in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia.¹⁶⁰

A number of examples of research-policy partnerships between LRGs and academic institutions and researchers across the continent also show the importance and potential of multi-stakeholder knowledge partnerships to assist local governments with knowledge and data production for SDG localization (SDG 17.16). The issues of intellectual property, quality and interoperability, and the lack of capacity in African local governments to act as the curators of public information on the local environment, make data management issues central to the localization of the SDGs in Africa.

Since 2017, researchers of the Mistra Urban Futures research network¹⁶¹ have been working with local governments in the cities of Cape Town and Kisumu to support the understanding and implementation of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda and to facilitate transdisciplinary as well as cross-city learning and interaction.¹⁶²

Another initiative that bridges the gap between government and academia is the Leading Integrated Research for the 2030 Agenda in Africa, a five-year programme that seeks to increase the production of high-quality, integrated (inter- and transdisciplinary), solutions-oriented research on global sustainability by early career scientists in Africa. This knowledge is used to address complex sustainability challenges in the region. Projects in Lagos and Accra as well as Luanda and Maputo look into co-produced data collection and monitoring of SDG 11 involving different urban stakeholders, including local governments.¹⁶³ A range of urban research institutes across the continent, such as the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) based in Freetown are doing similar work with local government and other urban stakeholders around producing knowledge relevant to the SDGs.¹⁶⁴ 

3.3 Local and regional government-driven initiatives to localize the SDGs

Many cities across the continent carried out initiatives, before the 2030 Agenda or the New Urban Agenda were adopted by the international community, that posthumously relate to different areas of the SDGs. In these cases, SDG localization is implicit. The absence of SDG ‘branding’ of these initiatives does not detract from the value they add to the global campaign and the efforts to localize and spread awareness of the global 2030 commitments through SDG projects on the ground. Increasing the traction of the SDGs through the implementation of such projects has the potential to become an awareness-raising tool in itself to help African LRGs conceive of new instruments and priorities that are compatible with the 2030 Agenda, as well as with the African Agenda 2063. Simultaneously, this may contribute to scaling up existing efforts that have wider transformative potential and that will maximize progress towards the SDGs as well as other global policy targets and the New Urban Agenda principles.

Strong examples of the potential to leverage SDG benefits can be found across African cities and regions. The diverse initiatives led by African LRGs have been clustered into cross-cutting themes to address the interconnectedness of sustainable development and local action to achieve sustainable development pathways. These local initiatives and policies can be viewed as possible responses to the challenges of African urbanization, including widespread informality, poverty, and lack of access to basic services; growing vulnerability to climate change impacts; and increasing inequalities, urban violence and conflicts. They show how LRGs can lead transformative approaches from the territories.

Dealing with multidimensional poverty and widespread informality for improved access to basic services

Poverty remains one of the biggest barriers to development in Africa and the poor state of education, health, basic services and lack of food security especially affects the most vulnerable populations, such as women, children and the elderly. In Africa, poverty is a widespread problem, although more concentrated in a number of the fastest growing countries, as well as in certain areas. Often it is rooted in structural issues such as violence, political instability, climate change and other deep-seated crises.¹⁶⁵ Another critical issue is the magnitude of informality in the African economy and urban landscape. Most non-agricultural jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa are informal and most of those are in self-employment, with informality representing 70%-80% of the urban economy. The policies and practices of local governments and the ways in which they respond to informality thus have an important impact on urban livelihoods.¹⁶⁶ This section outlines selected examples of local initiatives in food security, housing and basic services that contribute to poverty reduction.

While individual SDGs (as compared with the Millennium Development Goals — MDGs) are

The policies and practices of local governments and the ways in which they respond to informality have an important impact on urban livelihoods.



Bread delivery in Cairo, Egypt
(photo: M M, t.ly/Je008).

designed to address the complexity of the issues they cover, they need to be seen together in all their dimensions in the context of Africa, indeed in all regions. For instance, achieving **food security** in all its dimensions means addressing not only SDG 2 on ending hunger, but also other SDGs focused on social development such as SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 3 on health, as well as SDG 5 (gender equality), as well as its economic and specific urban dimension (e.g. SDG 8, 9 and 11).¹⁶⁷

Examples of African initiatives that tackle these various aspects include the cities of Antananarivo in Madagascar and Dakar in Senegal, both of which received prizes, for their urban agriculture and micro-gardens projects, respectively, from the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, for innovative practices and the creation of Urban Food Action Platforms. Both projects promote the installation of micro-vegetable gardens in low-income neighbourhoods to improve food security and create income-generating activities. A similar initiative was awarded in Arusha, Tanzania, with a specific focus on women's roles as food security providers and protectors of agro-biodiversity. The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact not only supports cities' efforts to strengthen urban food systems, but it also contributed to stimulating the exchange of practices and learning between signatory cities. This type of peer-to-peer learning will deepen project work at city level

and potentially enable the move from project to systemic engagement with local government at its heart on food security.¹⁶⁸

The challenges of informality and poverty come together especially in the area of **housing**. UN-Habitat estimates that 62% of urban African households live in slums.¹⁶⁹ It is therefore notable that there is an increase in the number of African countries, such as Rwanda, Lesotho and Ghana, implementing new, more comprehensive housing policies which set out clearer roles and functions for LRGs in the planning and production of housing. In Morocco for instance, in the framework of the national initiative Cities without Slums, the city of Casablanca has undertaken important work in co-financing the rehousing of informally housed households by mobilizing household finance and third-party investments.¹⁷⁰ These new policies develop from international housing rights frameworks and covenants, such as the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs. Further, an 'inclusionary housing' policy is being adopted by various local governments. Johannesburg now requires a proportion of all its units that are developed to be more affordable housing units. Cape Town and eThekweni city governments are also proactively identifying well-located land parcels on which to develop more affordable housing.¹⁷¹

In the area of **slum upgrading and urban infrastructure**, there are also several experiences of partnerships between LRGs and community-

based organizations that have been successful in reducing the gaps in provision and finding affordable, safe and sustainable solutions.¹⁷² UCLG Africa in particular has partnered with Shack/SDI to implement the 'Know your City' programme. Its objective is to enhance greater collaboration between local governments and urban poor communities in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of urban planning processes; and ensure a more inclusive approach to urban development and management. Initiatives around participatory slum upgrading contribute not only to better housing but also to improved access to basic services such as water and sanitation, waste management and energy, as well as more integrated development. A notable example is the Mukuru slum upgrading project in Nairobi, Kenya, where Nairobi County created a Special Planning Area for participatory upgrading.¹⁷³ Other examples of participatory approaches to slum upgrading include the town of Epworth in Zimbabwe, where a settlement profile, mapping and enumeration of the informal settlement Magada, provided the basis for an upgrading programme as part of an agreement between the residents and their community organizations and local and national government.¹⁷⁴ Transform the Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda is another example of an initiative where five secondary cities are supported by an MLG framework that includes both the national government and LRGs. This has been extended to the country's 14 main intermediary cities, ensuring the urban poor participate in planning and decision-making processes, in particular in the municipal development forums. Similarly, in Mozambique, the municipality of Beira created the Multi-Functional Community Centre for Renewable Energy in the slum of Munhava with the support of UN- Habitat, to provide slum dwellers with access to clean energy, better sanitation and drinking water. The centre is also expected to provide opportunities in particular to young people and women to exchange experiences and generate local initiatives linked to the development of their communities.¹⁷⁵

Informal waste collection happens in the majority of African cities. In certain cities such as Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, waste collection services are almost entirely provided by the informal workers (98%).¹⁷⁶ Interesting local examples of participatory co-production in the informal sector are evident in this field, such as in Qalyubeya Governorate, Egypt. There, local informal waste pickers were central to the launch of an integrated community-based solid waste management system. The system improved the local environment, raised the living conditions of local residents, alleviated the problem of solid waste and created new jobs without affecting

current ones. This innovative project was awarded the 3rd Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation in 2016.¹⁷⁷

Similarly, in the city of Accra, Ghana, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) is incorporating the informal waste collectors into the contracts signed with waste collection companies, as part of its membership of the 100RC initiative. In May 2017, the city commissioned a waste transfer station that serves as a transit point for waste hauled from other parts of the city by informal collectors who service communities located in poorly planned areas of the city. Because of the success of this approach, AMA is in the process of registering all informal waste collectors to regulate their operations.¹⁷⁸ The city of Johannesburg (South Africa) has established seven waste buy-back centres, operated by the informal community of waste pickers, with the aim of empowering impoverished communities and providing job security benefits, while increasing recycling rates. As part of a comprehensive waste management project, N'Zérékoré (Guinea) has set up activity zones across the city to inform and train the population about environmental and public hygiene and foster good public health practices. As well as improving living conditions and public health across the city, this project has created jobs for disadvantaged groups, including women.¹⁷⁹

Access to basic services in **schools**, including electricity, drinking water and the Internet is an equally critical challenge in Africa.¹⁸⁰ In Zambia, local governments play a crucial role in improving health interventions in school institutions by ensuring students have access to drinking water and sanitation. The Egyptian city of Aswan has also developed a comprehensive strategy that integrates gardening and water conservation programmes in schools, as well as diverse entrepreneurial training opportunities for all groups of society.¹⁸¹

In the area of **transport**, there are significant initiatives that look into ways to integrate informal transport systems, such as the MoveWindhoek project in Namibia. The city of Windhoek, together with the Ministry of Works and Transport and GIZ, developed the Sustainable Urban Transport Master Plan for Windhoek, which enables decision-makers to develop an affordable, accessible and efficient public and non-motorized transport system for the next 20 years, thus addressing the specific needs of the most disadvantaged urban populations.¹⁸² In the case of Tshwane, South Africa, the city administration has improved its collaboration with informal transport providers, leading to improvements in local economic development (LED) (SDG 8), which has accelerated the rate of social change and had a direct impact on the lives of the poorest citizens.

Making communities more sustainable and resilient to mitigate the effects of climate change

The 2019 Index and Dashboard Report published by the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa indicates, surprisingly, that African countries are on track to reach SDG 13 and focused on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.¹⁸³ However, there is no way in which the 1.5°C target can be attained if the current urbanization mega-trend in Africa follows the same industrial and infrastructure pathways as Europe and North America from a century ago.¹⁸⁴ Fortunately, recent technology innovations and political economy shifts render many of the renewable energy and infrastructure solutions required compatible with the least-cost and most tenable options for improving the lives of people in these cities and adjacent rural areas.

African cities and territories have been implementing a range of initiatives to adapt to and mitigate the consequences of climate change, such as flooding, rising sea levels, extreme temperatures and drought. These include projects in the area of ecosystems and biodiversity, water, agriculture and energy and urban planning and infrastructure, which link to a range of SDGs beyond SDG 13 and to the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. By adopting sustainable and more integrated approaches to urban planning, LRGs can contribute to reduce disaster risks, improve the delivery of basic services and strengthen resilience at the community level. Efforts to improve resilience at the local level may also contribute to achieving SDG 1 and SDG 11.

The city of Accra has been a pioneer in Africa in building its capacity to transform commitments into concrete plans and to become more resilient and carbon-neutral. The city of Cape Town has implemented an ambitious climate change policy, with the aim to reduce the carbon and energy intensity of its activities, improve its transport network, and reduce the use of private vehicles.

In addition to these two cities, several other municipalities such as Kigali, Lagos, Luxor, Nairobi or Paynesville, have engaged in **urban resilience strategies** to better recover from socio-economic

and environmental stresses, in the framework of the 100RC. The city of Kigali in Rwanda has for instance based its action plan on local challenges, including aging infrastructures, energy insecurity, environmental degradation, lack of affordable housing and flooding, while Paynesville in Liberia has focused its strategy on specific areas of intervention, such as public health and water management. The latter managed to provide education and hygiene supplies to communities affected with the Ebola Virus Disease, as an attempt to increase its resilience to future public health challenges.

Eco-cities projects have also flourished in a few countries offering innovative models of urban sustainability. The eco-city of Zenata in Morocco, located between Casablanca and Rabat, was conceived based on sustainable development and resilience principles. The organization of the city facilitates natural ventilation and 30% of public areas are green spaces, with public lighting entirely Light Emitting Diode (LED). In Burkina Faso, the new eco-city of Yennenga that is currently being built 15km from the capital of Ouagadougou, has been planned paying specific attention to the Harmattan winds, solar energy and the collection of rainwater.

A few municipalities have also committed to take actions to implement effective **disaster risk reduction (DRR)** strategies. Béguedo, Burkina Faso is strengthening and protecting its ecosystems and natural buffers to make them more resilient to natural hazards. The municipality is taking action on good governance of natural resources; adapting to climate change by implementing best practices, such as mapping the protected areas, and working with the community to show how they can improve their livelihoods while reducing disaster risk.¹⁸⁵ In Cameroon, Yaoundé 6 has been engaged in DRR at the local level since 2013 and has shifted from a sectoral vision to a global and integrated vision of its development, with a plan covering the period 2019-2030.¹⁸⁶

It is important that projects also extend beyond large cities to small towns, coastal and rural areas. For instance, in Mozambique, the coastal municipality of Quelimane has in recent years shifted from a narrow focus on economic development and poverty reduction to a more forward-thinking climate-compatible development approach integrated into its urban planning. The municipality has undertaken a series of actions, as part of a multi-year project supported by international cooperation, that seek to address multiple challenges and sustainability goals. By restoring its mangrove forests, Quelimane manages to simultaneously enhance its adaptive capacity to the risk of flood and sea-level rise and provide economic opportunities for the poor and marginalized communities that

In Mozambique, the coastal municipality of Quelimane has in recent years adopted a more forward-thinking climate-compatible development approach integrated into its urban planning.

are tasked with managing the tree seedlings, thereby contributing to SDG 15. Within the same configuration on the Atlantic coast, the city of Saint Louis in Senegal in collaboration with Enda Energie and Wetlands International has established a comprehensive framework for protecting the vulnerable coastal ecosystems. At the village scale, two villages (Gazi and Makongeni) in Kenya, have joined forces for the preservation of the mangrove swamp by exchanging carbon credits. The profits so far have made it possible to preserve 117 hectares of mangroves and ensure regular revenues used to provide access to water. In 2017, this project received the Equator Initiative Award, and is being replicated in other regions in Kenya.

Moreover, the development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) under the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity has become a key policy tool for many LRGs to plan sub-national **biodiversity strategies**. The Fatick Region in Senegal has for instance developed the Integrated Regional Development Plan 2012-2018 that used an ecosystem approach to meet the Global Goals at the regional level. The transfer of environmental and natural resource management powers to the regions enabled Fatick to design and monitor its biodiversity, safeguarding efforts to protect wildlife in particular. As of today, 33 forests are being developed and 100 villages are involved in forest management. On the same lines, the city government of Dakar, has organized reforestation activities with schoolchildren from disadvantaged areas, in a more inclusive learning environment to simultaneously raise awareness on climate change and fight inequality.

While these various projects and initiatives are important in their own right, in Kenya three different counties have taken important steps to approve **climate change legislation** at SNG level to address climate change in more structural ways (see Box 8).

Numerous cities in emerging countries, such as Lagos (Nigeria) and Tshwane (South Africa), report higher emissions than cities in more advanced countries, particularly due to high emissions in the transport and energy production sectors.¹⁸⁸ Paradoxically, walking share in African cities is higher than the global average, e.g. 61% in Nairobi, 48% in Dar es Salaam and 34% in Cape Town.¹⁸⁹ In this context, large cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town (South Africa), Dakar (Senegal), Nairobi (Kenya) or Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) have inaugurated **rapid transport systems** in recent years.¹⁹⁰ Their aim is to provide residents with access to a quality, sustainable and affordable public transport system, while helping to reduce air pollution and promote sustainable mobility patterns with the creation of cycle paths and sidewalks.

Box 8

Climate legislation and financing at county level in Kenya for achieving the SDGs

In 2015, Makueni County became the first SNG in Africa to instate financial commitments on climate change in law, allowing for the allocation of the equivalent of 1% of its county annual development budget to climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

Wajir County followed in 2016 by enacting a County Climate Change Act operationalizing the County Climate Change Fund and allocating 2% of annual county development budget to climate change with a clear liquidation, disbursement and management framework. Through a participatory approach, the county annually identifies climate change projects to benefit from the fund.

Lastly, Garissa County has initiated climate adaptation initiatives for its communities, which are largely pastoralists and recently passed the County Climate Change Act, which allocates 1% of the annual county development budget to address climate change impacts.

The adoption of these laws will allow these county governments to address not just SDG 13, but also those SDGs related to education, healthcare, water and sanitation.¹⁸⁷

Certain municipalities have set up initiatives to foster the **sustainable consumption and production of energy**. In Uganda, Kampala (Capital City Authority) and Jinja are innovative cities that have implemented solar street lighting systems. Around 1,800 solar street lights have been installed in Kampala, and 92 in Jinja. This system has generated a range of economic, social and environmental benefits for both cities, including lower crime rates, better road safety, a more vibrant night-time economy and higher property values, contributing to SDG 11, SDG 13 and SDG 16 targets.¹⁹¹ Others have been active in providing innovative solutions to transform waste in energy. The city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia has recently inaugurated a waste-to-energy station, which collects the heat emitted during incineration to produce energy. The waste-to-energy plant is expected to incinerate 1,400 tonnes of organic waste per day, representing about 80% of the city's waste, and to provide 100 skilled jobs in Addis Ababa.¹⁹² Similarly, in the island of Zanzibar (Tanzania), a pilot was started in September 2017 in a low-income area of the island called Shauri Moyo, where 200 households were selected. On a smaller scale, a waste management centre was created in 2017 in the village of Houègbo in Benin, to encourage citizens through financial incentives

to collect their organic waste for conversion to biogas. The project is expected to be duplicated in the country's 77 municipalities.

Furthermore, a number of cities are adopting initiatives towards an **urban circular economy**. Cape Town, South Africa, has initiated action to recover and reduce waste and improve energy efficiency in municipal buildings since 2009. By 2015, the city had installed about 500 smart meters within municipal facilities and developed an automated energy management system, the 'SmartFacility' application. This interprets the facility's electricity consumption data in a friendly, accessible manner, illustrating the data on a dashboard for internal end users and the public. In addition, the Western Cape Industrial Symbiosis Program (WISP) was established in the city, and provides business members with time and technical expertise, connecting companies with unused or residual resources, such as materials, energy, water, assets, logistics and expertise. The cumulative impact of WISP over the last five years has included: 27,436 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill; 46,700 tonnes of GHG saved (equivalent to nine 2.2MW wind turbines installed in South Africa); EUR 2.8 million generated in financial benefits through additional revenue, cost savings and private investments; 143 jobs created in the economy (25 directly in member companies). The programme has received multiple award nominations, including being a three-time finalist for various circular economy awards. While the circular economy is still in its infancy across the continent, as a reformative system it presents significant opportunities for Africa to deliver on more inclusive, economic growth, which includes job opportunities and positive environmental practices.

Building inclusive and peaceful cities and territories

Fragility and conflict as well as growing inequalities are recognized as major factors in hindering progress towards the SDGs, and in particular a major obstacle to achieving the targets of SDG 10 and SDG 16. Many examples of local government-driven initiatives in the area of peace and inclusive societies are supported by partnerships with actors such as UN agencies, civil society or the private sector in the area of slum upgrading, participatory planning and budgeting or service delivery (see above). Partnerships between cities are also instrumental.

An important example that stands out in this regard is the partnership between the Beninese city of Dogbo and the Belgium city of Roeselare in the area of birth registration. Birth registration is key to gain a legal identity and ensure access to basic rights and services (SDG 16.9). The two cities were twinned in 2010 and work closely on projects ranging from water schemes to cultural

exchanges. Because of the birth registration project all the children born in the city of Dogbo had their births registered, compared with only 40% in 2010. This received an award from PLATFORMA, the European network of national LGAs, in 2018.¹⁹³

African LRGs have supported initiatives to fight against urban violence and overcome inter-ethnic, religious and socio-economic conflicts. In critical situations, local governments played a crucial role in contributing to resolve the crises and the reception of refugees, as recognized by the international community. One such example is the crisis in Mali in 2012, the result of the coup d'État and occupation of the North of the country by Tuareg insurgent groups and later by Islamist groups. The subsequent Sustainable Recovery Plan of Mali 2013-2014 (PRED), proposed by the national government, foresaw the strengthening of decentralization, and LRGs in Europe launched a strong solidarity movement with LRGs in Mali. This is also the case with the G5 Sahel Alliance of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the local authorities in Shabunda established 'permanent peace committees', as an effort to stop violence and restore state authority, in a context of post-ethnic war in the community. The programme included awareness-raising to facilitate the demobilization of combatants.

Africa hosts more political and climate change displaced persons and migrants than any other continent in the world. While the refugee crisis poses significant economic and social burdens on host countries, some LRGs are implementing proactive solutions. Within the framework of the National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum, the cities of Tangier and Nador in Morocco acknowledge their humanitarian responsibility and facilitate access to basic services for migrants, such as shelter, education and health. Because of lack of resources, Tangier actively encourages CSOs to partner with local government actors around issues of migration.

Culture may also appear as a powerful tool to promote social cohesion and create peaceful environments. In 2016, the city of Timbuktu, Mali launched a strategy to reinforce the socio-economic and urban fabric and civic participation in the city, urgently needed after its occupation in 2012 and 2013. The initiative strengthened local cultural heritage, defended citizens' freedom to maintain their cultural practices, and promoted culture as a strategy for resilience and sustainable cohabitation.¹⁹⁴ Another initiative to foster interculturalism and social cohesion is found in Yopougon, a suburb of Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire. This project promotes cultural citizenship among the local youth in a post-election crisis context through participatory programmes. Although this initiative enabled the conditions for peaceful

coexistence, the youth unemployment rate remains high and requires ongoing dialogue to ensure social cohesion. Worth mentioning also is the launch of the celebration of the African Capitals for Culture during the last Africities Summit in 2018: Marrakesh was chosen as the first African Capital for Culture.

The importance of **public spaces** must also be highlighted as a means to enhancing community cohesion and promote health, happiness and wellbeing for all citizens, especially children. UNICEF has been working in seven municipalities in Mozambique as part of its work on making cities more child-friendly through interventions in the area of early childhood education, nutrition, and participation and governance. Cities in Kenya and South Africa have also been working with the UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme to improve the quality of public spaces. In Kenya, Nairobi committed to restoring and rehabilitating public spaces across the city with the inclusion of local communities in the governance and management of spaces. Along with the Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan, detailed urban area plans have been prepared based on the principles of building safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces.¹⁹⁵ In Johannesburg (South Africa), public spaces serve as bridges to reconnect the urban areas to recreational spaces and allow for freedom of movement. Because of the spatial legacy of apartheid, parks and public facilities were all concentrated in higher-income neighbourhoods, while townships remained dense areas with almost no open green spaces. The 'Corridors of Freedom' initiative illustrates this new vision of making public space inclusive, particularly in poorer areas, and improving living conditions in former townships.

As part of their efforts to **tackle discriminatory practices**, several LRGs have also engaged in programmes promoting equal access opportunities for all. Pikine in Senegal has inaugurated an Office of Rights to provide services of attention, welcome and advice for irregular migrants. In addition, 75 Senegalese local authorities in 2017 adopted a Charter of Citizen Participation and the Right to the City to commit themselves to advancing the human rights and citizen participation agendas at the local level.¹⁹⁶ In the Cameroonian commune of Mayo-Baléo, a Centre for the Promotion of Women and the Family has been built to train women, girls and young people in running small businesses and to offer them a range of other courses (languages, sewing, computer courses, catering, etc.).¹⁹⁷ Finally, African local governments have adopted a Charter of LRGs on Migration to which over 30 cities have adhered.

Ensuring responsive and participatory decision-making

Most of the interventions at the local level address the need to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (SDG 16.7). This is interlinked with SDG 11.3 on the need to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries by 2030, as well as with most of the principles of the New Urban Agenda.

In Africa, planning systems remain highly centralized with urban planning laws mainly inherited from colonial times and primarily under the control of a central government department. Some governments have committed to decentralize these laws. However, new laws have often been written and not approved, or the necessary changes have not been made to urban governance and land management legislation.¹⁹⁸ The city of Johannesburg, for example, sought to create a strategy to rethink the nature of local governance. The Joburg 2040: Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) is both an aspirational document that defines the type of society Johannesburg seeks to become by 2040, and a long-term planning instrument with a set of strategic choices to guide the city's development trajectory. It lays the foundation for multilevel,

Streets of Nairobi, Kenya
(photo: Xiaojun Deng,
t.ly/2W8G5).



multi-scalar and integrated responses to the city's urban challenges.

Other initiatives seek to integrate local communities in the design of local development planning. For instance, city development strategies (CDSs) developed by Cities Alliance support local governments in the elaboration of long-term development strategies, using a participatory approach. These strategies have been formulated in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Douala (Cameroon) based on collaborative exercises involving local communities, in particular representatives of the most marginalized and vulnerable members. These have yielded interesting results in terms of consensus-building and funding opportunities for follow-up investments.¹⁹⁹ In Cotonou (Benin), the definition of the urban development strategy has proven useful in improving the coordination of urban development issues between the cities of Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi and Sèmè Podji, which form part of the Cotonou agglomeration. In Mozambique, the city of Mandlakazi has put a particular emphasis on strengthening citizens' participation with the creation of municipal participatory forums, to debate and plan municipal actions. Apart from the municipal forum, a 30-member women's forum and a 30-strong young people's forum were created to interact

with the city council and participate in planning activities.²⁰⁰

In Africa, the urban population is expected to grow threefold by 2050. Thus, planning cities extensions has become an urgent issue for LRGs, and different modalities of 'soft planning', particularly to prepare for future land uses and plan infrastructure development, should be explored. To be responsive and formulate policies that are adapted to the importance of informality in Africa, LRGs are increasingly involving communities in their sustainable development strategies in these areas. It is much more expensive to retrofit urban infrastructure a posteriori than to plan ahead for land use. This is particularly relevant in the case of intermediary cities where LRGs have lower financial capacities while being at the core of national, and the overall African, urban demographic transition. Another example is the 'base-plan' developed in 12 African cities that has been presented as an opportunity ahead of the New Urban Agenda. The success of such practices relies on involving communities and social actors in the diagnostic, and anticipating both the existing territorial dynamics and 'hard planning' needs for future amenities.

Participation in planning processes has also gained ground in the Maghreb countries. Morocco introduced such provisions in 2010, requiring cities to design strategic plans in a participatory way. The cities of Sousse and Sfax in Tunisia also provide interesting examples of the development of participatory urban strategies (see Box 9).

Participatory mechanisms have paved the way for greater accountability of LRGs and improved access to basic services. In Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana, citizens have access to scorecards to assess their satisfaction with the quality of public service delivery to the poorer communities. With the support of the Open Government Partnership, the metropolitan assembly of these twin cities has made considerable progress in obtaining better sanitation, access to toilets, and street lighting (which has resulted in a reduction in night-time crime). Similarly, **participatory budgeting** processes provide a route through which groups not generally involved in political decision-making can make their voices heard, help to identify common priorities and have these priorities realized. Dondo, Mozambique is the first widely recognized example of participatory budgeting in Africa: 51 local communities, debating within consultative municipal fora, discussed the allocation of up to USD 2.6 million of public spending. The Municipal Council subsequently decided to invest these funds in priority public works such as access to clean water and drainage (2007-2009). This experience was later supported by national development cooperation and the national LGA, and replicated by other municipal governments, such as Inhambane, during the

Box 9

Participatory planning for urban development in Sfax and Sousse, Tunisia²⁰¹

In Sfax, the Greater Sfax Development Strategy (GSDS) was elaborated to promote local economic development (LED) strategies and prioritize underserved neighbourhoods. This strategy also sought to foster inter-municipality cooperation for city and regional development and leverage significant budget allocation. Almost all segments of the population were actively involved in formulating a long-term economic development strategy for Greater Sfax. The Sfax leaders thus provided a significant example of the power of participatory governance.

A similar project has been promoted in Sousse, where the city's urban development strategy has been developed based on an innovative methodology involving local communities. With this methodological approach, the city was able to identify five common strategic objectives: social and territorial cohesion, economy, competitiveness, spatial planning, environmental management and governance. In addition, an action plan has been prepared in order to clarify Sousse 2030's vision. The overall participative process made it possible to identify 40 projects for 2014-2017 and 30 others are being considered in the future action plan.




Wood sellers at the Montée Parc Market, Yaoundé, Cameroon (photo: CIFOR, t.ly/3nqw5).

following legislature (2011-2014). This pioneering experience has been followed by other cities, such as Rufisque Est District (Senegal), Ampasy Nahampoana (Madagascar), and Yaoundé 6 District (Cameroon), or Blantyre (Malawi).

The global organization, Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), developed a collective document outlining principles and actions for national and local governments to implement the New Urban Agenda in a participatory and inclusive way to be supportive of informal workers. WIEGO has also developed methodologies for engaging with local governments to address their needs for access to public space, public services and public procurement processes, which were launched at the Africities Summit in Marrakesh in November 2018.²⁰² These were successfully used in cities such as Accra (Ghana), where the Focal City Initiative created multi-stakeholder platforms through a series of participatory consultative processes with informal traders that contributed to improved occupational health and safety in informal markets and increased awareness of the contribution of informal workers to the local economy.²⁰³

Other examples include the 'We are Medina' project in Larache, Morocco, which highlights local and regional commitment to promote communities' participation. Key to the success of this project was the creation of a bond of trust and technical neighbourly cooperation, channelled

through an interdisciplinary Neighbourhood Technical Office as well as monitoring committees with the participation of all the stakeholders involved. This project won the Dubai International Award for Best Practice for National Urban Policies in 2017.²⁰⁴

Transparency and accountability of LRGs remain crucial in Africa to enable more effective delivery of basic services tailored to local needs. A pilot project, known as Leaders in Local Government for Transparency and Integrity in Service Delivery in Africa, aims to strengthen local government transparency and integrity to fight against corruption in service delivery. This was launched by UCLG Africa in partnership with Transparency International in 2017. Three local governments, Walvis Bay Municipal Council in Namibia, Kabarole District in Uganda and Tema Municipal Assembly in Ghana, have volunteered to participate in the project to assess the institutional organizational weaknesses that render local governments susceptible to corruption and other malpractices in the delivery of services, and develop policies and systems that mitigate, detect and attenuate the risks.²⁰⁵ 

4. Conclusions²⁰⁶

By 2050, Africa will be the most populated region of the world, with over 2 billion people — more than the populations of either China or India. Thus, the overall success or failure in the realization of the SDGs indeed how realistic their attainment is will depend to a large extent on whether or not the Global Goals are achievable in Africa. The UNECA 2019 report on sustainable development (albeit based on incomplete data available to monitor progress) shows that the continent is not on track to achieve most of the SDGs. In particular, more action is needed to foster inclusive growth and take full advantage of the potential for demographic growth in the region.

In fact, Africa will have to implement the African Agenda 2063, the SDGs and other related global agendas while undergoing a huge shift in the population settlement pattern that sees the continent moving from 'majority rural' 30 years ago to 'majority urban' in the coming 30 years. African decision-makers need to fully understand the extent to which rapid urbanization is impacting the economic, social and spatial dynamics of the continent, making metropolises, cities and towns, local and regional governments (LRGs) key and emerging 'game changer' agents in shaping the structural transformation.

This report shows the positive contribution of the African LRGs to the implementation of the African and global agendas. It argues that this contribution could be even greater if enabling conditions were in place that capitalized on the energies and life force of African cities that is the young people who form the majority of the

population. Across Africa, there is high-level social demand to reconfigure the powers and functions to make the overall system of LRGs work better for a continent where poverty, the youth bulge, the backlog in infrastructure supply and basic service delivery, make the 2030 aspirations both extremely relevant and difficult to achieve. Positive attitudes to devolution and reform of local government bodies to give them greater strength to deliver the SDGs are espoused in frameworks such as the African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development. However, the effective legal and structural changes to the systems of government remain incomplete, or stagnated in some countries and globally, they are still fairly new for almost all African countries. Indeed, the Charter has been signed by 13 countries and ratified by only four (Burundi, Mali, Madagascar and Namibia).

There is a mismatch between the policy commitments at the highest governance level of the Africa region and the ability of LRGs at national level to unlock their potentialities to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the other global and continent-wide policy agendas. Unsurprisingly given this, there are delays in the localization of the SDGs gaining real traction. LRG capacity is further eroded by a variety of factors that include ongoing conflicts, climate change impact and increasing natural disasters. Furthermore, in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, there are clear examples of resistance by national governments trying to prevent the diffusion of political decision-making and fiscal powers away from the central level.

Nonetheless, there is evidence of nationally-driven change enabling rather than detracting from local action. Below are six key actions that can help unlock the status quo and catalyse innovation to scale up the contribution of LRGs in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. These actions mitigate against weak overall systems of government and misaligned intergovernmental systems, factors that are further incapacitating LRGs and limiting their powers to deliver on sustainable development.

Africa will have to implement the 2030/2063 Agendas and other global agendas while undergoing a huge shift in the population settlement pattern that sees the continent moving from 'majority rural' to 'majority urban'.

Get the management of urbanization right

Unless bold steps are taken immediately to re-establish the practice of urban and spatial planning that more than 20 years of structural adjustment policies have squandered in most African countries, Africa will not meet the SDGs. The result of this lack of planning has been a boom in informal settlements and slum areas, a serious backlog in basic service infrastructure, and poor maintenance and management of the infrastructure that does exist, in most African cities. Given the pace of urban growth — with cities doubling their population and areas in less than 20 years — the situation could dramatically worsen. The lack of investment in well-planned, well-managed cities and territories has largely contributed to the poor standing and efficiency of the LRGs and national economies.

It is time for African decision-makers to recognize the important role that cities and territories play in the structural transformation of the continent. As recommended in the New Urban Agenda adopted by the United Nations in October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador, every African country should define and implement a national urban policy (NUP). It is worth noting that in 2018, most of the 18 African countries that had an NUP had not yet explicitly aligned the policy with the SDGs. Thus, more closely linking the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and the African Agenda 2063 would in turn be an opportunity for LRGs and their networks to promote a more coherent and integrated urban and territorial development approach and prevent duplication that in any case cannot be afforded in resource-scarce contexts.

All countries are compelled to connect their villages, towns and cities into an organized system of human settlements with dedicated functions that will give traction to the overall economic, social and territorial structural transformation at the national level. At the regional level, regional economic communities should endeavour to define regional spatial plans to support and invigorate the organization of regional markets structured around the main cities of the region that will in turn connect the region to other parts of the African continent. At the continental level, it is also important to reflect on the role that metropolitan cities and city regions play in connecting all the regions of the continent and integrating the continent into the mainstream of global cities that lead the dynamic of the global economy.

Strategically planning for the accelerated urban transition, creating enabling environments, and providing human resources training are key components for LRGs to transform their planning and decision-making processes. Developing 'soft' and participatory planning of cities' extensions in

Linking more closely the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and Agenda 2063 would be an opportunity for LRGs and their networks to promote a more coherent and integrated urban and territorial development approach.

a way that could contribute to better managing urban expansions will help reduce urban sprawl and be more effective than costlier retrofitting interventions to integrate new informal areas in the urban fabric.

These reflections would gain greater traction if the role of cities in the structural transformation of Africa was considered a theme to be put on the agenda of one of the upcoming conferences of heads of state and government of the African Union.

Get the enabling environment of LRGs right

In almost all African countries, urbanization has led to the emergence of a strong social demand for more proximity and greater people participation in the management of public affairs. This in turn has resulted in the definition and implementation of decentralization policies in most African countries, which legally recognize greater powers and autonomy in decision-making of LRGs. As it is widely known, at least 65% of SDG targets fall within the realm of the decentralization laws and regulations entrusted to LRGs.

In the last few years, many countries have renewed existing institutional frameworks (e.g. Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda or Zambia). In others, where progress has been relatively slow, there is new momentum explicitly linked to formulating coherent strategies in the framework of the development agendas (e.g. Cameroon, Cape Verde, Togo where local elections took place in 2019) or as part of a process of peace and democratization (e.g. Mali and Tunisia).

Despite these legal provisions, African LRGs are not truly empowered to deliver on their mandate and to lead sustainable territorial development. As concluded by UCLG Africa, in most African countries the national institutional frameworks for LRGs need to be revised. Across Africa, LRGs still have limited decision-making powers, resources and capacities, including the control of infrastructures for services as per the functions allocated to them. This has major implications for the extent to which LRGs are able to plan and develop strategies to boost local development and to deliver on targets related to

the SDGs. This issue is particularly acute in small and intermediary cities, where the service delivery mandate is functional not just for the city residents but also for the wider peri-urban neighbourhoods and rural hinterlands, as well as in fast-growing metropolitan areas.

African governments acknowledged in Africa's priorities for the New Urban Agenda the need for an integrated vision of Africa's human settlements and territorial development that spans the rural environment, intermediary cities, as well as major cities and metropolises. They also recognized that LRGs are on the frontlines of the management of urban growth.

African governments should therefore accept that only empowered LRGs, with clear mandates, improved capacities and strengthened resources, supported by adequate multilevel governance (MLG) collaborative mechanisms, can help master rapid urbanization, accelerate the implementation of national strategies for more balanced territorial development, and more inclusive cities and territories, responding to the 2030 Agenda resolution that 'no person and no place should be left behind'.

Get the financial resources of LRGs right

African national governments and their development partners should give priority to the empowerment of LRGs in terms of their financial resources.

In fact, the fiscal costs of power devolution and localization of the SDGs are rarely calculated or provided for. Despite the increased vulnerability of LRGs from more frequent and intense impacts of climate change and natural disaster, there is general ignorance of the cost of implementing the Global Goals in localities and countries.

Fiscal decentralization and localizing financing must be enhanced, together with administrative and political decentralization. Levels of fiscal autonomy vary greatly between as well as within countries across the continent. Moreover, given the political history and the weak fiscal base – due to both poverty and informality — in the region, LRGs face a fiscal squeeze. Certainly, the two challenges in improving sub-national financing systems are 1) to strengthen local capacity to mobilize local own resources; 2) to improve intergovernmental transfers systems. Greater fiscal autonomy at the sub-national level must go hand-in-hand with improved systems for resource mobilization across the different scales of government, and the development of adequate transfer mechanisms to share national wealth. But this will probably not be enough to meet the colossal funding need.

In many countries, LRGs do not have the powers to contract debt or attract additional funding. Even in cases where LRGs can borrow, this is often restricted, tightly controlled or LRG projects barely meet the feasibility, bankability and risk standards. It is therefore essential that national governments



Floating market at Abomey-Calavi, Benin (photo: Melissa Cooperman/IFPRI, bit.ly/2MtYYuC).

and cities develop mechanisms to upgrade the quality of LRG projects to meet the conditions set by the financing institutions, investment funds and private partners. This is one of the objectives of the African Territorial Agency championed by UCLG Africa, as well as other project preparation programmes led by local government associations (LGAs) and regional networks. These initiatives are however still limited to pilot cities; hence there is an urgent need to develop a range of sub-national lending mechanisms to respond also to intermediary and small cities (e.g. through the creation of local government finance institutions or strengthening those that already exist).

The expansion of sub-national investments is urgent considering the social, financial and environmental costs of catching up, retrofitting the expanding urban fabric, responding to and recovering from the climate emergency and disaster impacts that will only keep growing. Given the localization of the SDGs as a priority, it is also crucial that international partners seize the opportunity of transforming their financing mechanisms to be more supportive of LRG development investments.

Get the human capacities of LRGs right

In order to improve own-revenue generation, attract more funds and prepare bankable projects eligible for funding, LRGs need competent administrations with well-skilled staff. So far, the dialogue between the leaders of the national government and those of LRGs has focused mainly on fiscal decentralization and financial issues, and not enough on human capacity. This is despite the fact that the effectiveness, sustainable provision and good management of LRG financial resources depends largely on the quality and capacity of human resources in the political and administrative bodies of LRGs.

This is why UCLG Africa set up the Africa Local Government Academy (ALGA) aimed at improving the skills and professionalism of LRGs' elected officials and administrative staff. ALGA offers two kinds of capacity-building activities: 1) a 12-month Executive Master on LRG Management for senior staff (namely the city manager or director-general of LRG administrations, the chief finance officer and the chief technical officer); 2) a series of short-term training courses delivered in ALGA's specialized colleges. UCLG Africa and UCLG World are also developing peer learning and mentoring programmes, taking advantage of the wealth of experience and knowledge that is embodied within the LRG community.

It is essential to address the human capacity gaps of LRGs' political and administrative bodies if the expectation that they should be more active in the implementation of the African and global

agendas, and specifically the SDGs, is to be met. The questions that arise in this regard are: 1) how to make a career in LRG one of the first options for young people entering the labour market; and 2) how to attract and keep the best talents. Looking at the insecure labour conditions of most LRG personnel and the particularly low wage levels compared with other employment areas, the answers to these questions will not be easy.

What is clear however is that the LRGs will not be up to the tasks expected of them unless the capacity and professionalism of their political leaders and administrative staff drastically improves. One area that should immediately be developed is the financing of capacity-building activities. Successful experiences from around the world suggest that this should be through recurrent resources coming from a percentage of the wages paid to LRG staff that could possibly be complemented with a grant from the national government. The recourse for LGAs to document and disseminate capacity-building experiences and initiatives has also proven to be instrumental in upscaling their impact across the membership. Finally, the observation that mayors and LRG leaders learn best from other mayors and LRG leaders shows the usefulness for UCLG to develop in collaboration with its regional sections, a dedicated peer review and peer learning programme, with a specific component on mentoring activities using and benefitting from the collective endowment of their respective networks.

The fundamental principle here is to realize the centrality of the human resources of LRGs in order for them to play their rightful role in the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the African Agenda 2063.

Get multilevel governance collaboration and multi-stakeholder partnership right

Given the holistic, interlinked and transversal nature of the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs cannot be achieved through single-sector or silo approaches or narrow place-based interventions. Quite the reverse, higher tiers of government must build on territorial partnership and the local political leadership for investment to be adapted locally and to strengthen local economic, social and environmental sustainable development. For instance, the strategic debate over how to retrofit and build massive infrastructure to promote greater regional integration and productivity must consider the issue of scale in coordination with the specific needs of each context and territory, actions to be carried out at different governance levels, from sub-national and national, to regional and continental levels. In this sense, multilevel governance matters.

Meeting the SDGs targets will require a collective effort of all levels of government and not just the LRGs. **Cooperation and**

The issue of data is not only one of measuring, reporting and verification, but more critically a political one. More structural support for the development of locally embedded monitoring and reporting processes is required.

collaboration between the different spheres of public governance including the alignment of budget flows is key to putting the subsidiarity principle into practice. There are inspiring examples of countries adapting their national planning systems to increase the involvement of LRGs with the aim of better coordinating SDG implementation and follow-up on specific targets (e.g. Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa or Togo). However, the alignment of national and local strategies remains, in most cases, a top-down process and LRGs' involvement is limited.

In almost all countries, national institutional mechanisms to coordinate and lead SDG implementation exist at the highest political level. Some countries have set up coordination mechanisms that rely directly on reformed planning systems, while others have created new mechanisms. However, the participation of LRGs in these coordination mechanisms and, moreover, in the reporting process to the UN High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) through the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), remains limited (to 47% of countries that reported between 2016-2019 for VNRs and 31% for coordination mechanisms), showing weak involvement of LRGs. **The participation of the LRGs in national coordination, assessment and reporting, needs to be further improved to ensure that the national process truly reflects a 'whole-of-government' approach. It is suggested therefore that national governments take positive steps to support SDG localization strategies involving all levels of government.**

Furthermore, for the SDGs to be an all-encompassing, all-inclusive exercise, all layers of society must participate fully in their implementation and in the definition of priorities. **Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach to SDG implementation is the best way to ensure ownership by citizens and communities, and long-term sustainability of impact. However, it is one thing to say that LRGs value a multi-stakeholder approach to SDG implementation, but it is quite another to put in place appropriate mechanisms for this to be effective.** In many instances, the participation of

civil society, traditional authorities, academia and the private sector is minimal and confined to short-lived consultation workshops.

Nonetheless, this is an area where true democratic processes can prove to be instrumental in delivering concrete progress towards the realization of the SDGs targets. This is firstly by deliberating about the priorities to consider among the 17 SDGs, given the social demands and the local conditions in each LRG; secondly by discussing the indicators that seem the most appropriate in driving social transformation brought about by SDG implementation; and, thirdly by collectively defining the data that need to be produced to inform the chosen indicators and to contribute to the voluntary reports that national, local and regional governments should periodically submit to the UN as part of the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the implementation of the SDGs.

Get the data revolution started

The localization of the SDGs and related need for bottom-up reporting mechanisms calls for a serious reflection on data collection. This analysis is necessary not only for the sake of reporting to the UN, but also and mainly for the mobilization of all actors at national, local and regional levels to catch up on the full implementation of the SDGs in Africa by 2030.

The gaps so far observed in this area are testimony to the poor understanding of the importance and need to establish routine data production processes linking all spheres of government and all stakeholders. This is vital in order to collectively assess whether countries are on track or not with regard to meeting the SDG targets by 2030, and to deliberate on the best corrective measures in case of setbacks.

The issue of data is therefore not only one of measuring, reporting and verification, but more critically a political one. This is because it creates the framework for the choice of indicators and information, as well as the resulting analysis, and thus structures the way in which all stakeholders will assess and understand progress made in the implementation of the SDGs targets, following the trajectories chosen in each country and by respective LRGs. The challenge is that Africa is currently vastly underrepresented in existing global urban databases and much still needs to be done to build disaggregated, place-based datasets.

The dominant picture on the continent is that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the SDGs are not nearly established or robust enough, especially at the sub-national scale. There is a need for more structural support for the development of locally embedded monitoring and reporting processes to national and sub-national levels and globally on the SDGs. Such



Civil society meeting with local public officials in Tanzania (photo: SDI, bit.ly/2LXd3ld).

processes also need to include the empowerment of local communities, civil society and other stakeholders to understand, analyse and use data independently in order to hold government to account. A good example showing the relevance of data in building inclusive cities and territories and a productive dialogue among stakeholders at the LRG level is the 'Know your City' programme, developed by UCLG Africa in collaboration with Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) with the support of the Cities Alliance. In addition, there is a need for partnerships to produce relevant data for monitoring development progress, especially for indicators for which currently no data is being produced.

In other words, recurrent routine processes should be developed between different levels of public governance on the one hand, and between the public authorities and other relevant stakeholders on the other, so that data collection and analysis becomes a collective effort aimed at measuring whether or not the countries are on track to meet the SDG targets and recommending corrective measures in case of setbacks.

African national governments, African LRGs and the other African stakeholders are inextricably connected in sustainable development delivery and in the partnerships upon which this delivery depends. They should therefore also be intrinsically part of the production of data and analysis to assess progress in SDG implementation. 🕒

02



Asia-Pacific

Regional chapter



Woman harvesting crops at Seoul's urban fringe, Republic of Korea (photo: © Ainara Fernández Tortosa).

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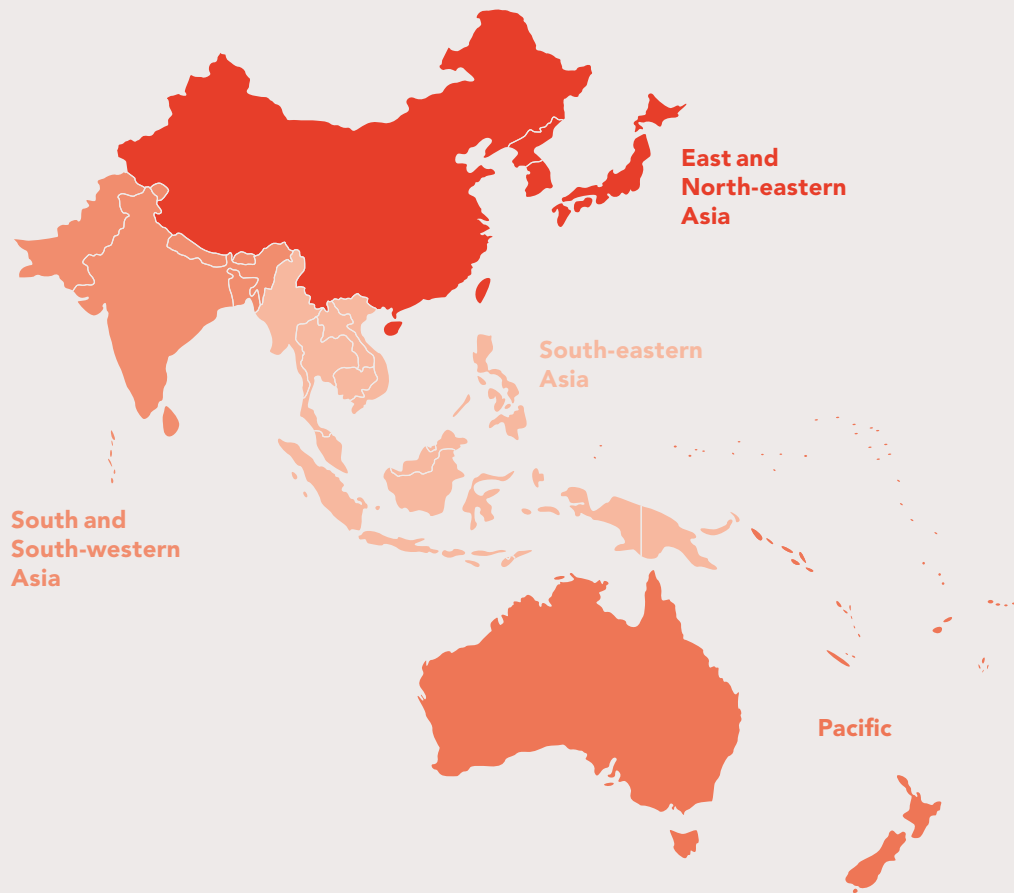
3.1 Awareness-raising and SDG ownership: the role of LRG networks and partners

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South and South-western Asia

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India
Nepal
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Brunei Darussalam
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Indonesia
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia
Myanmar
Papua New Guinea
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Viet Nam

East and North-eastern Asia

China
Japan
Republic of Korea
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Pacific

Australia
Federated States of Micronesia
Fiji
Kiribati
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Micronesia
Nauru
New Zealand
Palau
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu

1. Introduction

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda have been widely embraced in the Asia-Pacific (ASPAC) region. Most governments are working towards including them in several development policies and planning and monitoring frameworks at the national and sub-national levels. There are, however, still significant challenges facing the implementation of the SDGs in the region; and advancing localization through enhanced territorial development strategies is one of them. The region's vast population and geographic area, rapid levels of urbanization and environmental threats all affect the localization of the SDGs.¹

The ASPAC region, as defined by UCLG, is divided into four sub-regions, namely: Southern and South-western Asia, South-eastern Asia, Eastern and North-eastern Asia and Pacific Island countries. The region encompasses a wide range of sub-regions, countries, special administrative regions and some of the world's wealthiest and poorest countries, as well as the largest and most isolated countries and cities on Earth. It is home to more than 56% of the world's population (4.1 billion inhabitants), of which around 50% live in urban areas.² And it is one of the most diverse and fastest growing regions of the world, accounting for more than 60% of the world's economic growth and development.

Urbanization has helped millions escape poverty through increased productivity and employment opportunities, improved quality of life, and large-scale investments in infrastructure and services.³ Most of the 2.26 billion Asia-Pacific urban dwellers live in relatively densely populated urban environments, with the urban population predicted to reach 3 billion by 2035. The region has more than 4,400 urban centres with populations of over 50,000 people. Around

300 cities have populations of over one million, of which 21 are megacities (urban agglomerations with more than 10 million inhabitants); several of them are forming supra-cities or urban regions with populations of over 50 million (such as Delhi-Lahore or the Pearl Delta Metropolitan Region).

Lao PDR (photo: Sasha Popovic, bit.ly/31XrtXZ).





At the same time, small and medium-sized cities are growing rapidly, creating long urban corridors and clusters in many countries. Sixty-five percent of the urban population in the ASPAC region lives in medium-sized cities.⁴

Urbanization is one of the megatrends facing the region in the coming decade. Although coupled with rapid economic growth, urbanization entails significant environmental and social costs.⁵ Asia is home to more than half of the world's cities most vulnerable to a range of natural disasters, including rising sea levels

resulting from climate change.⁶ Even though the proportion of the urban population living in slums has decreased, the number of people living in slums is increasing. Disaster risk, slums, air pollution, congestion, informality, and access to (and quality of) basic services are among the challenges facing many Asian cities.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (UNESCAP) 2019 assessment of progress in SDG implementation underlines the significant improvement made in the region, particularly with respect to poverty reduction, education and life expectancy. However, the report also stresses that 'on its current trajectory, Asia and the Pacific will not achieve any of the 17 SDGs by 2030'.⁷ Measures are underway to achieve affordable and clean energy (SDG 7). Yet inequalities are widening and many sub-regions are lagging behind. Several areas show little progress in food security (SDG 2), supporting industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), building sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11),

Asia is home to more than half of the world's cities most vulnerable to a range of natural disasters, including rising sea levels resulting from climate change.




A resident fetches water from emerged land at the bottom of dried-up Banteng Lake in the Rongkop District, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (photo: Tribun Jogja/ Hasan Sakri, t.ly/O5097).

combatting climate change (SDG 13), protecting life below water (SDG 14) and life on land (SDG 15), and supporting peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). For three of the Goals, the situation has deteriorated, including water and sanitation (SDG 6), ensuring decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and supporting responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).⁸

Large disparities between countries threaten Asia-Pacific's overall ability to achieve the SDGs. According to SDG performance indexes, South Asian countries' scores are below the global median (with the exception of Bhutan), while South-eastern Asian countries are distributed around the median (with the exception of Myanmar, with much lower scores) and East Asian countries, namely Australia and New Zealand, score over the median.⁹ Massive investments are needed to achieve the SDGs in the ASPAC region (estimated at USD 1.5 trillion annually).¹⁰

This chapter presents an overview of the progress made towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia-Pacific countries, with a focus

on the role of local and regional governments (LRGs). The challenges of localization of the SDGs in the region have been partially documented in several reports.¹¹ The chapter is divided into four sections. Following the introduction, Section 2 discusses the SDG implementation strategies adopted by countries in the region and the enabling institutional environments for sub-national government action; section 3 describes activities currently being undertaken at the local level to develop a territorial approach to the implementation of the SDGs, showcasing local practices that address some key development challenges faced by cities and territories in the region. The conclusion synthesizes findings and outlines an action agenda to accelerate the localization of the SDGs in the region through a territorial development approach. 

2. National and local institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

2.1 National strategies and institutional arrangements for implementation of the SDGs

All countries in the ASPAC region have signed up to the SDGs. The preparatory phase to support the implementation of the SDGs involves a range of activities, from integrating the SDGs in national development strategies (alignment of national development plans or strategies to the SDGs) to the development of institutional frameworks (for example, the appointment of national coordinating committees) and the establishment of monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Twenty-eight countries have presented Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) between 2016 and 2019.¹² Nine countries have committed to present their VNRs in 2020. The majority of the Voluntary National Reports reflect the progress that countries are making in the preparatory and implementation phases.

SDGs national strategies and plans

As summarized in Table 1, countries in the ASPAC region have taken significant steps towards mainstreaming the SDGs into their national planning processes, and governments have designated national, focal or nodal agencies to coordinate the implementation of the goals. The UNESCAP synthesis report on the 2019 VNRs highlights that a majority of countries have revised or realigned their National Development Plans (NDPs) to support the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda.¹³

As shown in Table 1, a majority of countries use their national development strategies as a framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, thus ensuring the integration of the SDGs in their development plans. Some countries have integrated the SDGs into sectoral plans, for instance the South Korean 3rd National Basic Plan for Sustainable Development, which selected the goals and targets that were considered the most relevant based on national priorities. Other countries mapped sectoral plans and policies and assigned responsibilities to the different ministries and agencies to cover all the SDGs. China, for

example, aligned the SDGs with its Five Year Plan.¹⁴ Japan launched a sustainable development vision and plan soon after adopting its commitment to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.¹⁵ Indonesia mapped its mid-term plans against the SDGs.¹⁶ Countries such as Australia and New Zealand are still working on defining their strategy, but have integrated the SDGs in different areas.¹⁷ The Small Pacific Island States face unique difficulties in developing plans and are more reliant on international support. The United Nations Pacific Strategy (UNPS) 2018-2022 proposes a five-year strategic framework to support the UN system's collective response to development priorities in 14 Pacific Island Countries and Territories.¹⁸

In regional forums organized by UNESCAP, countries stressed the importance of effectively integrating policy responses, improving inter-ministerial coordination and establishing adequate monitoring systems, which are particularly affected by the lack of resources and primary statistical data at all levels to measure performance.¹⁹

With respect to the implementation of the SDGs from the perspective of sub-national governments (SNG), the localization of strategies to realize the SDGs and the role played by local governments is mentioned in a number of VNRs (Bhutan, China, Japan, South Korea, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam; in India mainly at state level), while a few others make specific references to territorialization strategies

The UNESCAP synthesis report on the 2019 VNRs highlights that a majority of countries have revised or realigned their National Development Plans to support the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda.

Table 1 National strategies and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SDGs

Bangladesh

The 2030 Agenda has been integrated into Bangladesh's Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020) and an action plan has been prepared. Coordination: SDGs Inter-Ministerial Implementation and Monitoring Committee established by the PM. No LRG participation reported.

Bhutan

The 12th Five Year Plan (2018-2023) has been aligned with the SDGs. The process was initiated in the 11th Plan. The plan focuses development on National Key Result Areas (NKRAs). Coordination: Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNHC) Commission (inter-agency coordination body), including a High-Level SDG Working Committee (in charge of preparation of the VNR) with parliamentary oversight.

Cambodia

The Cambodian Sustainable Development Framework, approved in November 2018, will be integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan. Coordination: National Council on Sustainable Development, which is coordinated by the Planning Ministry in charge of SDG implementation. LRGs consulted.

China

China's 13th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) for Economic and Social Development adopted in March 2016 reflects the SDGs. In September 2016, the country also released China's National Plan on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which translates each target of the SDGs into action plans for the country. Several sectoral plans are also aligned with SDGs. Coordination: inter-agency coordination mechanism (43 government departments) led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. No direct participation of LRGs.

India

SDGs are integrated in the Three Year Action Agenda 2017-20, as well as in the 15-year vision and 7-year strategy. Coordination: National Institution for the Transformation of India (*NITI Aayog*), chaired by the Prime Minister. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation formulates indicators. Only states' chief ministers are represented in coordination mechanisms.

Indonesia

SDGs are incorporated in the national development vision (*Nawacita*) and at all three levels of Indonesia's development planning: National Long-Term Development Plan 2005-2025, the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2015-2019 and in the 1-year Government Work Plan. An SDGs Action Plan (2017-2019) was launched in June 2018. In addition, Indonesia is formulating a 2030 Agenda Roadmap and integrating the SDGs in the preparation of the Medium-Term Regional Development 2020-2024 and Regional Work Plan at the sub-national level. Coordination: SDGs National Coordination Team, headed by the President. There is also an implementation team, which is coordinated by the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), an expert panel and four multi-stakeholder forums for follow-up. SDG coordination teams have also been created at the sub-national level.

Japan

The 2018 Basic Policies and 2018 Economic Growth Strategy are committed to promoting the SDGs. In December 2017, Japan adopted the 2018 SDG Action Plan and in June 2018, the Expanded SDG Action Plan. Coordination: SDGs Promotion Headquarter, headed by the Prime Minister (inter-ministerial structure). LRGs involved in SDG Promotion Roundtables (consultative level).

Republic of Korea

The Third National Basic Plan for Sustainable Development 2016-2020 provides a basic platform for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Coordination: Commission on Sustainable Development (led by Ministry of Environment). It includes civil society organizations (CSOs) and academia, the Office for Government Policy Coordination and the Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC) for international policies (led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). No direct participation of LRGs reported.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

A set of SDG Promotion Guiding Principles were adopted in 2016. The SDGs have been integrated into the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020), and in its monitoring and evaluation framework; into the Ten Year Socio-economic Development Strategy (2016-2025) and into the Development Vision toward 2030. Lao PDR is developing a roadmap for implementing the SDGs. Coordination: National SDG Steering Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, and led by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Planning and Investment and the Lao PDR Statistics Bureau. No participation of LRGs reported.

Malaysia

SDGs have been integrated into the Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020 and Vision 2020. Coordination: National SDG Council (chaired by the Prime Minister) and a National Steering Committee (chaired by the Director of Economic Planning Unit), which includes five Cluster Working Committees (with ministries, CSOs, the private sector, academia, UN agencies and youth). Similar mechanisms were created at the state level.

Maldives

Alignment of SDGs is underway. Coordination: National Ministerial Coordination Committee (inter-ministerial mechanism), chaired by the Prime Minister and coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Energy; there is also a technical committee (multi-stakeholder). Local governments aligned their five-year development plans (2017-2021) with the SDGs.

Myanmar

The National Comprehensive Development Plan (NCDP) 2011-2031 and the 2nd Five Year Plan 2016-2021 has been revised to include the SDGs and Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (Draft version, February 2018); Readiness Report of Myanmar's Official Statistics for SDGs and SDGs Baseline Indicators Report. Coordination: Ministry of Planning and Finance.

Nepal

Nepal integrated the SDGs into its 14th Periodic Plan (2016/2017-2018/2019), and into sectoral strategies and annual programmes. The SDGs Status and Roadmap 2016-2030 serves as a framework. Coordination: SDG Steering Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister. There is also a National Planning Commission and an SDGs Coordination and Implementation Committee (chaired by the Vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission). CSOs, private sector and development partners participate in nine SDG Implementation and Monitoring Thematic Committees. Local authorities recently elected.

Pakistan

SDGs are embedded in the Pakistan Long-Term Development Agenda, in the 12th Five-Year Plan (2018-2023) and provincial medium-term development strategies, and public sector development programme. A national SDG Framework towards 2030 was adopted in 2018, while the provinces are in the process of developing Provincial SDG Frameworks. Coordination: National Economic Council, chaired by the Prime Minister and Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms. The four provinces have established SDG Support Units in their planning and development departments (plus two extra units in federally administered areas), as well as technical committees and thematic clusters. Focal persons have been nominated down to district levels. Taskforces in the national and provincial parliaments have been established to review progress and facilitate legislative support for implementation. A National Advisory Committee on SDGs has been announced.

Philippines

The SDGs are integrated into the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, complemented with national budget allocations through the Public Investment Programme, which are geared towards the achievement of the country's long-term document 'Ambisyon Natin 2040' and 10-Point Socio-economic Agenda. Coordination: Sub-committee on the SDGs to be set up as part of the Budget Development and Coordination Committee (DBCC), chaired by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and co-chaired by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The sub-committee will also include technical working groups in economics, environment, social and governance.

Singapore

Singapore adopted a whole-of-government approach to develop and implement integrated and sustainable policies as part of its Sustainable Singapore Blueprint 2015. Coordination: Inter Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development, co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources.

Sri Lanka

The Vision 2025, the Public Investment Programme (2017-2020) and the 'Blue Green' budget of 2018 are the foundations of the strategic development framework. A National SDG Action Plan (2017-2020) was developed in 2016 but not implemented. Coordination: Sustainable Development Council (SDC) during the first years under the purview of the Presidency and Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife Conservation (Act 19, October 2017), although recently the ministry has been dissolved. The SDC should comprise 12 members, three of whom are from provincial councils (appointed by the President), but LRGs are not involved.

Thailand

The SDGs are integrated within the 20 Year National Strategy Framework (2017 - 2036) and the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017 - 2021). Coordination: National Committee for Sustainable Development (CSD), chaired by the Prime Minister (multi-stakeholder, with three taskforces and a secretariat assured by the National Economic and Social Development Board).

Table 1 National strategies and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SDGs

Timor-Leste

National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 and Roadmap for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda adopted in 2017. Coordination: SDG Working Group (government ministries, parliament, academia, private sector, media, religious organizations, and representatives of civil society, with the United Nations as observer). There is a VNR Secretariat (including a Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation Unit-UPMA) and a CSO advisory group. The creation of a National Commission for the SDGs has been proposed.

Viet Nam

SDGs have been integrated into the Five Year National Development Plan (2016-2020). The seventeen global SDGs have been nationalized into 115 Viet Nam SDG (VSDG) targets in the 'National Action Plan for Implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development' (NAP). The NAP will be implemented in two phases: 2017-2020 and 2021-2030. Coordination: Ministry of Planning and Investment, in charge of SDG implementation; Inter-sectoral Working Group on SDGs; and the National Council on Sustainable Development and the Competitive Enhancement, which provides strategic advice.

PACIFIC

Australia

Australia has not developed a process to integrate the SDGs into national and sub-national policy yet. Coordination: Inter-departmental Committee, co-chaired by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Council of Australian Government acts as the coordinating forum for the states and territories.

Fiji

Fiji's 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plans. Coordination: Ministry of Economy and SDGs Taskforce.

New Zealand

A Living Standards Framework was developed by the New Zealand Treasury, while Statistics New Zealand developed Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand (*Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa*). The country has also adopted an Urban Growth Agenda. Coordination: SDG national summits ensure the involvement of all sectors, including LRGs, in building a multi-sector action plan for SDG implementation, which is currently underway. The 2nd SDG Summit was held in September 2019, in order to 'accelerate action, together'.

Kiribati

SDGs are aligned with the Kiribati Development Plan (KDP) 2016-2019 and Kitinsyi Vision 20. Coordination: Development Coordinating Committee and SDG Taskforce, which operate under the oversight of the National Economic Planning Office of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The Kiribati Local Government Association has contributed to the VNR.

Nauru

Nauru has demonstrated its commitment to achieving the SDGs through the review of its national sustainable development strategy (NSDS).

Palau

National SDG Framework, National Sustainable Development Plan; Palau 2020. Coordination: SDG Coordinating Unit, including several working groups.

Papua New Guinea

Vison 2050 and National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development for Papua New Guinea. Coordination: National Executive Council, Central Agency Coordination Committee, MTDP-SDGs National Steering Committee, technical working groups.

Samoa

The Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2016/17- 2019/20 is aligned with the SDGs, as well as with the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA). Coordination: National SDG Task Force (inter-ministerial), chaired by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. No reference to LRGs.

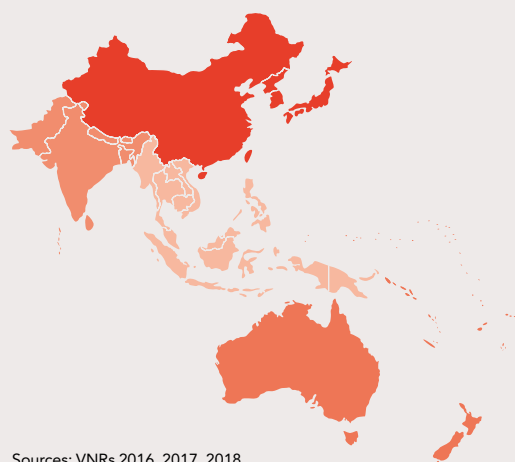
Tonga

Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025. Coordination: The Planning Division in the Office of the Prime Minister coordinates the implementation of the SDGs in Tonga, supported by the Tonga Sustainable Development Taskforce (a multi-stakeholder body) and a Technical Working Group (which supports the Taskforce).

Vanuatu

Vanuatu 2030. The People's Plan, Annual Development Report, and Final Technical Report on the National SD Plan 2016-2030 (also aligned with the Pacific Roadmap for SD). Coordination: Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination, within the Office of Prime Minister.

Asia-Pacific Region



Sources: VNRs 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019; UNDESA (2017 and 2018). 'Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'; UCLG Surveys.

(Indonesia). Many countries make efforts to raise awareness among local governments through campaigns, national symposiums, conferences, seminars and forums. However, such outreach efforts are often sporadic and the involvement of LRGs is still limited, as outlined in a number of reports and studies.²⁰

Indeed, both a review of the VNRs and local governments' testimonies show that the participation of LRGs in the preparation of these reports remains limited. Local governments participated in the consultation process (mostly through multi-stakeholder workshops or occasional consultations) in only 11 out of the 28 countries that have presented their VNRs.²¹

Although the responsibility for the implementation of the SDGs in the 2030 Agenda lies with central governments, LRGs should be involved to a greater extent in the preparation of VNRs and subsequent review documents.

Institutional arrangements

The scope and ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires cross-sectoral action from all parts of government, as well as from non-governmental stakeholders. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, member countries have put in place different mechanisms to ensure coordination and follow up of the commitments. Many have used pre-existing national mechanisms (e.g. Bhutan, Cambodia, India, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Thailand, Vanuatu and Viet Nam). Others have created new processes and designated national focal or nodal agencies in charge of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, mostly at high levels of government — prime ministerial or inter-ministerial level — to ensure governmental commitment (e.g. Australia, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Maldives, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines Samoa, and Sri Lanka). In some cases, the mechanisms involve other non-governmental stakeholders such as the private sector, NGOs, religious groups and academia (e.g. Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Palau, Samoa, Timor-Leste and Thailand).

The involvement of LRGs in coordination and follow-up mechanisms is still more limited than their participation in the VNR processes. Only in six countries have LRGs been involved or consulted in some way through national mechanisms (in Japan and Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, in Australia and Samoa; in India and Pakistan only state governments have been consulted).²² In some countries, LRGs are involved to a greater extent in sub-national mechanisms at regional or local level (e.g. China, India, Indonesia and the Philippines). In some cases, despite the existence of multi-stakeholder national mechanisms, local governments are not



Streets of Manila, the Philippines (photo: Stefan Munder, t.ly/ze0eN).

directly associated with them (e.g. South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand). Some countries have not defined coordination mechanisms yet (e.g. New Zealand).

The Asian Sustainable Development Forum has also emphasized the importance of adopting a 'whole-of-government approach' and the importance of conducting full and comprehensive consultations that involve a wide range of stakeholders, including CSOs, NGOs, think-tanks, businesses, local governments, philanthropic organizations and the media.²³ ◉

The involvement of LRGs in coordination and follow-up mechanisms is still limited: only in six countries have LRGs been involved or consulted in some way through national mechanisms.

2.2 Enabling institutional environments of local and regional governments

Overview of regional trends

Since the 1990s, decentralization and state reforms have taken place in most Asia-Pacific countries, yet the pattern of decentralization differs greatly from country to country. As is often the case, in federal countries such as Australia, India, Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia, the federated units (states or provinces) have legislative jurisdiction to determine the institutional arrangements for their local government systems, assign functions and responsibilities, and regulate the fiscal framework for local governments. Local government is generally a state or province matter. In unitary countries, the determination of local governments' institutional environment and their oversight are the responsibility of central government, while the scope of local government is defined in the countries' constitutions and complementary legislation. Some constitutions, such as those in Bhutan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, make clear provisions for local governments.

Constitutional and legal reforms have continued to take place over the last decade and have entailed territorial and political reorganizations.²⁴ Bhutan and Myanmar in 2008, Pakistan in 2010 (the 18th Constitutional Amendment makes it compulsory for provinces to establish local government systems), Fiji and Viet Nam in 2013, Nepal in 2015 (which entailed the federalization of the country), and Thailand in 2017 have all adopted new constitutions. In the Philippines, a constitutional draft was presented to the President in July 2018 that would entail the creation of 18 federal regions.²⁵ Similarly, constitutional reform is being proposed in South Korea to embed decentralization in the constitution. Over the past years, other laws have reformed local government frameworks in the majority of countries in the region.

In 2018, UCLG ASPAC and Cities Alliance proposed an evaluation of how enabling the institutional environments were for local governments, in terms of supporting sustainable development in the regions (Cities Enabling

Environment, or CEE, Assessment).²⁶ The assessment offers a review of local governance in the region. According to the assessment (based on 11 criteria to reflect the different dimensions of an 'enabling environment' for LRGs), the most economically developed countries in the region (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea), as well as Bhutan, Indonesia and the Philippines, have the most enabling environments for local government action (see Figure 1).

Within this group, the assessment finds that LRGs in Japan and New Zealand benefit from the most favourable enabling environment with respect to local autonomy and accountability. This is followed by Australia and South Korea, with lower scores in terms of constitutional arrangements and fiscal decentralization respectively. A special Act on Autonomy and Decentralisation and Local Administration System was promulgated in South Korea in March 2018.

Bhutan scores highly in terms of sustainable development, but less so on local democracy (assemblies are elected but executive bodies are appointed).

Despite being a highly centralized political regime, China also ranks highly. SNGs benefit from a relatively large degree of autonomy in terms of implementing local development policies, and local assemblies and executive bodies are elected (although not necessarily across the whole country, and higher levels of government often influence elections). Indonesia's score is low on urban policies and sustainable development policies, while the Philippines has a low score on fiscal decentralization. It should also be noted that legal frameworks are not always fully implemented in the Philippines.²⁷

A second group of countries with intermediate rankings includes Thailand, Viet Nam, India and some Pacific Islands such as Vanuatu.²⁸ The majority of these countries have low scores on fiscal decentralization. Within the framework of the 2015 Law on Organization of Local Administration adopted in 2015, Viet Nam's local governments are considered part of the national government's administrative body and organized according

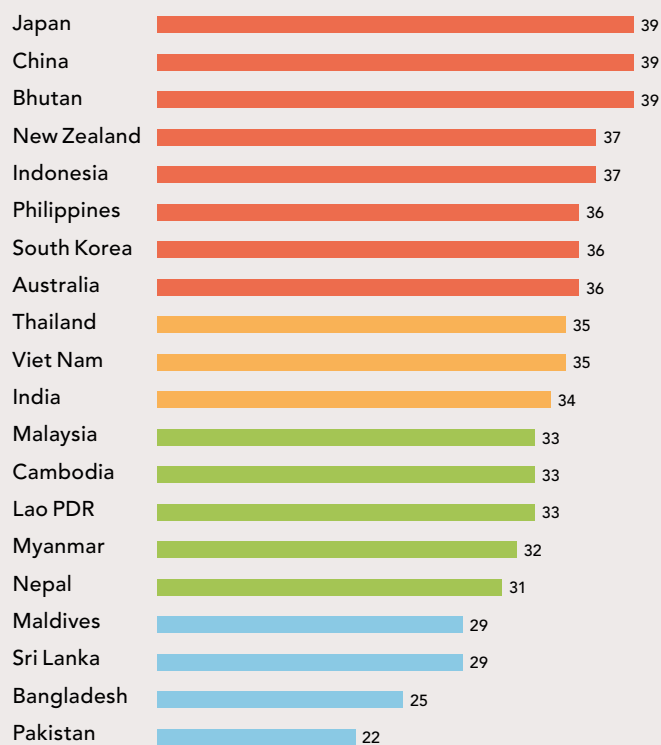
to a centralized structure; local assemblies are elected but executive bodies are appointed, while local budgets are a part of the state's budget and must be approved by the National Assembly. In Thailand, decentralization has slowed significantly because of the instability of the political system in the country; the Ministry of Interior can intervene in or modify local policies. In India, decentralization is uneven, despite the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of 1992 that give recognition and protection to local governments. Some states have made progress with respect to decentralization, but in a majority of states local governments have very limited powers and resources.²⁹

A third group includes countries where local government reforms are still at an early stage or where local administration is effectively more deconcentrated than decentralized. This group includes Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia and Myanmar. All have low scores in terms of local democracy and fiscal decentralization. In Cambodia and Lao PDR, local assemblies are elected but executive bodies are appointed. In Malaysia, state governors are elected, but both local assemblies and executive bodies of local governments are appointed. Tasks that were traditionally devolved to local governments have been partially recentralized or privatized. In Myanmar, following the 2008 Constitution, local administrations' oversight became the responsibility of the newly created states and regional governments. Therefore, in spite of the institutional changes, the local administration system remains highly centralized.³⁰ Following the recent constitutional and legislative reforms (including the Local Governance Operation Act and Inter-Governmental Fiscal Management Act 2017), Nepal could also be included in this group; new local authorities were elected in May-June 2017, yet overall capacities of local governments remain weak.

A final group includes those countries with the lowest scores, namely Bangladesh,³¹ Pakistan,³² and Timor-Leste.³³ In these countries, decentralization reforms have either stagnated or regressed altogether. Sri Lanka was initially put in this group, but local elections were finally held in the country as recently as February 2018 for all its 340 local governments (24 municipal councils, 41 urban councils and 275 divisional councils). It was the largest election in Sri Lankan history.³⁴ In the Pacific Region, the Maldives, Fiji, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands also form part of this group, since local governments are remarkably weak here, in terms of political and fiscal autonomy.³⁵ In some cases, central governments have not delegated effective functional authority to local administrations. Consequently, greater reform is needed in these two last groups of countries in terms of defining the role of local authorities, increasing local powers and fiscal decentralization and setting up frameworks

Figure 1

CEE Assessment ratings by country



Notes: Rankings go from 34 or higher (most favourable legislative enabling environment) to 22 or lower (enabling environment generally unfavourable to cities).
Source: UCLG ASPAC, Cities Alliance, and UNDP. 'City Enabling Environment Rating', 48.

for performance assessment. Other Pacific Small Island Developing States (with the exception of Fiji and Palau) have their own specific features or do not have local self-government systems at all.³⁶

In many nations, despite efforts to clarify the allocation of responsibilities, there is significant overlap between different levels of government — states, regions and local governments — and some legal provisions have not been implemented. In many cases, central line agencies exert direct control over local governments or manage similar responsibilities, undermining their autonomy in spite of legislative provisions.

The strengthening of local democracy is a key area identified for regional reform by the CEE Assessment, although some progress has been observed. In 2017, Nepal held the first local elections in almost two decades and in Bangladesh, district councils were elected in 2016 for the first time, although this did not apply to the whole country. As mentioned above, Sri Lanka's 2018 local elections finalized a process that had been suspended since 2015. In Pakistan, following the 2010 18th Constitutional Amendment, all provinces passed local government regulations and were able to hold local elections in 2015 and 2016.

However, in January and May 2019 respectively, local governments in the provinces of Balochistan and Punjab were dissolved. In the latter, a new law, the 'Punjab Village Panchayats and Neighbourhood Councils Act' of 2019, mandates the provincial government to hold elections within a year. Malaysia has elections at state level, but local elections have been suspended since 1965. Local elections in Thailand, suspended since the military coup in 2014, were scheduled to take place 90 days after the national elections in March 2019. In Myanmar, the first local elections took place in the country's main cities (Yangon and Mandalay) in 2019.³⁷ In Fiji, local authorities have

been appointed since the military coup in 2006. In other Pacific Small Island Developing States, government structures operate in parallel with customary chiefdoms and there is a high level of consultation amongst the community.

Unfortunately, women's representation is still limited in the region (on average only 19% of seats in national parliaments and local governments are occupied by women).³⁸ Nepal's new constitution mandates a 40% quota of elected women representatives at the municipal level. As a result, 95% of the 293 municipalities now have women councillors and deputy mayors. Other countries have also established quotas for women (e.g. India,

Table 2 Territorial organization of countries in the Asia-Pacific region as of 2018

2018	System of government and form of state	Levels of SNGs	Total SNGs	1 st level (municipal)	2 nd level (intermediary)	3 rd level (regional/state)
Australia	Constitutional Monarchy Federation	2	570	562		8
Bangladesh	Republic Unitary state	3	5,930	5,377	489	64 districts
Bhutan	Absolute Monarchy Unitary state	3	225	nd	205	20
Brunei Darussalam	Absolute Monarchy Unitary state	No local government				
Cambodia	Constitutional Monarchy Unitary state	3	1,856	1,646	185	25
China, PR (1)*	Popular Republic Unitary state	4**	3,216	2,851	334	31
Fiji	Republic Unitary State	1	27	27		
India	Republic Federation	2	267,464	267,428 262,771 rural local bodies (Panchayat) 4,657 urban local bodies		36 29 States 7 Union territories
Indonesia	Republic Unitary state	3	83,892	83,344	514	34
Japan	Constitutional Monarchy Unitary state	2	1,788	1,741		47
Kiribati	Republic Unitary state	1	26	26		
Korea, Republic of	Republic Unitary state	2	243	226		17
Lao PDR (1)	People's Democratic Republic - Unitary state	4	18		NA	18
Malaysia	Constitutional Monarchy Federation	2	167	154		13
Maldives	Republic Unitary state	2	209	188		21
Myanmar	Republic Unitary state	3	414	325	67	22
Nauru	Republic Unitary State		14	14		

Indonesia and Sri Lanka). However, in Indonesia, despite the 30% quota applied to the parliament's composition, women legislators represented 16% at provincial level and 14% at municipal level (16.6% at national level).³⁹ In the Philippines, the proportion of women in local government was 31% in 2016, but this fell to 21.3% in 2018.⁴⁰

Changes in the territorial organization of countries in the region

There are approximately 437,000 SNG entities in the Asia-Pacific region, with up to four distinctive levels of local government, ranging from large cities

with populations of over five million to small semi-autonomous self-governing neighbourhoods or villages with a few thousand inhabitants.⁴¹ In addition to LRGs, there are quasi-governmental and authority districts which operate across local government boundaries, such as metropolitan development authorities, capital districts, planning or utility agencies, and educational local authorities (Japan). In many cases, the areas under their jurisdiction do not correspond to local governments' administrative boundaries, which poses coordination difficulties when it comes to the planning and management of cities and urban areas.

2018	System of government and form of state	Levels of SNGs	Total SNGs	1 st level (municipal)	2 nd level (intermediary)	3 rd level (regional/state)
Nepal	Republic Federation	2	760	753		7
New Zealand	Constitutional Monarchy Unitary state	2	78	67		11
Pakistan	Republic Federation	3	10,333	10,200	129	4
Palau	Republic Unitary State	1	16			16
Papua New Guinea	Constitutional Monarchy Federation	1	318	296		22
Philippines	Republic Unitary state	3	43,761	42,045	1,634	82
Samoa	Republic Unitary state	2	330	330		
Solomon Islands	Constitutional Monarchy Unitary	2	10	1		9
Singapore	Republic Unitary state	No local government				
Sri Lanka	Republic Unitary state	2	350	341		9
Thailand	Constitutional monarchy Unitary state	2	2,517	2,441		76
Timor-Leste	Republic Unitary state	2	455	442	13	
Tonga	Monarchy Unitary State	2	178	155		23
Tuvalu	Constitutional Monarchy Unitary	1	8	8		
Vanuatu	Republic Unitary state	1	9			9
Viet Nam (1)	Socialist Republic Unitary state	3	11,938	11,162	713	63

*These statistics exclusively cover mainland China and exclude the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao.

**The fourth level consists of the townships/villages (39,862). Although these are not acknowledged in the constitution, they are recognized by the Budget Law and the fiscal system.

Source: World Observatory of Sub-national Government Finance and Investments, CLGF and other sources.

(1) China, Lao PDR and Viet Nam are considered to be a 'one party system'.

It is difficult to identify a common trend with respect to the evolution of territorial organization in the region. Japan, for example, reduced the number of SNGs between 1999 and 2016 from 3,232 to 1,741 and amalgamation continues to be encouraged. Australian states also reduced the number of local governments from 862 in the 1980's to the present 562. In Nepal, as already mentioned, the move towards federalism reduced the number of SNGs and established three levels of government. Some countries are putting forward strategies to foster cooperation between territories for service delivery (e.g. Australia, Japan and New Zealand). China approved, in 2019, a decree to foster urban integration and coordination between rural and urban areas. On the other hand, India increased the number of states to 29 and in 2015 created the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) to promote cooperative federalism. In Indonesia, the 2014 'Village Law' gives more visibility and prominence to this tier, providing villages with a legal basis to access their own share of fiscal transfers. Bangladesh created a new division in 2015 (Mymensingh) and new municipalities by merging or adjoining wards through the union of villages. As part of its 2017-2018 programme, South Korea is attempting to address the regional imbalances between Seoul and the surrounding regions. Table 2 provides an overview of the number of tiers and local governments for countries in the region. There are no local governments in Singapore, Brunei, Nauru and Tonga.

Countries in the region face the growing challenge of managing large metropolitan regions under a multiplicity of government layers. In order to address the coordination and urban management issues in such large metro areas, cities such as Bangkok, Delhi and Manila have established metropolitan development authorities whilst countries such as Australia, China, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and Viet Nam have all given special status to their capital cities and large metropolitan regions.⁴² Japan also adopted a law in 2015 enabling the merger of metropolitan areas into new special entities modelled on Tokyo's system of metropolitan governance.

Changes in local and regional governments' fiscal autonomy and capacities⁴³

As a general trend in the region, the delegation of administrative powers and responsibilities is stronger than fiscal decentralization, which results in critical vertical fiscal imbalances. Consequently, local governments tend to struggle with budgets and ensuring enough investment funds to fulfil their responsibilities.

Figure 2 shows the ratio between local and central government public revenues and expenditures for 15 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Nearly one third of total government

expenditures and revenues are realized at the sub-national level (33% and 34% as a percentage of general government expenditures and revenues respectively). Measured in terms of GDP, the average levels of expenditures and revenues in the Asia-Pacific region are 9% and 8.1% respectively (as compared to 16.2% and 15.9% of GDP on average for OECD countries). There is a clear gap between federal countries (Australia, India, Malaysia and Pakistan) where LRGs represent 11.2% and 10.4% of GDP for expenditures and revenues; and unitary countries, which mobilize only 8.2% and 7.2% of GDP for expenditures and revenues (and 1.5% less than this if China is excluded).⁴⁴

In countries where fiscal decentralization is more advanced, local expenditures and revenues correspond on average to 15.2% and 15.4% of GDP (for example Australia, Japan and South Korea). However, such figures only reach on average 1.7% of GDP for expenditures and 2.2% for revenues for less fiscally decentralized countries (e.g. Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka). Between these two lies Indonesia, where local government expenditures and revenues represent 8.1% of the country's GDP. New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand lie closer to the group of less fiscally decentralized countries⁴⁵ whilst, in stark contrast, China and Viet Nam sub-national expenditure levels represent 21.6% and 15% of GDP respectively (equivalent to 85.4% and 56% of total public expenditure)⁴⁶ — yet the spending autonomy of these LRGs is largely constrained by central government policies.

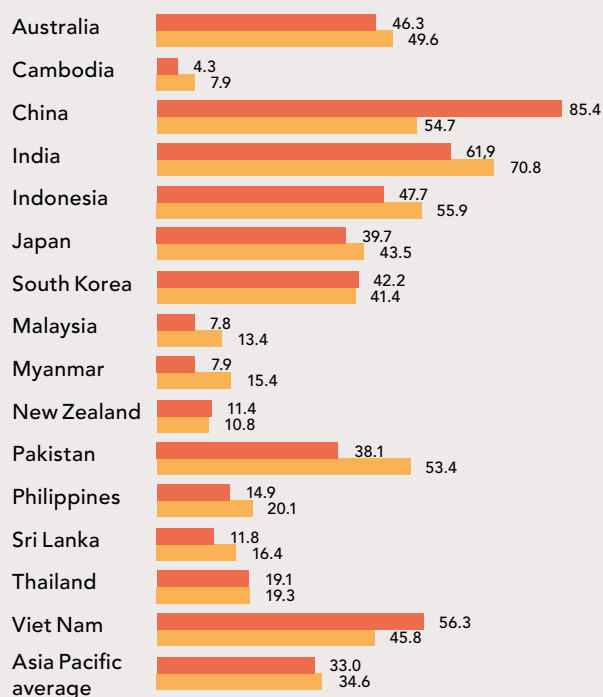
For the majority of SNGs in the region, spending responsibilities include general public services, public infrastructures and transport (e.g. urban management, roads and municipal facilities), environmental protection (including waste management) and management of amenities. In some countries, education, health, housing and social assistance represent a significant share of local spending (e.g. Indonesia, China, South Korea and Viet Nam). In countries with aging populations, social and health-related expenditures are increasing, as is the case in Japan and South Korea. In other countries, for example Cambodia and Bangladesh, local responsibilities are defined by law, yet most small local governments do not have the necessary resources to perform their functions. Most developing countries in the region are experiencing a growing mismatch between expenditure responsibilities and resources.

Over the past years, fiscal reforms have been implemented in the majority of countries in the region, although there is a divergence in trends towards both de- and recentralization.⁴⁷ In terms of SNGs' capacities to raise their own resources, many LRGs in the region operate under severe fiscal constraints. In more economically developed

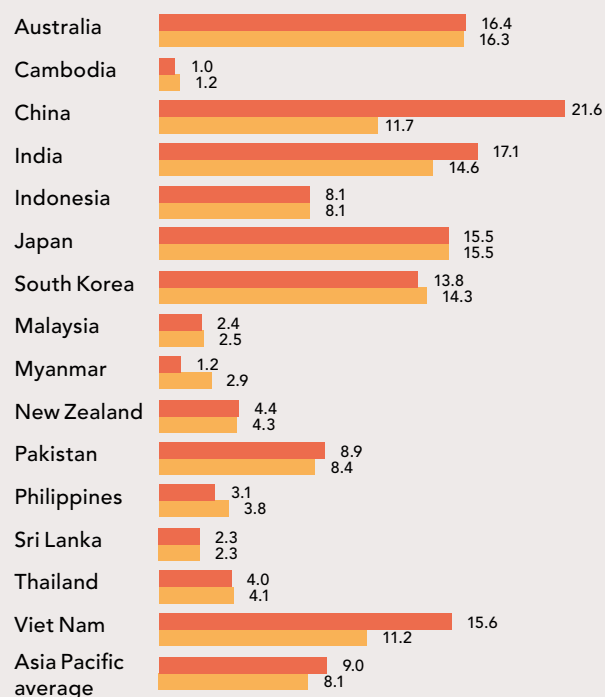
Figure 2

Sub-national government revenues and expenditures as a percentage of GDP and as a percentage of general government expenditures and revenues (2016)

SNG expenditures and revenues on GG



SNG expenditures and revenues on GDP



■ SNG expenditures % of GG ■ SNG revenues % of GG

■ SNG expenditures ■ SNG revenues

Source: World Observatory of Subnational Governments Finance and Investments (2019). Data collected are from 2016.

countries, tax revenues are more decentralized (in Japan and South Korea, for instance, tax revenues respectively accounted for 47% and 32.8% of sub-national revenues). In federal countries, for example Australia, local taxes represent around one third of sub-national budgets, whilst in India the figure is 72%. In Pakistan, LRGs lack the capacity to collect taxes effectively. In China, local governments have very limited taxing powers although local tax represents almost 50% of local budgets. In Indonesia and the Philippines, local taxes represent a limited part of local revenues (16% and 23% respectively). In other Asia-Pacific countries with developing economies, tax revenues are much more centralized.

Transfers, although intended to reduce fiscal imbalances, constitute a major part of sub-national government revenues and make local governments dependent on them. In South-eastern Asia, transfers represent on average

around 50% of SNGs' revenues, ranging from 19% in Malaysia, 20% in Cambodia 62% in Thailand, 68% in the Philippines and 83% in Indonesia. With respect to more economically developed countries, transfers in South Korea represent 58% of sub-national budgets, followed by 45% in Australia, 43% in Japan and 26% in New Zealand (compared to an average of 37% in OECD countries). In the majority of countries, how transfers are spent is often determined at the national level, reducing local authorities' room for manoeuvre. Some countries are increasing the share of tied grants (e.g. in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam), while in other countries reforms are underway to reduce the share of earmarked grants, as is the case for example in Japan. In some countries, transfers are often delayed (e.g. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Sri Lanka), transferred erratically or sometimes not transferred at all (e.g. Nepal and Pakistan).⁴⁸

Giving local governments more fiscal autonomy is still the area where most reform is required. This needs to be enhanced by strengthening LRG capacity to raise their own resources (local taxes and fees) in addition to financial transfers from central government.

Uncertainty and delay in transfers hinder local governments' financial capacities, making it more difficult for them to invest in local infrastructures.

Throughout the region, local tax revenues are low and expenditure efficiency is weak. In general, property-based taxation remains significantly under-utilized. City authorities have land, fixed assets and infrastructure that could potentially be used to generate funds. The booming urban property market provides a great opportunity to expand local government revenue, for which land value capture mechanisms should be put in place (e.g. betterment levy, land readjustment or tax increment financing).⁴⁹

Investing is a major function of LRGs in many countries in the region. In Australia, China, India, Japan and Viet Nam for example, LRGs are responsible for over two-thirds of public investments, whilst this figure is 59% and 58% respectively in Indonesia and South Korea and 32% in New Zealand and Pakistan.

Local governments in the region can *de jure* engage in borrowing, generally with the approval of central government (or state/province). However, with the exception of countries, India and the Philippines, access to borrowing is in fact limited (and very restricted in some countries such as Cambodia).⁵⁰ In a country with a developed economy such as New Zealand, LRGs traditionally borrow to fund capital expenditure programmes. Here, the Local Government Funding Agency was created in 2011 through the joint initiative of local and central governments as a debt vehicle to raise bonds on financial markets and lend to member LRGs. In India, a state-level pooled finance development fund scheme has been established by the Ministry of Urban Development to provide credit enhancement to LRGs wishing to access bond markets (e.g. Ahmedabad),⁵¹ while in the Philippines access to loans is often through Municipal Development Funds (although municipal debt is in fact limited). In China, until recently local governments had a considerable degree of autonomy over land concession revenues and could engage in indirect borrowing from banks through local government financing

vehicles. However, since 2015, the Chinese government has been making efforts to control local debt.⁵² The use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to finance infrastructure investment is rare (except in China).

The effect of limited access to borrowing is that even cities that have the capacity to borrow to fund economically viable critical infrastructure are often prevented from doing so by rules and regulations that are not linked to local situations but applied uniformly across countries. Such regulations have a significant impact on the competitiveness of cities and their ability to raise the capital they need to fund essential infrastructure to support development needs.

Even where fiscal decentralization has evolved in the regions, local fiscal autonomy is often constrained and has even regressed in some countries.⁵³ To finance the implementation of SDGs, however, LRGs must play a stronger role in the mobilization of domestic resources. Effective and more equitable local taxes and efficient public spending can reinforce inclusive and accountable governance. Innovative land-based financing, for example, can contribute to raising revenues for sustainable development, particularly in cities (as for example the recent property tax reforms in Bangkok following the approval of the Land and Building Tax Act in November 2018).⁵⁴

As discussed in this section, in most Asia-Pacific countries local governments operate within constrained institutional frameworks and under the restrictive oversight of either the central government in unitary countries, or the provincial or state governments in federal countries. LRGs' capacity to fulfil their responsibilities and improve their accountability is hampered by ambiguous and overlapping functional allocations between levels of government; extended remits without the requisite funding; and growing conflict over the scope of decentralization. Such limitations to local action hinder local governments' ability to carry out their assigned tasks effectively and, therefore, to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs.⁵⁵

According to the CEE and UNESCAP's assessments of progress regarding SDG implementation, giving local governments more fiscal autonomy is still the area where most reform is needed. In order to generate revenues to finance the development of infrastructure and service delivery, LRGs' fiscal autonomy must be enhanced by strengthening their capacity to raise their own resources (local taxes and fees) in addition to financial transfers from central government. Given the rising rates of urbanization and the limited central funds available for local development in many countries in the region, strengthening local government capacities and revenues is becoming increasingly pressing in order to improve the efficiency of domestic resource mobilization. ◉

2.3 Multilevel governance mechanisms for implementing the SDGs

National governments are responsible for setting country-level goals and targets for the SDGs and for defining the strategy to achieve them. LRGs have, however, critical responsibilities in achieving many of these objectives. The realization of the 2030 Agenda's imperative to 'leave no one behind' entails a strong spatial and territorial component that makes coordination across all government levels critical for the Agenda's realization. For this reason, it is crucial to adopt a territorial approach to local development that ensures the vertical and horizontal coordination of policies and planning strategies. This, in turn, is key to ensuring policy coherence across different levels of government. For such coordination to rise, it is necessary to effectively enact the principle of subsidiarity and enable LRGs to take action in an autonomous and accountable way. For local action to become a catalyst of global change, LRGs must be able to access different available local capital sources, in accordance with specific local and national contexts and institutional frameworks. LRGs' actions will enhance resource mobilization from the national level and channel it towards sustainable development actions at the local level. They can also go the extra mile and mobilize additional resources, resulting in an easier, more effective final policy outcome.

As previously discussed, countries in the region are implementing different public administration arrangements to realize the SDGs. Top-down approaches, where the different sub-national levels of government are asked to follow national policy directives or priorities, are the most common means of promoting this process. However, more nuanced strategies and mechanisms are

progressively emerging in different countries. The approach is necessarily different in the most developed Asian economies, where due to a more embedded local autonomy, there are relatively stronger initiatives coming up from local governments regarding the design of sustainable policies (e.g. in Australia, South Korea, Japan and New Zealand). The following section analyses some examples of these approaches, ranging from countries with an environment that enables LRG action, to countries where local autonomy is limited or local governments are weak.

Kid in front of a Shinto shrine in Sumiyoshi ward in the city of Osaka, Japan (photo: Geoff Whalan, bit.ly/2B7E9Qp).



SDG coordination and local initiatives in countries with favourable enabling environments

Japan and **South Korea** are both countries with relatively robust SNG capacities, but they have taken two different approaches to developing their SDG implementation strategies. Whilst in South Korea coordination initiatives are bottom-up and stem from cities, in Japan coordination strategies have been put forward under the clear leadership of the central government. **Japan**, whose decentralization process started in the 1990s, has specific laws governing local autonomy, with clear provisions regarding the devolution of powers. As previously mentioned, the SDG Promotion Headquarters ensures the coordination of the SDG strategy at the inter-ministerial level, while the

SDGs Promotion Roundtable Meeting promotes multi-stakeholder engagement, including that of local governments. The Headquarters sets a National Implementation Framework to ensure the adoption of a 'whole-of-government approach', integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development (economy, society and environment). Based on a long tradition of strong collaboration between central and local governments, the Japanese government encourages local governments to incorporate the SDGs into their strategies and policies. As part of the second pillar of the Japanese SDG implementation strategy (SDG-driven regional vitalization), the government launched a new project: the 'SDGs Models of Local Governments'. Through this initiative, the whole of central government provides intensive support to selected local governments in their implementation of the SDGs.⁵⁶ With the support of different programmes (such as 'Future city' and 'Ecomodel city'), cities have shown a proactive interest in implementing innovative strategies and action plans to localize the SDGs, in a tradition that closely ties local government with central government policies (see Section 3.2 for more details).

In **South Korea**, based on the experience of the Agenda 21 and the Local Councils for Sustainable Development (created in the 1990s), LRGs have taken the lead in promoting sustainable development. Since 2016, local governments and NGOs have developed regional actions within the frame of the Local Sustainability Alliance (LSAK). Based on the 2nd National Strategy and Five Year Plan for Green Growth (2014), in 2016 the Ministry of Environment released the Third Sustainable Development Fundamental Plan (2016-2020), designed to adapt the SDGs to national conditions.⁵⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was nominated as the lead agency in charge of coordinating the implementation of the SDGs. The communication process between local and national bodies on sustainable development has, however, been complex and difficult. Independent national agencies manage their areas in siloes, and there exists a large degree of overlap in terms of the division of responsibilities across levels of government. Many cities have established their own local SDG implementation system (for more details, see Section 3.2). In 2018, the new government designed a roadmap to implement the SDGs and launched a five-year Urban Regeneration New Deal with the aim of strengthening collaboration between local and national governments. In January 2018, a new Presidential Committee on Autonomy and Decentralization was set up. A revised bill, the Special Act on Autonomy and Decentralization and Local Administration, was promulgated in March 2018.⁵⁸

The previous discussion highlights the differences between the two countries: one with

Box 1

Chinese strategies to strengthen local buy-in of SDGs policies

Within the 'Development Plan of China's Innovation Demonstration Zones for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' adopted in December 2016, central government and local governments work in direct collaboration to develop local variations for policies, to promote innovation and drive policy learning and change. Three pilot cities have been selected: Guilin, Shenzhen and Taiyuan. These pilots should facilitate vertical coordination between the central government and provincial and city governments, and horizontal coordination between different departments at both the central and local levels, as well as create better opportunities for public participation (see also Section 3.2 below).⁶⁰

The process involves reform at different levels. At the national level, the State Council has issued an official document, determined the implementing ministry, confirmed the involved departments and participating organizations, and established the inter-ministerial meeting to provide support to the SDG pilot zones. At the local level, in pilot cities, legislation has been adopted to confirm the city's overall sustainable development planning to 2030. Cities are also establishing SDG-related institutions to conduct further implementation work.

By doing this in several pilot locations, different versions of one policy or means of governance can be tested, thus developing more room for bottom-up innovation. Successful cases can then be adopted nationwide. Another tool put in place to encourage local governments to make priority choices is 'awards competition'. Here, a city can set up a special task force or a special office for coordination. Competitions and awards help consolidate multiple targets into a clearly defined goal, promote cooperation between government departments - which usually have different interests — and mobilize greater support from stakeholders.

Source: Bingqin Li and Qian Fang (2018). 'Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals by Chinese Cities' (developed for this report); and UNDP (2018). 'SDG Localization in ASEAN: Experiences in Shaping Policy and Implementation Pathway'.

strong national government leadership supported by a tradition of close collaboration with local governments (Japan), the other with important bottom-up dynamics and difficulties articulating local and national strategies (South Korea).

Cross-level efforts to ensure LRG mobilization in countries with complex governance frameworks

The SDGs pose massive governance challenges in the large number of countries looking for new coordination mechanisms. This is particularly the case in very extended and complex countries such as **China**, where generally a top-down approach has been taken in the implementation of the SDGs. In principle, national plans need to be adapted to local levels but with central coordination. However, the government system is unavoidably multi-layered and covers a wide range of regions with significant differences. Consequently, it requires greater effort to bring local governments on board and there is a need to develop an awareness and understanding of the 2030 Agenda at the local and regional level. Experience has shown that top-down approaches can put great strain on local government officials, who may resort to short-term measures that are not sustainable.⁵⁹ Indeed, in order to implement complex policies, China is developing a set of tools that involves a mix of policy processes instead of adopting a traditional top-down approach. One of these is 'pilot initiatives', designed to involve local governments and facilitate experimentation (see Box 1).

In **China**, as in most countries, implementation of the SDGs will demand more public finance, which plays a vital role in investments and in catalyzing other sources of resources. However, funding and resources at different levels of government often do not match. In the past, this mismatch was not as problematic, as local governments could rely on land revenues and borrowing money to deliver unfunded services. However, local government land sales and borrowing capacity have been curtailed more recently. At the same time, the share of total public investment with respect to GDP has slowly started to decline, having peaked at 46% in the period 2010–2013. These challenges have emerged against a backdrop of fiscal reforms in the tax system and public spending. An Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Act is announced for 2020 that could introduce modifications to the framework.⁶¹

Another approach combining both top-down and bottom-up initiatives is being developed in **Indonesia**, in response to the diversity of Indonesian sub-national governance systems spread out across this large archipelagic nation and comprising governors, regents (heads of districts) and elected mayors. The National Coordinating Team and the Ministry of Planning (BAPPENAS) are in charge of ensuring both horizontal coordination

at the national level (between over 30 ministries and agencies) and vertical coordination between the different levels of government and non-state actors.⁶² Since 2015, legal reforms have been introduced to clarify the allocation of responsibilities between the different levels. Provinces have supervisory functions on matters that require cross-jurisdictional cooperation. However, they do not

Box 2

The Indonesian puzzle for the localization of the SDGs

At the sub-national level, public investment is mostly undertaken by regency and city governments, which respectively represent 1.8% of GDP and 59% of public investment. Therefore, one of the main challenges is the effective coordination of national and sub-national development plans. In principle, SNGs must take into consideration Indonesia's National Medium-Term Development Plan for their own regional development policies. To ensure the mainstreaming of SDGs at all levels of government, a Presidential Decree (No. 59, July 2017) requires the integration of SDGs into the national and sub-national mid-term development plans, and mandated the preparation of an SDG roadmap and action plans that include clear deadlines at national, provincial, district and city levels. More details on the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting at national and sub-national levels were defined in later regulations (National Planning Ministerial Regulation No. 7, 2018), which request annual reports and bi-annual monitoring at all levels of government. Another decree of the Ministry of Home Affairs was issued in 2018. As of early 2019, 19 out of 34 provinces had developed their SDG action plans (RAD) and the remaining 15 provinces were in the process of doing so. As a result of the 2018 local elections, 117 new sub-national development plans are being drafted in 17 out of 34 provinces and 100 out of 514 districts or cities.

To support the localization of the SDGs, the government developed a strong communication strategy, technical guidelines and a set of metadata indicators for each of the SDGs' pillars and targets. At the provincial level, Regional Coordination Teams (TKD) for SDG implementation have been established. They gather together local stakeholders and are supported by the planning agencies at provincial, district and municipal levels. Governors' decrees or regents' decrees set the legal basis for actions in many provinces. Each governor is responsible for coordinating a regional action plan in coordination with all other regents and mayors. Communication through provincial data hubs using the OneData portal is designed to support follow-up, while an SDG Academy is planned to facilitate capacity building. However, coordination is not always effective and many obstacles are emerging, as highlighted in local governments' testimonies (see Section 3.2).

Source: Republic of Indonesia, VNR 2019; UNDP (2018). 'SDG Localization in ASEAN: Experiences in Shaping Policy and Implementation Pathways'; and Teti Armiami Argo and Zuzi Anna (2019). 'Empowering local Government Capacity and Regional Government Association to Strengthen Development Goals'.

China has attempted to strike a balance between top-down and bottom-up initiatives, as well as developing efficient policy implementation mechanisms that involve a broader range of actors.

have hierarchical authority over local governments and mainly perform coordination-related tasks. Furthermore, to make matters more complex, LRGs often make use of local public enterprises in order to fulfil their responsibilities: as of 2014, there were around 650 enterprises (including drinking water companies and marketplaces) owned and managed by regencies and cities and 108 owned by provinces. In light of this, the government is implementing a multifaceted strategy to promote the localization process, with a special focus on integrated planning (see Box 2).

It should be noted that in parallel, the Indonesian government has developed the National Urban Development Policy 2015-2045, aimed at closing gaps and achieving sustainable urban development with reference to three milestones: liveable cities (all cities to attain minimum standards for urban services), green cities, and smart and competitive cities. Local government associations (LGAs) consider their involvement in the process of elaboration of the strategy to have been partial.⁶³

The case of the **Philippines** contrasts with that of Indonesia. The country's territorial organization is also complex, with multiple islands and territories (14 regions, the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao, the national capital region and the special Cordillera Administrative Region) that have gone through an important decentralization process. Local governments comprise three levels — province, city and municipality and sub-municipal barangays. As mentioned above, the country is currently discussing an initiative that would involve the adoption of a federal system. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) is responsible for the coordination of the SDG implementation strategy, while the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) supports the localization of SDGs. The SDGs are integrated in the National Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 and monitored through the Socioeconomic Report SDG Annex. The Philippines sees the localization of the SDGs as a means to reduce regional disparities. The main mechanisms for SDG localization are regional development plans and comprehensive development plans at regional and local levels. In June 2017, the national government issued an

executive order requiring all levels of government to implement the PDP and public investment programme 2017-2022 (EO 27, "Directing all government agencies and instrumentalities, including local government units, to implement the Philippine Development Plan and Public Investment Program for the period of 2017-2022."). In November 2018, the NEDA and DILG, through the Joint Memorandum No. 01 Series of 2018, "Guidelines on the Localization of the Philippine Development Plan Results Matrices and the Sustainable Development Goals", spearhead its implementation. SDG data monitoring and evaluation is managed by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which released the initial list of the SDGs for Monitoring in the Philippines, and implemented it through PSA Council Resolution No. 4 Series of 2016, "Enjoining Government Agencies to Provide Data Support to the SDGs."⁶⁴

NEDA's regional development offices are responsible for crafting and coordinating the regional development plans. Provincial governors usually chair the Regional Development Council, acting as the formal mechanism for coordination and multilevel governance. However, the view of local government organisations is that 'local government units' are not completely aware of the ongoing process, despite several workshops held by DILG in all the regions. The new matrices were launched ahead of the national and local elections (May 2019), without real consultation; and not all local governments have the capacity to respond to their requirements.⁶⁵

As part of the localization efforts aimed at following up the implementation process, NEDA, DILG and the Philippines' Statistical Office developed assessment criteria for SDG implementation, linked to access to specific funds (e.g. the Seal of Good Local Governance).⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the alignment between the funds to support local governments' plans and the SDGs is not clear for LRGs. Testimonies stress that local plans will continue to be aligned with the funds rather than with the national SDG strategy. On the other hand, LRGs also find it difficult to access specific funds to support adaptation to climate change and resilience projects. Significant gaps are observed between national policy objectives and the actions taken by LRGs on the ground. There is an over-reliance on regulatory approaches instead of promoting outreach, collaboration and capacity building efforts between national and local governments. Vertical and horizontal coordination between organizations remains patchy, producing weak linkages in planning and fragmented policy. The current electoral conjuncture and other national debates (in particular with respect to federalism) do not help the buy-in process either.⁶⁷

The examples of China, Indonesia and the Philippines serve to highlight the obstacles

that are emerging with respect to supporting localization and promoting integrated planning strategies. China has attempted to strike a balance between top-down and bottom-up initiatives, as well as developing more innovative and efficient policy implementation mechanisms that involve a broader range of actors. In Indonesia, the obstacles and gaps to harmonizing the different processes have emerged as a result of strong efforts to ensure buy-in at the sub-national level and support pilot initiatives. In the Philippines, the government has pursued a stricter top-down approach. It prioritises reporting mechanisms but still devotes limited support and funding to new SDG priorities.

Policies to strengthen coordination of SDG implementation between national and sub-national governments in federal countries

In federal countries such as India, Australia and Pakistan, where each federated state has its own legal framework, the landscape for SDG implementation is just as complex. In **India**, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) — the national planning authority — has been assigned the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the SDGs, which requires

the full engagement of state governments, union territories and local government units. The central government is developing initiatives to invigorate the federal structure of the country through the promotion of 'cooperative and competitive federalism'. The objective is to boost performance in each state by moving from a top-down planning approach to a bottom-up approach, promoting experimentation, benchmarking and the sharing of experiences across states.⁶⁸ As a result of this push, every state and union territory (UT) has also set up a special centre, unit or team for guiding and overseeing SDG implementation. As many as 23 states and UTs have prepared their 'Visions' documents and action plans⁶⁹ towards 2030. The SDG cells and committees are expected to build collaboration across sectors, departments and agencies within states' administrations to facilitate effective inter-departmental/inter-sectoral collaboration. The involvement and participation of district administrations, rural and urban local governments in the implementation structures will need to be reinforced further (for more information on sub-national actions see Section 3.2). Different stakeholders have criticized extensively the way in which current federal programmes address many of the urban and local dimensions of SDG implementation.⁷⁰

Social housing apartment blocks in Fitzroy, Melbourne, Australia (photo: © Ainara Fernández Tortosa).



In **Australia**, different mechanisms for policy coordination exist. As part of the effort to support LRGs, the Australian government released the Smart Cities Plan in 2016, which outlines a vision for productive and liveable cities by promoting collaboration between all levels of government, the private sector, research organisations and the local community. 'City Deals' is a key component of the plan, promoted as a collaborative approach aimed at bringing together the three levels of government to support urban policy and develop a shared vision to improve infrastructure, innovation and job accessibility in a specific geographic area.⁷¹ City Deals is an example of special purpose vehicle funds conceived as partnerships to leverage funds for project financing. However, many mayors argue in favour of adopting discretionary instead of nationally-targeted funding programmes to support localization of the SDGs (see Section 3.2).⁷²

In **Pakistan**, the National Economic Council under the aegis of the Planning Commission of Pakistan set up the National SDG Framework in March 2018. SDG Units have been established within the Federal Planning Commission in Islamabad and in the four Planning and Development Departments and Boards at the provincial level. Two such units have also been established in the federally administered areas. Technical committees and thematic clusters support their work. There is no representation of district or local governments in these coordination units, but focal persons were nominated at the district level. These mechanisms are based on the National SDG Framework and are meant to facilitate alignment. However, vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms are weak at all levels and their development faces a range of obstacles: 'Most national and provincial policies and action plans are not backed by sufficient financial resources, and decision-making processes that are markedly top down hamper sub-national prioritization'.⁷³ Political uncertainty and the lack of a local government system (dissolved in the provinces of Balochistan and Punjab) are also significant obstacles to implementation.

Challenges to coordination in countries with enabling environments unfavourable to local action

Other countries with weak enabling environments at local government level, such as **Bangladesh**, **Cambodia**,⁷⁴ **Lao PDR**,⁷⁵ **Malaysia**, **Myanmar**,⁷⁶ **Nepal**,⁷⁷ **Sri Lanka**, **Thailand** and **Viet Nam**⁷⁸ follow more traditional top-down approaches, with limited or no consultation of SNGs or administrations. Many of these countries have also developed national urban development strategies (such as Cambodia, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Lao PDR and Viet Nam), with

governance arrangements that are often unclear, to ensure synergies with other sectoral policies.⁷⁹ Often countries have created 'deconcentrated governments units' and agencies that represent central or regional governments at territorial levels, taking on many responsibilities that in principle have been devolved to local governments (e.g. in Bangladesh, Lao PDR or Malaysia). This constrains the roles of local governments and often leads to poor vertical and horizontal alignment between national and local SDG-related priorities, hampering the possibility of creating more integrated approaches in the territories.

The Government of **Sri Lanka**, for example, seemed very committed to the SDGs. It created the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife (MSDW) to support SDG implementation in 2015. In 2016, the MSDW launched a consultative process (the National Sustainable Development Engagement Platform⁸⁰) and drafted the Roadmap and National SDG Action Plan (2017-2020). The Action Plan was presented to various stakeholders at the national and provincial levels but was not implemented. In October 2017, a Sustainable Development Act was passed in parliament and it was expected that the government would establish a Sustainable Development Council (SDC) in early 2018 to ensure the development of a national strategy for SDG implementation. The Act required every ministry, department and sub-national authority to prepare an SDG strategy. However, the process lost momentum. The SDC was appointed at the end of 2018 and, despite the initial commitments, no substantive action has been taken to ensure localized and decentralized planning for the implementation of the SDGs. The Voluntary National Review (VNR) presented in 2018 claims that multi-stakeholder consultation took place in March 2018, but these consultations appear to correspond more to formalities than to real engagement. Members from provincial councils and local authorities were not explicitly consulted or engaged.⁸¹ Weak policy leadership and the absence of a national SDG roadmap and operational framework, exacerbated by a highly fragmented institutional structure and weak policy coordination across sectors, has created a critical gap in effectively mainstreaming and integrating the SDGs in Sri Lanka.⁸²

As summarised here, cooperation across levels of government has intensified since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, the varying approaches taken by countries range from policy efforts towards integrated planning to efforts to design better harmonised sectoral policies and enhance policy delivery to engage all levels of government, to weak or incipient national SDG strategies with poor or ill-defined policies aimed at promoting integration by involving sub-national governments.

Within the first group, strategies range from more centralized approaches to combined strategies that mix central guidelines with flexible approaches at sub-national levels. Often, more top-down forms of vertical integration are not supported by the emergence of truly shared spaces across different levels of governments to resolve conflicting priorities and reduce the gap between administrations. In contrast, more flexible policies for SDG localization pay more attention to the need to conciliate national priorities with local initiatives and, in addition, to promote local development processes to test experiences on a small scale that might then be potentially scaled up across levels of governments. This second option facilitates territorial development approaches.

This diversity reflects, to some extent, both the varied national institutional frameworks for SNGs in the region and the fact that territorial development strategies that could catalyse localization processes in most countries are still in the preliminary stages of development. Countries with more favourable institutional frameworks for LRGs show stronger mechanisms for multilevel integration (e.g. Japan) as well as SNGs that have the capacities and resources to be pro-active in the SDG localization process, even when national leadership is still limited (e.g. South Korea). In other countries, for example China and Indonesia where local autonomy is progressing, governments are exploring modalities to promote sub-national initiatives and develop pilot experiences to ensure gradual harmonization and policy coherence.

Intermediary cities are often neglected when it comes to localization strategies in the region, yet intermediary and medium-sized cities play a crucial role in the development and functioning of national systems of cities and regions.⁸³ In many countries, such as Bangladesh and China, they are growing faster than large cities. Intermediary cities provide a vital connection to more than 65% of the world's population living in smaller towns and cities and rural areas, which are facing urbanization, management and development challenges. Most are not getting the resources, knowledge and capacity they need to implement the SDGs. They must be given greater prominence in the area of policy development and in the allocation of national resources, if the SDGs are to be successfully achieved in this region by 2030.

Political instability and election cycles can interfere with SDG implementation, which adds an extra layer of complexity to localization processes. Inflexible vertical hierarchies hinder the adaptation of lines of planning, implementation strategies and resource allocation to local contexts, as well as local government accountability — which is key to ensuring the involvement of local stakeholders (civil society and the private sector). Lack of

In many countries, such as Bangladesh and China, intermediary cities are growing faster than large cities.

clarity regarding responsibilities, duplication or fragmentation of jurisdictions and functions, unfunded mandates and weak mechanisms for reconciling conflicting priorities can generate weak or perverse incentives for local governments to adopt proactive policies. It can also lead to the adoption of short-term unsustainable policies as a response to inflexible vertical planning (as mentioned above in the case of China). In many cases, and particularly in federal countries, horizontal coordination at sub-national level is as complex and problematic as it is at national levels.

A significant criticism by local governments in the region is that they have not been adequately consulted during the preparation of national strategies that must be adapted to the territories, nor in the setting of national SDG target priorities. Furthermore, LRGs express frustration at not having been given the necessary resources to establish the enabling environment required to support the socialization and localization of the SDGs. Most countries face enormous disparities between SNGs with respect to development levels, as well as the capacities and resources available to them for implementing the SDGs.

Asia-Pacific countries need to accelerate progress in the implementation of the SDGs by empowering local governments and community groups to lead territorial development processes and deliver in an integrated fashion across all the Goals and global sustainability agendas. During the Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development organised by UNESCAP (Bangkok, 27-29 March 2019), representatives from all countries reiterated their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and shared key initiatives implemented at the national and local levels, including the establishment of coordination mechanisms and the enhancement of multi-stakeholder engagement. SDGs could become the catalyst for strengthening the intergovernmental system (e.g. planning, budgeting, financial management and accountability), supporting sustainable development and improving governance.⁸⁴

The next section analyses in more in detail how local and regional governments are moving towards the localization of the SDGs in their cities and territories through territorial developmental strategies. 🌀

3. The contribution of local and regional governments to the localization of the SDGs

Building on the findings of the previous section — which explored national strategies for SDG implementation, the institutional framework to support a territorialized approach, and the degree of vertical and horizontal integration — this section studies the processes and actions undertaken by LRGs of the Asia-Pacific (ASPAC) region for the localization of the 2030 Agenda through territorial developmental strategies.

The momentum and commitment in support of the localization of the SDGs in the ASPAC region have grown, but progress throughout the region has been uneven. Several countries have advanced in implementing the SDGs at the local level, making significant progress in awareness-raising and local plan alignment with the Goals. Most local governments in Asia-Pacific, however, still do not know the SDGs, or at best have a limited awareness of them and

how they link to their daily tasks. Only front-running cities and regions have advanced to the operationalization and implementation stage of the SDGs; and even at this stage, in many cases, implementation has consisted of basically ‘retrofitting’ the SDGs into existing projects and activities (often supported by the Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 21 and other global development policy frameworks). Moving from commitment or alignment to concrete territorial strategies that operationalize the agendas into the daily initiatives and lives of their communities has been the most challenging step for most LRGs in the region. Local governments are expected to learn how to prioritize programmatically and, given the limited amount of resource, often have to ‘choose’ which SDGs are actually applicable in reality. This section focuses on the initiatives local governments are implementing to overcome these challenges. ◉

Students of a local school in Kathmandu, Nepal (photo: Julien Cavadini, bit.ly/2IBB3YN).



3.1 Awareness-raising and SDG ownership: the role of LRG networks and partners

LGAs and regional associations in Asia-Pacific are playing an active role in the localization of the SDGs and the establishment of territorial development strategies. A wide range of actors from different contexts and at different levels are contributing to the emergence of new initiatives, supporting dissemination and training and providing technical assistance: regional organizations (e.g. UNESCAP, ASEAN, APEC, the Asian Development Bank (ADB)); the Asia-Pacific section of UCLG (UCLG ASPAC), Citynet, the regional offices of global organizations (e.g. AIMF, C40, CLGF, ICLEI and Regions4SD); other networks working with local governments (e.g. LOGIN);⁸⁵ and local government partners. UCLG ASPAC regularly organizes forums, edits publications and promotes training as part of its commitment to raise awareness of the global agendas. It has also provided support to specific national programmes (Indonesia and Pakistan, for instance, analysed in detail below). As mentioned in Section 2, it carried out an assessment of 28 countries in the region to explore whether the national legal and institutional environments have in fact been conducive to the localization of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda.⁸⁶ Citynet has promoted training actions and study trips; with UNESCAP and the Seoul Metropolitan Government it has supported the Urban SDG online portal, a tool for knowledge-sharing and city-to-city cooperation for sustainable urban development in the region.⁸⁷ LGAs have also promoted greater involvement of local governments in regional mechanisms through, for example, the ASEAN Mayors Forum and the UNESCAP Forum, as well as via capacity-building actions.⁸⁸ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the ADB, together with other international institutions (e.g. the GIZ) and agencies, are implementing several projects for the

localization of SDGs at the regional and national level.⁸⁹

Associations in **South-eastern Asia** have been particularly active. In 2018 in **Indonesia**, national associations joined UCLG ASPAC in the nation-wide project LOCALISE, supported by the European Union (for more information see Section 3.2). This has elicited partnerships with stakeholders such as CISDI, GIZ, Indonesia Climate Alliance and the SMERU Research Institute. In addition, the Association of Indonesian Municipalities (APEKSI) and the Indonesian Regencies Government Association (APKASI) have established training programmes for local government officers and stakeholders, and developed toolkits for the dissemination of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.⁹⁰ Foundations, academia and UN agencies, with UNDP at the forefront, have also been promoting various learning initiatives on the SDGs.⁹¹

In the **Philippines**, both the League of Cities and the League of Municipalities have been active in SDG localization through seminars, information sharing, conferences and workshops. The League of Cities has developed pilot projects with different partners to promote integration of the SDGs into local activities, for example the Vertical Integration for Low-Emission Development (V-LED) in collaboration with UN-Habitat; the Building Climate Resiliency Through Urban Plans and Designs programme with the support of German cooperation agencies and UN-Habitat; the Ambitious City Promises project with ICLEI; the Global Initiative for Resource-Efficient Cities with UNEP; and the 'Green, Green, Green' project of the Philippine Department of Budget and Management, amongst others.⁹² The League of Cities, moreover, co-leads Citynet's SDG Cluster.

The Association of Cities of **Viet Nam** participated in several national workshops and, in 2018, organized two meetings on SDGs in the Mekong Delta region and in the country's


northern region.⁹³ Other associations in the sub-region are still at quite a preliminary phase. In **Cambodia**, the National League of Communes (NLC) has included the SDGs in its five-year strategic plan (2018-2022) which, to date, has not been implemented. The **Malaysian** Association of Local Authorities (MALA) has worked on connecting local governments with international activities linked to the SDG framework in, for example, Sabrang Perei and Penang.⁹⁴

In **East and North-Eastern Asia**, the **Republic of Korea** has historically been very active, particularly through the Local Sustainability Alliance of Korea (LSAK) and as part of international networks such as ICLEI, Citynet and UCLG. LSAK is the network organization for Local Agenda 21 and includes Korean local governments and CSOs. The network provided its members with a platform to share knowledge and information and better integrate the SDGs into their policies and programmes. The Korean Institute Centre for Sustainable Development (KICSD) has, finally, developed various training courses and research projects on the SDGs and other themes related to the development agendas.⁹⁵

In **South and South-Western Asia**, the All India Institute for Local Self-Government (AIIISG) coordinates 26 centres responsible for education, research and capacity building for local urban bodies. The Institute is developing a learning agenda and provides technical assistance for sustainable local governments, linking the SDGs with key Indian programmes (e.g. AMRUT, PMAY, EQUI-City, Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, and the National Urban Poverty Reduction Programme). In **Pakistan and Bangladesh**, a range of conferences and workshops have taken place during the past year with the support of international agencies and national government. Local authorities from all the provinces of Pakistan gathered at a Local Government Summit in Islamabad in March 2017 in support of localization and with six major issues to address: education, employment, energy, water, peace and governance.⁹⁶ In April 2018, with support from UNDP and GIZ, UCLG ASPAC and the Local Council Associations from Pakistan's four provinces organized an international conference, 'Think Global, Act Local — SDG Implementation through Local Governments', in which delegates from Pakistan's local governments discussed the role of LRGs in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, debating with delegates from over a dozen countries from the Asia-Pacific region. UCLG ASPAC, in partnership with the Association for the Development of Local Governance (ADLG) of Pakistan, launched a flagship initiative in March 2019 — the Local Empowerment, Advocacy and Development for SDG Localization (LEAD for SDGs) — a four-year project with the support of EU funding. The project will assist

In Kiribati, the national LGA (KiLGA) helped ten councils put together their development plans aligned with SDGs.

local governments, their associations — the Local Council Association of Balochistan (LCAB) and the Local Council Association of Sindh (LCAS) — and other stakeholders to localize the SDGs.⁹⁷ In **Sri Lanka**, the Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA) developed several awareness-raising workshops and pilots to integrate the SDGs into local plans and budgets in two provinces.⁹⁸ In **Nepal**, the three existing associations — the Association of District Development Committee of Nepal (ADDCN), the Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN) and the National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN) — are making efforts to disseminate the SDGs. NARMIN, for example, adopted the 15 Points Directives to Rural Municipalities for the mainstreaming of the SDGs into the local planning and monitoring process (in the fields of health, sanitation and nutrition).⁹⁹

In the **Pacific region**, the associations of local governments in **Australia** — ALGA, the Western Australia Local Government Association, and the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors — worked with the federal government to contribute to the reporting process in 2018, gathering experiences at the local level. In **New Zealand**, Local Governments New Zealand (LGNZ) formed part of the reporting unit to the HLPF in 2019 and was asked to present its own contribution to the report. The association has publicised the SDGs to its members. It developed a toolbox to assist local authorities to meet the challenges of sea level rises and extreme weather events, with advice on adaptation and mitigation, and is leading a project designed to improve the quality and safety of water supplies, in addition to a project to improve access to quality affordable housing. The Society of Local Government Managers has developed a national set of indicators that aligns closely to the SDGs and has distributed these to all councils to enable them to provide annual monitoring reports.¹⁰⁰ In **Kiribati**, the local government association (KiLGA) has ensured the dissemination of the SDGs through its monthly newsletters, radio, forums and workshops and its Executive Director participated in the process of drafting the country's VNR in 2018. In 2018-2019, the Association helped ten councils put together their development plans aligned with SDGs and, with support from UNICEF, assisted five councils to develop their WASH policies and development plans aligned to the SDGs.¹⁰¹ 

3.2 Alignment of local strategies and plans (preparatory phase)

The preparatory phase of localizing the implementation of the SDGs involves a wide range of activities — from gap analysis and alignment of the SDGs with local plans to outlining innovative strategies and programmes. In light of this, this sub-section provides an analysis of where the region's countries stand with regard to the involvement of LRGs in the preparatory phase of SDG implementation. In order to do so, this Section explores the extent to which the region's various countries have been including LRGs in the process of alignment

of their development plans with the SDGs. This Section first introduces the countries that have clear national strategies, are making efforts to target LRGs, and are making faster progress in the preparatory phase and have aligned the SDGs with their sub-national plans (e.g. Japan, Indonesia and China). In South Korea, LRGs are taking the lead based on the legacy of the Local Agenda 21 movement. LRGs in other countries such as Australia and New Zealand are also progressing at a different pace, building on their experience of sustainable policies. In India and Viet Nam, top-down strategies are leading to an increasing gap between the state or provincial levels and the local levels (districts or local governments units) in the SDG implementation process. There is also difficult context and uncertainty hindering local government engagement in three other countries — the Philippines, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. In the Philippines, LRGs tend to be more involved in projects, with little account taken of the full SDG framework: 'beyond project-based targets, there are limited efforts to align the SDGs with the planning, financing and monitoring frameworks'.¹⁰² It is essential here to build awareness of the many examples of initiatives in this context.

Box 3

Local Voluntary Reviews - Toyama, Kitakyushu and Shimokawa

In **Kitakyushu Metropolitan Area** (966,000 inhabitants) the local government focused on the three pillars of sustainable development, 'Fostering a trusted Green Growth City with true wealth and prosperity, contributing to the world'. The city integrated the SDGs into the Kitakyushu Basic Environment Plan, which was revised in November 2017. This aligned fulfilment of the SDGs with environmental policies. The city will continue to introduce SDGs into administrative plans in areas other than the environment; and in the revision of administrative plans including the '*Genki Hasshin! Kitakyushu Plan*' and the Kitakyushu City Master Plan. The city uses SDG-related indicators to review progress.

Toyama City (418,300 inhabitants) has developed compact city planning based on a polycentric transport network. The city has a framework of implementation, centred on overarching divisions, and cooperates with industry, government and academia. It includes concrete cases of integration of the three dimensions through sustainable transport — e.g. Light Rail Transit networks — as well as universal health coverage through the Machinaka General Care Centre.

Shimokawa Town (3,355 inhabitants) set its 'Shimokawa Vision 2030: The Shimokawa Challenge: Connecting people and nature with the future', which translates 17 goals into seven different localized goals as part of a very inclusive, engaged process. The core activity of Shimokawa Town in pursuing sustainability is cyclical forest management, which maximizes use of its rich forest resource.

Source: <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/sdgs/vlr/index.html>.

Examples of joint national-local efforts to align SDGs with sub-national development plans

As mentioned above, LRGs in Japan, Indonesia and China have moved faster as far as alignment efforts are concerned. In **Japan**, over 30 cities and towns are involved in the implementation of the SDGs, with the support of the national government through the 'Future City Initiative' (a product of the pre-existing 'Eco-Model Cities' programme), with a special focus on environment, aging population and the involvement of the private sector and civil society.¹⁰³ The city of Yokohama has been amongst the most committed, with its 'Yokohama Future City' initiative focusing on environment, eldercare and culture.¹⁰⁴ Many other local governments are promoting initiatives through outreach campaigns aimed at local stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of the SDGs for local

development (e.g. Shiga and Nagano, Sapporo, Otsu and Omihamichan). Hamamatsu — known as ‘SDGs *Miraitoshi*’ or ‘future city’ — aligned its strategic plan with the SDGs in order to promote the preservation of forestry, cleaner energy and interculturalism.¹⁰⁵ Three cities — Toyama, Kitakyushu and Shimokawa — launched their Voluntary Local Reviews in 2018 (see Box 3). Over the period 2019-2020, Japan will also revise its SDGs Promotion Guiding Principles.

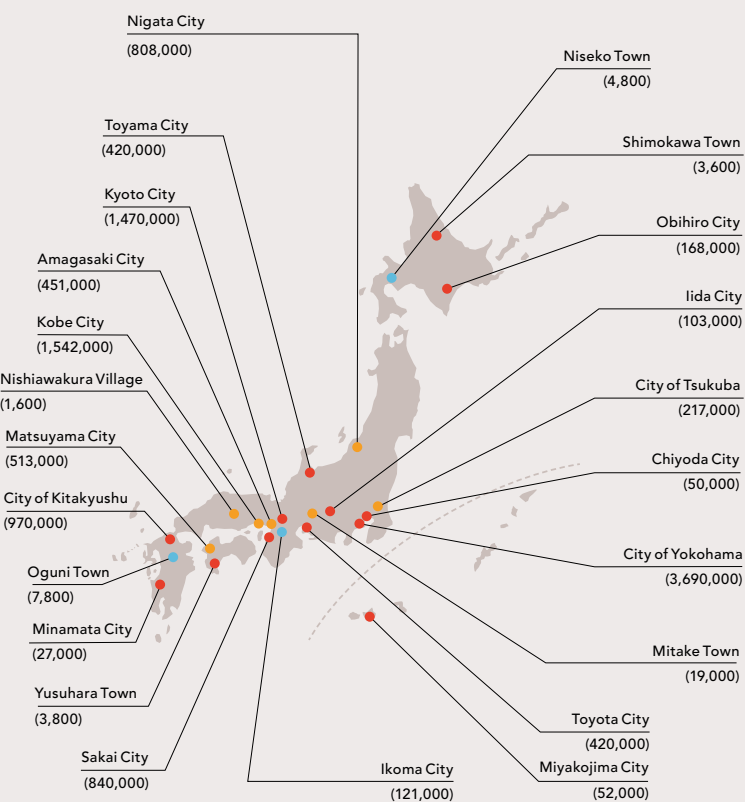
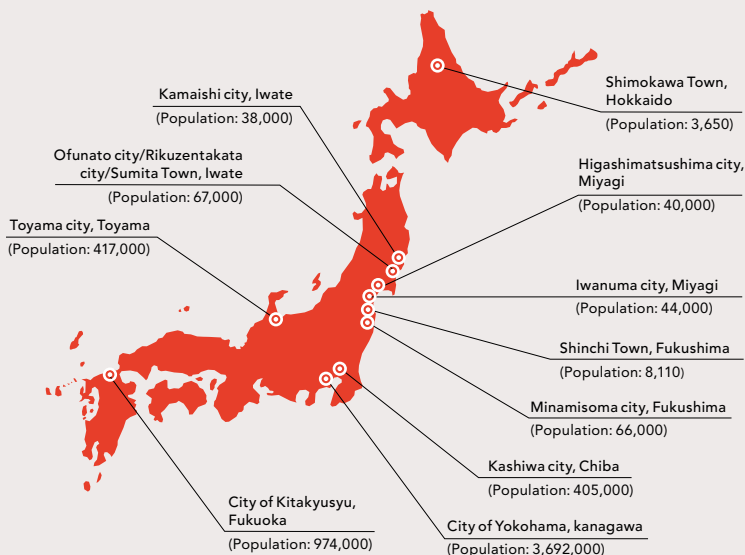
In **Indonesia** local governments are required to act by Presidential Decree No. 59 (see Section 2.3) and are making efforts to integrate the SDGs into provincial and local plans.¹⁰⁶ After the 2018 local elections, 17 provinces and 514 districts worked to mainstream the SDGs into their new local and regional plans. At the start of 2019, 19 out of 34 provinces had developed and formalized their SDG local action plans (RADs). Fifteen more provinces are in the process of completing their RADs. As mentioned previously, the LOCALISE SDGs project has, since 2018, worked in 16 provinces and 14 cities (see Figure 4). The project aims to develop training and knowledge sharing, support the preparation of SDG local action plans through technical assistance and networking, as well as follow up the status of SDG implementation and formulate strategy recommendations to localize the SDGs programme.¹⁰⁷

The LOCALISE project carried out a survey on the status of SDG implementation, which concluded that the provinces (11 out of 16) — particularly in West Indonesia — have a higher implementation rate than the cities. Only three cities — Jambi, Bengkulu and Pangkalpinang — have a high score in terms of implementation. There is also a gap between eastern and western local governments: the majority of western provinces have launched and prepared their own RADs, whereas in eastern provinces, only a few are doing so. While the majority of provinces mentioned that they had benefitted from an ‘enabling environment’ in terms of developing regional plans, they also faced critical obstacles. The survey found several issues still pending.¹⁰⁸ Data has generally not been adapted to the requirements of the indicators. Moreover, limited access to financial resources in the region has hindered bottom-up participation. More generally, different local governments have different timelines for their regional long-term development plans, so that several regions have not yet included the SDGs in their regional planning strategies. In addition, local governments have limited authority to implement local action plans at the provincial level: this either makes the plans too distant from the local context, or gives them a set of indicators that are not relevant to the actual monitoring needs of local governments. As regards monitoring, both medium and long-term regional plans have not been properly reviewed. As a result, local

Figure 3

Selected Future Cities and Eco-Model Cities in Japan

Future City: municipalities selected in 2011



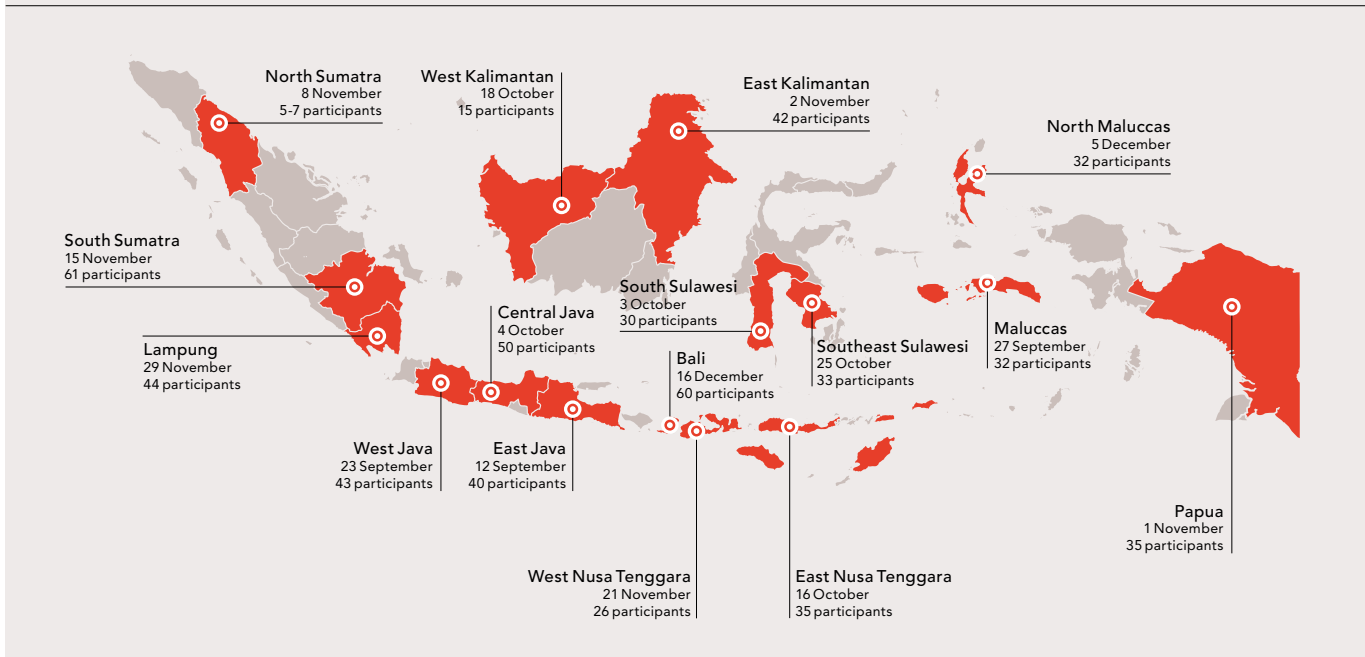
selected in 2008 selected in 2012 selected in 2013

* figures in parentheses show the population of each city

Source: https://www.japanfs.org/en/projects/future_city/index.html.

Figure 4

LOCALISE project: provinces and cities involved in the training process



governments are not able to fully adapt them to their vision of the localization challenges ahead and, in any case, there is generally weak reference to SDG indicators in the first place. This has been exacerbated by the lack of training initiatives overall — i.e. institutions or activities that increase awareness and understanding of the SDG framework across local government. These issues are compounded by the immense diversity and complexity of Indonesia’s geography, which has significantly undermined cooperation and mutual learning. As a result, current regulations tend not to assimilate more of the SDGs and their overall view of development, which in turn curbs attempts by local governments to adapt, integrate and coordinate a more bottom up approach to SDG-based regulation at the local level.

One example mentioned in the Indonesian VNR is that of East Nusa Tenggara Province, and the rapid development of a Regional Mid-Term Plan 2018-2023 aligned with the SDGs and regional priorities. One of the key problems here were indicators and the need to make adjustments taking into account the availability of data.¹⁰⁹ Jakarta has integrated the priorities of the national plan and the SDGs into its mid-term plan (RPJMD), supported by a participatory approach (*e-Musrenbang*, participatory electronic budgeting and planning). Other cities are more focused on specific actions related to SDG 11 — such as Balikpapan, Surabaya, Palembang, Semarang, Yogyakarta and Bogor.

China reported in 2016 that SNGs are elaborating their own five-year plans in

accordance with the blueprint of the Chinese government’s 13th Five-Year Plan, which is already aligned with the 2030 Agenda.¹¹⁰ At the same time, as mentioned above in Section 2.3, after the adoption of Innovation Demonstration Zones for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, 16 cities applied to be part of it and on March 2018 the first three SDG pilot cities were chosen. These were: the city of Guilin, with a project focus on innovations in natural landscape conservation, eco-tourism and ecological agriculture; the city of Shenzhen, centred on sustainable development and good megacity governance driven by high-tech innovation; and the city of Taiyuan, focused on improving water quality and the atmospheric environment, including the surrounding ecological environment and tackling five types of pollution in the territory. The experiences of these cities will be rolled out to the rest of the country and ten demonstration zones built during the 13th Five-Year Plan period. The process is strongly supported by UNDP through awareness raising (Massive Open Online Courses), assessment support, training and workshops (involving 1,337 public officers in 41 counties and three provinces), advisory services, follow-up during the implementation process (1-2 years) and certification (SDG Seal).¹¹¹

On the other hand, other cities and provinces are competing in different areas to foster sustainable development through ambitious and innovative programmes e.g. Deyang, Yiwu, Haiyan and Huangshi as resilient cities; and Chengdu, Nanhu, Zhejiang Langzhong, Libo and Chibei as models for international sustainable pilot cities (some of

these examples will be developed in Section 3.3). According to the Provincial and Large and Medium Cities Sustainable Development Ranking 2018 Annual Report,¹¹² Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Tianjin, Guangdong, Chongqing, Shandong, Fujian and Anhui rank top ten in terms of sustainable performance among provinces and metropolitan cities. According to the ranking, the most developed and wealthy regions, such as Beijing, Shanghai, the Pearl River Delta and other coastal cities, ranked the highest. Coastal cities on average have better environmental quality than inland cities, whilst cities in the central and western regions are facing severe environmental pressures because they have less capacity to protect resources and the environment and to manage consumption, all of which are crucial to sustainable development.¹¹³

A bottom-up led model of sub-national engagement in the localization process

In **South Korea**, since 2015 local governments have begun to revise their strategies to put SDGs as a central value and establish local

SDG implementation systems (see Table 3). As mentioned above (Sections 2.3 and 3.1), there is a longstanding tradition in South Korea of sustainable agendas.¹¹⁴ As of 2016, 210 of 243 local governments have formulated their local 'Agenda 21' and around 100 local governments established 'local councils for sustainable development' involving civil society and the private sector.¹¹⁵ These local councils are not, however, recognized as local governmental organizations. Therefore, the Framework Act on Low-Carbon and Green Growth (LCGG Act, established in 2010) also required the formation of Local Committees on Green Growth in 17 metropolitan and provincial governments, but this has had limited impact.

Policies in Seoul are summarized in Box 4. Two analyses identify similar factors hindering stronger action on the part of local and regional governments: limited awareness and support; lack of connection between local policies and regional development plans, as well as with national policies; shortfalls in budget and personnel; weak implementation capacity and the absence of monitoring mechanisms (localized indicators,

Table 3 Involvement of local governments in the implementation of the SDGs in South Korea (2018)

Stage	Examples	
Type A (Implementation stage)	Metropolitan municipality	Seoul, Gwangju
	Basic local government	Suwon, Dangjin, Dobong-gu (areas of Seoul city)
Type B (Transition stage)	Metropolitan municipality	Incheon, Daegu, Daejeon, Ulsan, Sejong Metropolitan Autonomous City, Gyeonggi-do Province, Gangwon-do Province, Chungcheongbuk-do Province Chungcheongnam-do Province, Jeollabuk-do Province, Gyeongsangnam-do Province, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province
	Basic local government	Gimpo, Gwangmyeong, Siheung, Ansan, Pyeongtaek, Asan Gangneung, Wonju, Jecheon, Cheongju, Jeonju, Suncheon, Yeosu, Geoje, Changwon, Gapyeong-gun, Seochon-gun, Damyang-gun, Incheon Nam-gu, Incheon Bupyeong-gu
Type C (Preparation stage)	Metropolitan municipality	Cities and regions not belonging to A, B
	Basic local government	Cities not belonging to A, B

Type A - Implementation: Operational system (implementation, modification of the plan, indicator development, evaluation system).

Type B - Transition: Building a system for implementation (establishing plans and strategies to implement sustainable development, education for public officers and citizens).

Type C - Preparation: Establishment of foundations (basic ordinances, definition of institution, Commission on Sustainable Development, etc.).

Source: KDI (February 2018), Establish guidelines for the implementation of the SDGs by Local Governments, Final Report, p. 189 (in Korean).

The 2030 Seoul Master Plan and the Seoul Sustainable Development Goals

Since 1995, the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) has led efforts to build a sustainable city, with a population of 10.1 million people. The first Sustainable Development Commission (2013-2015) established the Master Plan for Sustainable Development in 2015 and evaluated the sustainability of Seoul based on the Sustainable Development Indicators System. The second Sustainable Development Commission (2015-2017) focused on implementing the Master Plan for Sustainable Development. In 2017, the Seoul SDGs were established using a bottom-up approach and the SDGs were merged into all of Seoul's policies, plans, and administration and moved through the cycle of implementation, evaluation and revision.¹¹⁷ The 2030 Seoul Plan was developed by citizens at each stage of the planning.¹¹⁸ To realize the future vision, five core issues were identified: 'people-centred city without discrimination, dynamic global city with a strong job market, vibrant cultural and historic city, lively and safe city and stable housing and easy transportation, community-oriented city'.

Source: The Seoul Sustainable Development Goals 2030, 17 Ways to Change Seoul. For more information see: <http://www.urbansdgplatform.org/board/viewPublicationDetail.msc?no=146>.

insufficient data and periodic assessment).¹¹⁶ The same sources call on the national government to develop local government SDG guidelines and a promotion strategy that reviews relations between local and national governance bodies such as Green Growth Committees; develop adequate regulations; introduce stable budgets; and strengthen public-private cooperation and joint efforts at monitoring.

Initiatives have generally been generated in the environmental department. Efforts are now underway to retrofit the strategy to respond to the new SDGs framework, with a view to developing a more integrated approach. But this is likely to take time (as demonstrated by Table 3, which classed the majority of local governments as being in the transition or preparatory stage).

Taking advantage of local sustainable initiatives in countries that are still defining national localization strategies

While LRGs in **Australia and New Zealand** are progressively referring to the SDGs as a framework, they are already implementing different initiatives and programmes for sustainable policies aligned with the SDGs. In **Australia**, cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council in Perth were among the first councils to

integrate the SDGs into their plans or strategies (Sustainable Sydney 2030, Plan Melbourne 2017-2050, and Perth Regional Environment Strategy 2016-2020).¹¹⁹ Other cities have also, for some time now, been developing sustainable policies consistent with the SDGs, for example Fremantle which has adopted the One Planet Fremantle Strategy, whilst districts such as Illawarra are leading a group of 'healthy cities' in the region.¹²⁰ Other local authorities are promoting climate change and sustainability actions in their communities to build resilience and adaptation capacity. Over 100 local government areas that encompass more than 300 cities and towns across Australia, representing almost 11 million people, have joined the Climate Council's Cities Power Partnership, which encourages, motivates and accelerates local initiatives in emissions reductions and clean energy.¹²¹ However, as recognized by the Australian Local Government Association, 'many councils have been slow on the uptake to integrate the SDGs into their planning process and community strategies'.¹²² The Australian government has been active in recent years in catalysing the development of Smart Cities through its City Deal and Smart Cities and Suburbs' programmes.¹²³

In **New Zealand**, Local Government New Zealand publicized the SDGs to its member councils to support the preparation of the VNR in 2019. In fact, local councils have been active in developing sustainable policies for some time. In 2014 Auckland Council adopted the Living Lightly and FutureFit programme, encouraging Aucklanders to shift to a low-carbon path by proposing six climate action themes (Move, Shop, Eat, Energy, Grow and Talk) to change lifestyles.¹²⁴ In addition, its Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2018 has a vision for the city to be zero waste by 2040. The Greater Wellington Regional Council has adopted an electric-first policy for its own vehicle fleet and has invested in electric buses to replace diesel buses.¹²⁵ Its biodiversity strategy Our Natural Capital aims to reduce predators and protect threatened species through mobilizing community action.¹²⁶ Rotorua Lakes Council has established an innovative partnership with the indigenous people of its district, the *Te Arawa Iwi*, which provides Iwi with a voice in the policy and decision-making processes of the council.¹²⁷ In 2017, New Zealand local leaders launched a Local Government Leaders' Climate Change Declaration to support initiatives to reduce greenhouse gases and commit locally to respond to climate change.¹²⁸ As mentioned above, local authorities have also completed an assessment of the amount of underground and above ground infrastructure that will be affected by sea level rises, based on three different scenarios. Discussions between local and central government are underway to

identify options for meeting the costs involved and providing councils with the powers to halt development in areas likely to be affected by sea level rise in the future.¹²⁹ Through the Urban Growth Agenda (UGA), the New Zealand national government are seeking to implement the New Urban Agenda. All cities and local government areas should promote direct public participation in urban planning processes. Other priorities include waste reduction, improving air quality standards, universal access to green and public spaces, age-friendly communities and better access for persons with disabilities. The national government has committed USD 47 million for local council initiatives. Projects must have at least 50% co-funding and be up to five years in duration.¹³⁰ In 2019, New Zealand's national government adopted its first 'well-being' budget based on its commitment to protect human, natural, physical and social capital, and has developed a programme of local and national indicators to assess progress.

Top-down SDG strategies and the widening gap between intermediary and local levels

India and Viet Nam are two examples of countries where the alignment process is taking place at provincial or state level, widening the gap with local governments. For example, in **India** there is a significant difference between the involvement of state levels and local government bodies. As mentioned in Section 2.3, almost all states and union territories (UTs) have set up a special centre, unit or team to coordinate SDG implementation. Twenty-three states and UTs have prepared their Action Plans or Vision 2030 documents; six states have developed or are in the process of developing an SDG monitoring framework; 15 states and Delhi's UT have worked on specific indicators; and nine states have reported interventions related to aligning their budgets with the SDGs.¹³¹ In contrast, the involvement and participation of district administrations, rural and urban local governments is lagging behind. There is common agreement that representatives of *Panchayati Raj* institutions and urban local bodies and community organizations need to be more systematically part of the implementation process and receive capacity support.¹³² 'Despite these attempts, localising SDG indicators at the state or the urban scale remains quite limited in India'.¹³³ The situation in small towns and villages is even more critical.¹³⁴

In **Viet Nam**, twenty-two provinces issued their provincial action plans for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹³⁵ Following the Prime Ministerial Decision on the National Action Plan for Implementing the 2030 Agenda (No.622/QD-TTg, 10 May 2017), provincial governments are the key coordinators at the

local level for implementing and reporting on the achievement of indicators to central government. Provinces direct implementation and reporting in the cities and towns under their jurisdiction.

Limited local government initiatives in countries facing significant uncertainties and an adverse institutional environment

In other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, LRGs are also taking action but in more difficult circumstances and with more limited capacities. In the **Philippines**, despite the national executive order (Order No. 27) requiring all levels of government to implement the national development plan (PDP), aligned with the SDGs, the current political context and existing mechanisms mean they face some difficulties (see above Section 2.3). However, since 2015 the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), in partnership with the League of Cities, the Local Government Academy and several international agencies has been promoting the SDGs in over 34 cities, as a follow up to the MDG FACES programme (focused on children in poor urban communities).¹³⁶ For example, the cities of Naga, Iriga and Montelupa have made efforts to incorporate SDGs into their development plans. They have introduced a system of (local target) scorecards to gather baseline data on governance. The scorecards evaluate whether development plans are aligned with the SDGs.¹³⁷ Similarly, in 2017, the *Galing Pook* Awards Programme shortlisted 30 municipalities and barangays that have developed initiatives complying with the three pillars of sustainable development in different areas: participatory governance (Angon, San Fernando), poverty reduction (Zamboanga del Norte and del Sur) and economic development (Tagum City), support to informal workers (garment sector in Taytay) and poor communities (fisheries in Ambao, youth in Ilocos Norte), access to basic services (water in San Luis, waste management in Makati, transport in Legazpi, road maintenance in Davao), affordable housing (Quezon) and slum upgrading (Dipolog City), sustainable tourism (Loboc), urban renewal and green cities (Pasig), clean food (Marikina) and, finally, inter-municipal cooperation for better services (PALMA Alliance in the Cotabato Province).¹³⁸ Other local governments are also active and follow a range of programmes supported by international institutions and local government organizations (such as the League of Cities) related to sustainable policies e.g. Angeles City, Tagum, Legazpi, Ormoc, Cagayan De Oro, Pasig, Parañaque and Marikina for climate mitigation and adaptation and resilient initiatives. Other examples include Or Sorogson, a pilot city for the Global Initiative for Resource Efficient Cities;

the city of Cebu for solid waste management; the cities of Baguio and Quezon for planned sanitation and tourism through PPPs, and others. But these represent individual one-off projects rather than an integrated approach that refers to the full SDG framework.

In **Sri Lanka**, the SDG Action Plan developed in 2016 envisaged the development of provincial sustainability plans to showcase examples of good practice in implementing SDGs and sustainable villages at the local level. In 2016 and 2017, senior officials of provincial councils and local authorities were trained in mainstreaming and integrating the SDGs, but this has taken place on an *ad hoc* basis. The level of awareness and engagement of provincial councils and local authorities in the SDGs is still low and no substantial efforts at local sustainability planning have been initiated. Local governments face a lack of clearly defined, devolved and decentralized SDG processes from central government. As discussed in Section 2.3, the formulation of provincial sustainability plans has not been effectively pursued. A preliminary attempt to establish a cluster of sustainable villages in Pannala in the Kurunegala district also failed, creating a gap in regional and local sustainable development planning. The limited initiatives developed in 2019 by the national association FSLN (mentioned above in Section 3.1) risk being suspended due to insufficient

financial support, and there is no clear vision of what LRGs need to do; a roadmap is not sufficient if there is not the means for action.¹³⁹

In **Pakistan**, district/local governments are not associated with the SDG coordination units created at provincial level. Following the Local Government Summit on the SDGs in Islamabad in March 2017 and an international conference in April 2018 (see Section 3.1), local governments' awareness of the SDGs increased, creating more political space for LRGs in SDG implementation. However, the lack of legal and financial frameworks weakens the localization of the national agenda in provincial plans and the development of localized territorial strategies. There are huge challenges of coordination within the four provincial governments in terms of strategies, monitoring and reporting mechanisms. There is no mechanism to track the progress of SDG implementation due to lack of data availability at central and local levels, and local governments were not involved in the reporting process in 2019. It is expected that the 'LEAD' initiative for SDG implementation launched in March 2019 will help to assist local governments and their associations in the future.¹⁴⁰

Monitoring local initiatives

The lack of reliable data to effectively measure progress towards the SDGs remains one of the region's biggest challenges. Despite a significant increase in the availability of SDG indicators since 2017 - including disaggregated data - data gaps remain for two thirds of the global SDG indicators.¹⁴¹

Data management systems at the sub-national and local levels are 'relatively dysfunctional, especially with the use of quantitative indicators to measure results and progress'.¹⁴² However, some initiatives at local level are emerging. China selected Deqing County as a pilot study area in 2017, the aim being to comply with the UN Global Indicator Framework and provide a good example in measuring the overall progress towards the SDGs using geo-statistical data and methods that could be shared and replicated across the world.¹⁴³ In New Zealand, for instance, the Society of Local Government Managers has already developed a national set of indicators that align closely to the SDGs, which have been distributed to all councils to enable them to conduct annual monitoring reports. At a national level, Indonesia has created a OneData portal as a data hub, coordinated by the National Development Planning Agency and the National Statistics Bureau. This will allow districts, municipalities and provinces to gather, compile and report on the correct indicators in line with the SDG and national development indicators. 📍

Fishermen gathering net in Mannar, Sri Lanka (photo: Adam Jones, bit.ly/2p7TtK4).



3.3 Local actions for the implementation of SDGs (operationalization stage)

Operationalization of the SDGs involves turning visions and plans into actions. Actions may include re-engineering of current sustainable development initiatives started prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, or new projects and programmes to support the localization of the SDGs and other global initiatives. The latter include the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Agreements.

This section highlights selected examples of LRG initiatives that contribute to the operationalization of the SDGs through integrated territorialized policies. There is particular focus on Asian cities, which have emerged as centres of innovation and prosperity, but are also the locus where major challenges are concentrated. The examples focus in particular on climate change, resilience and energy challenges (contributions to a sustainable planet), sustainable infrastructures (prosperity), and inclusiveness (a people-centred agenda). They cover a limited range of development issues but provide insights into the extent of efforts to localize the SDGs in the region. Preference has been given to initiatives that are outcome driven and include cross-sector approaches to maximise policy complementarities and synergies between sectors, in line with the SDG principles.

Sustainable cities and territories for a sustainable planet

Recent assessments highlight the need for the Asia-Pacific region to accelerate the path to achieve the goal of sustainable cities.¹⁴⁴ SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda require more integrated urban planning and inclusive urban governance. The impact of sustainable cities goes far beyond SDG 11 (ten of the 17 SDGs are linked to SDG 11).¹⁴⁵ Moreover, taking into account the speed and scope of urbanization in the region, the world's sustainable development prospects increasingly depend on how Asian and Pacific cities are managed, and how they adopt more sustainable and inclusive patterns of development.

As discussed in Section 3.2, frontrunner cities stand out in their efforts to align their plans with the SDGs and build more integrated approaches through planning and combined sectoral policies. Visionary local governments are taking the lead, for example Seoul, which has revised its masterplan using the SDGs as a framework, adopting people-centred policies (see above Box 4). Other cities have adopted integrated planning approaches both with and without reference to the SDGs. Guangzhou's 'One Plan for All' strives to promote coordinated economic, social and environmental development.¹⁴⁶ Other cities, both big and small — e.g. Toyama Compact City Strategy (Japan),¹⁴⁷ Sustainable Sidney 2030 (Australia),¹⁴⁸ Da Nang Sustainable City (Viet Nam),¹⁴⁹ and Naga Comprehensive Land Use Plan (the Philippines)¹⁵⁰ among others— are fostering more coherent urban sustainable policies.

Table 4 groups the efforts of cities to localize the implementation of SDG 11 under certain 'umbrella' sustainability themes. These include eco, green, inclusive, innovative, liveable, resilient, safe, smart and sustainable cities. Many cities in the region have adopted these terms as concepts and brand names to emphasize implementation of SDG 11 and other agendas.

Many of these sustainable city initiatives predate the introduction of the SDGs, but they represent an important legacy of programmes. Many cities rebranded their image in response to a need to adapt their old declining economic activities to new regional and global economic trends. Some cities adopted a broad and comprehensive policy framework in order to 'green' their economies and become smarter cities promoting new technologies.¹⁵⁸

This legacy encompasses different concepts of sustainability. Moreover, the region has different traditions and city models, for example dense and compact cities versus extended and sparse urban areas.¹⁵⁹ Poor urban governance and weak regulatory frameworks represent one of the biggest obstacles to the implementation of the SDGs. Many cities in the region are experiencing growth without

Table 4 Different strategy concepts of urban sustainability to support the implementation of the SDGs

Concept	Feature	Focus aspect	Examples
Eco City /Eco Villages	A city built on the principles of living in harmony with the environment; using renewable energy and other resources.	Environment, economy Goal 11.6	Wuxi Eco-City, Tangshan Eco-City, Kunming Eco-City. Examples of Eco-villages in Bangladesh, India and Nepal ¹⁵¹
Green city ¹⁵²	Green urban biodiversity; green economy that is low-carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive.	Environment, economy Goals: 11.6, 11.7a, 11.7b	Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Shanghai, Songdo, New Town (India)
Inclusive city ¹⁵³	A city that has spatial inclusion, social inclusion and economic inclusion (World Bank, 2015).	Social inclusion Goals: 11.2, 11.7b	Metro Manila, Karnataka (India), Kanazawa (Japan)
Innovative city ¹⁵⁴	A city that is innovative and a major driver of economic growth.	Social organization, economic growth Goals: 8.2, 8.3, 9.5.b, 17.6, 17.8	Singapore, Hong Kong
Liveable city	A city with good ecological sustainability and liveability, providing a high quality of life. Liveable cities also include healthy cities.	Environment, social inclusion Goals: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3	Melbourne, Adelaide (Australia), Singapore
Resilient City	A city where individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems have the capacity to survive, adapt, and grow, no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience. ¹⁵⁵	Responsiveness, adaptability Goals: 9.1, 9.4 a, 11.5 c	Bangkok, Da Nang (Viet Nam), Christchurch, Newcastle, Semarang (Indonesia) For a complete list of '100 Resilient Cities' in the region see regional membership of the '100 Resilient cities' initiative.
Safe Cities	Cities designed for crime prevention, public area safety and security, with a person-oriented city design.	Safety, cities for people, women Goals: 5.2, 5.2, 5.3, 11.2, 16.1-3	Melbourne, Sydney, Osaka, Tokyo, Singapore
Smart city ¹⁵⁶	Using modern communication technology to support sustainable urban development and a high quality of life.	Holistic perspective, infrastructure Goals: 8.2, 8.3, 9.5.b, 17.6, 17.8	Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, Makassar, Singapore, Mumbai, Bangalore, New Clark City, Phuket. 65+ cities in the region focused on smart city plans and programmes.
Sustainable city	A city 'where achievements in social, economic and physical development are made to last' and one which is inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (UNDP, 2015).	Holistic perspective Goals: 11.2, 11.3, 11.7.c Also mentioned in 34 sub-goals, in particular Goals 8, 9, 12, 13	Brisbane, Auckland, Bandung, Dalian, Zhangjiakou, Chengdu

Source: Gong, W. et al¹⁵⁷ (2016) adapted to include SDG sub-goals

any holistic urban plan (e.g. only 24% of Indian cities have master plans). Persistent challenges (unplanned urban expansion, demographic trends, persistence of poverty and inequalities, services and infrastructure deficits, degradation of natural resources), coupled with climate change and the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, increase

the likelihood that the development gains of the last decade will be rolled back.¹⁶⁰ Below is a brief review of initiatives in these two areas, so central for sustainable cities in the region.

Climate Change. Goal 13 is one of the Goals where little progress has been made in the ASPAC region between 2000 and 2018.¹⁶¹ The region has

countries that both contribute to over half of the world's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but are also geographically vulnerable and highly exposed to the damaging impacts of climate change.¹⁶² The heatwaves in **Delhi** (India) and **Melbourne** (Australia) in 2019 are examples of this. Both adaptation and mitigation measures require massive infrastructure and social investment.¹⁶³ In 2019, 130+ cities in the ASPAC region made commitments to the Global Covenant of Mayors on Climate Change and Energy (GCoM) to develop mitigation and adaptation policies.¹⁶⁴ South-eastern Asia is the sub-region with a large number (nearly 70) of SNGs committed to this, including key metropolitan areas (e.g. **Jakarta**, **Surabaya**, **Kuala Lumpur**, **Quezon City**, and **Can Tho**), regions (e.g. **Iskandar**), and intermediary and small cities (e.g. **Probolingo** and **Bontang** in Indonesia, **Putrajaya** in Malaysia, **Borongan** in the Philippines, and **Phuket** in Thailand).¹⁶⁵ In Indonesia, an intensive mentoring process was implemented in 34 provinces to ensure the integration of the national action plan for GHG emissions in regional and local development plans.¹⁶⁶

In East Asia, Japanese cities have been involved in climate change actions for a long time. **Tokyo's** Climate Change Strategy is attempting to reduce final energy consumption (which has decreased by 21.1% since 2000) and CO₂ emissions (which decreased by 36.1% between 2000 and 2015). At the same time, renewables account for more than 11% of final electricity consumption, notably due to the increase in solar energy production capacity.¹⁶⁷ In South Korea, many cities have made commitments.¹⁶⁸ In **Changwon**, the '2020 Environmental Capital' initiative launched in 2008 planted millions of trees and reduced air pollution, urban noise and average summer temperatures by about 3 to 7 degrees celsius.¹⁶⁹ In China, a recent publication by the Asian Development Bank highlighted 50 projects implemented by Chinese cities that have successfully implemented effective GHG reduction strategies and environmental improvement measures. Chinese cities are committed to a reduction of 318 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year by 2030.¹⁷⁰ In South Asia, several cities and states have made commitments, although the majority are only in the preliminary phases.¹⁷¹ The Indian Government supports different programmes to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.¹⁷² In the Pacific region, **Brisbane**, **Melbourne** and **Sydney** — among 20 other Australian local governments — are examples of where climate change initiatives have been implemented.¹⁷³ In New Zealand, local governments adopted a strong statement to support climate change responses.¹⁷⁴ In 2015, the **Greater Wellington Regional Council** (GWRC), launched its Climate Change Strategy and Implementation Plan.

LRGs also play a role in the preservation of forest ecosystems (e.g. the Melbourne Metropolitan Urban Forest Strategy). The **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province** (Pakistan) surpassed the objective of the project 'one billion tree tsunami', initiated in 2014. The major impact of this success also triggered a national reforestation campaign, 'Plant for Pakistan'.¹⁷⁵

Resilient cities. Since 2005, the Asia-Pacific region has recorded almost 60% of total global deaths, with 80% of people affected and 45% of total economic damage due to natural disasters.¹⁷⁶ The number of urban residents potentially facing high or extreme multiple hazards is currently around 742 million, and could reach nearly 1 billion by 2030.¹⁷⁷ The 'Making Cities Sustainable and Resilient Campaign', launched by the UNDDR (formerly UNISDR) and UN Habitat, was highlighted in a report to the HLPF and involves more than 400 cities in the Asia-Pacific region (the majority in South and South-eastern Asia).¹⁷⁸ The campaign seeks to build the capacity of local governments, anchoring resilience across various institutions. Another scheme already mentioned is the 100 Resilient Cities initiative, which involves 19 cities in the region and has the aim of helping them become more resilient to the physical, social and economic challenges of this century.¹⁷⁹ The following are some examples. In Indonesia, most provinces have adopted Disaster Management Plans (DMP), while at district/city level 30% — equivalent to 118 cities — have adopted DMP. However, more effort is needed to ingrain disaster preparedness into the culture of people.¹⁸⁰ In the Philippines, a large majority of LRGs in nine regions (over 17) have incorporated Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies into their local plans, albeit the capacity to implement them remains limited.¹⁸¹ Iloilo is considered a DRR champion: after the typhoon in 2008, the city created a City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (CDRRMC) and developed a disaster plan involving barangays (villages), setting up a Disaster Information Centre and installing electronic signboards and bulletin boards.¹⁸² Another project acknowledged by the UN SDG Platform is the Metro Colombo Urban Development Project, developed in 2012 to reduce the physical and socio-economic impacts of flooding and strengthen strategic planning processes.¹⁸³ In India, Surat is frequently mentioned as a good example; here, the city has developed an 'End-to-End Early Warning System'.¹⁸⁴

Sustainable local infrastructures

Water and Sanitation. Even though the region has made significant progress in terms of access to safe drinking water, progress with sanitation has been much slower. 300 million people still lack access to safe drinking water and 1.5 billion do not have access to sanitation.¹⁸⁵ Following a

UNESCAP assessment regarding Goal 6 (water and sanitation), the Asia-Pacific region is expected to miss the Goal's targets and, in fact, will be in a worse position by 2030 than it was in 2000.¹⁸⁶ Rapid urbanization is challenging the ability of local governments to keep up with the rapidly growing demands on their freshwater supplies. In many cities, access to water is limited both in time and quality. Cities also face vulnerabilities due to outdated water supply systems and inadequate capture and storage capacity. In addition to limited access to sanitation that affects urban areas, a considerable proportion of wastewater already collected in the region is not treated before being discharged or reused (80% — 90% is discharged into water bodies in developing countries as of 2015).¹⁸⁷ While a central government agency is generally charged with the management and protection of water resources, LRGs are primarily responsible for water supply. The service is often delivered directly by state/provinces or municipalities (operation and maintenance) or through special purpose authorities, especially in big urban areas (public corporations or utilities), with some involvement of the private sector through Public-Private Partnerships (e.g. Manila Water Company). Community-managed alternatives are also frequent in small towns and rural areas. Some utilities, such as **Melbourne's**, Victorian Water Corporation (Australia) has used SDG 6 and other SDG targets to develop its 2030 Management Strategy in consultation with stakeholders and customers, to ensure improved community wellbeing and a better natural environment.¹⁸⁸ Many big cities are at the forefront of water management technologies in the region (e.g. NEWater in Singapore¹⁸⁹ and Arisu - Office of Waterworks in Seoul).

Localized solutions to wastewater treatment, such as decentralized wastewater treatment systems, are emerging at the technical and policy levels in South and South-eastern Asia. For example, **Rajkot** (India) developed a Decentralized Wastewater Treatment System in 2015. The 'system treats sewage from 236 households, saving 4,000 kWh of electricity (SDG 7) and reducing 15 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year (SDG 11.6).¹⁹⁰ **Coimbatore** in southern India (1 million inhabitants) is currently working on a concept for intelligent water management to develop localized innovative water supply and wastewater disposal technologies.¹⁹¹ Community-led total sanitation initiatives have been developed in the past decade in India, for example, supported by national programmes (e.g. the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative). **Xiangyang** City in Hubei Province (China) is testing out technologies for recycling sludge from wastewater treatment into energy, and recovering resources through an innovative cost effective green treatment process.¹⁹² Based on Mauri

tradition, the **City of Rotorua** (New Zealand) has developed an ecosystem re-entry mechanism, including restoration of the mauri (life-force) of the *wai* (water), as well as *Kaitiakitanga* (care of the environment), to support the principle that water is intrinsic to life and therefore also needs to sustain life and be life-sustaining.¹⁹³

Only a few basin management systems are in place, such as in the Mekong River Basin and the Aral Sea Basin, although these need to be scaled up to ensure efficiency of water resource use and management. Improved watershed management requires more involvement and contribution from LRGs. Asia-Pacific developing countries need an additional USD 14 billion annually to provide universal access to water and sanitation by 2030. And in South and South-West Asia, sanitation facilities account for 56% of the total financing needs of the water and sanitation sector, compared to 44% for access to water-related infrastructure. In urban areas, improving the management of tariffs, fixing leakages and regular maintenance can help reduce financing needs.¹⁹⁴

Solid waste management and the circular economy. Cities in the region are also generating increasing volumes of solid waste. SDGs 11.6 and 12.3-5 focus on the treatment and recycling of waste, with a view to developing a circular economy. Poor management and disposal of waste has an impact on many other SDGs related to soil, groundwater and marine pollution, as well as a healthy environment. A number of cities have adopted comprehensive waste management strategies based on the 3R principles (reduce, reuse and recycle — SDG 12.5). **Surabaya** (Indonesia, 3.3 million inhabitants) developed an e-3Rs and created a waste bank where residents are paid in return for recycling plastic bottles and cups. The city also has an educational programme and community-based waste management, in order to reduce the levels of waste and increase recycling in the city.¹⁹⁵ In **Chennai** (India), two municipalities signed a plastic waste recovery agreement in July 2018 with a cement plant to recover plastic waste sorted by residents in order to limit the amount of plastic sent to landfill. Residents are also being asked to sort organic waste in order to adopt vermi-composting, and biogas equipment is going to be installed.¹⁹⁶ **Bandung City's** Low-Carbon Plan (2014) includes the reduction of waste going to landfill from 69% to 25% between 2013 and 2019 and promoting the 3Rs and waste-to-energy schemes. In 2010 **Bangkok** initiated a solid waste separation programme at community level and built a waste-to-energy plant operating in the Nongkhem District (generating 8MW of power), but this only accounts for about 3% of the total solid waste generated.¹⁹⁷

Other initiatives in medium-sized cities, small towns and villages are being promoted

by different partners (e.g. in Quy Nhơn, Viet Nam and Battambang, Cambodia).¹⁹⁸ Innovative initiatives in the region have received international attention. For example, **Wuhan** (China, 10.9 million inhabitants) received the Guangzhou International Award for Innovation for the transformation of one of the largest landfills in Asia into a recreational park and ecological garden covering an area of over 170 square km.¹⁹⁹ The project involved government departments as well as experts from 82 cities. This is the largest application of aerobic technology for landfill remediation and the biggest ecological bridge in China. **Seoul** has made significant progress in solid waste management in a relatively short period of time. It has reduced the waste sent to Sudokwon Landfill (where methane gas is captured and converted into energy, while organic food waste goes through composting), switched to incineration facilities (recovering enough energy to supply 800,000 households), created four Resource Recovery Centres, and increased the rate of household waste recycling to 65% (almost twice the OECD average). As a result of this policy, Seoul has been able to achieve a 57% reduction in waste generated per capita and increased recycling rates nearly 20 fold. Partnerships between waste pickers and local governments can also be seen in the Global South (**Dhaka, Jakarta and Manila**). These informal solid waste collection systems gather recyclables separately and then give them to waste pickers in sorting centres. The **Kapiti Coast** near Wellington KCDC (New Zealand) redistributes waste levy fees paid by waste disposal operators to community groups, businesses, Maori and other community organizations in the form of Waste Minimization Grants, reducing waste to landfill and associated greenhouse gas emissions. However, the reality is that most cities struggle to manage solid waste in a cost-effective and environmentally responsible way, mainly relying on open dumping and uncontrolled landfilling.²⁰⁰

Transport and mobility. Fast urban growth has led to a dramatic increase in motorized vehicles, severe congestion and air pollution. Careful planning of public transport, inter-modal transfer centres and innovative solutions for traffic management are necessary to make the Asia-Pacific region's transport systems more sustainable and accessible, to decarbonize transportation and improve the air quality in urban areas. Examples of more sustainable and integrated public transport networks, electric vehicles, and use of smart transport systems include innovative initiatives by LRGs in support of localizing SDG 11.2 and the New Urban Agenda.²⁰¹

Several key urban areas have adopted a mass transit-oriented policy with the aim of reducing private car dominance and improving the share of public transport modalities (subways, light train, high bus usage) and integrated fare systems. Cities

such as Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo have among the more advanced and innovative systems. Hong Kong has invested heavily in a passenger rail and metro network, implementing restrictive car ownership and use policies, while the Mass Transit Railway Corporation operates a unique business model to capture property added value to invest in transport. As a result, public transport is used for 90% of all motorized journeys and the car ownership rate is lower than that of other cities of similar wealth. These transport patterns have resulted in very low transport-related energy use and carbon emissions.²⁰²

Other metro areas, such as the **Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR)**, are making strides to decarbonize the transport sector (including an elevated rail system, underground train network and an airport rail link), as well as extending the Pun-Pun, the city's first bicycle-sharing programme.²⁰³ **Bandung City** launched its 'Better Urban Mobility 2031' plan to develop public transport, including a seven-line Light Rail Transit (LRT) system, as well as low-emission vehicles. **Kochi City** (India) commissioned the development of a new metro in 2017.

Inspired by the success of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Bogota (Colombia), **Transjakarta** and **Seoul** BRT systems started operating in 2000, and **Islamabad** BRT in 2012.²⁰⁴ Now BRT is currently serving around 10 million people per day in Asian cities, half of which are in China. **Hanoi's** first BRT was launched in 2016. The city's 'Masterplan for 2030 with a vision to 2050' envisages eight urban rail corridors, eight BRTs and several monorail corridors, with increases in the modal share of public transport to reach 35% - 45% by 2030, with a 30% reduction in private transport in the same time period.

Other cities are moving towards electrification of the bus network. By the end of 2017, all of **Shenzhen's** bus fleet — 16,359 vehicles — had been replaced with electric buses. This is the world's first city to adopt a completely electric fleet of buses, leading to a reduction in the city's emissions of 1.35 million tons of CO₂ each year.²⁰⁵

Careful planning of public transport, inter-modal transfer centres and innovative solutions for traffic management are necessary to make the Asia-Pacific region's transport systems more sustainable and accessible, to decarbonize transportation and improve the air quality in urban areas.

Soft mobility is also being promoted in the region. In the historic district of Monas, the city council of **Jakarta** has, since July 2018, been providing its first bicycle sharing stations, with the aim of reducing the use of cars in one of the most polluted cities in the world.²⁰⁶ **Kochi City** (India) inaugurated a bike sharing scheme in July 2018, with stations located at the foot of the metro (commissioned in 2017) to facilitate the switch between transport modes.²⁰⁷

Beyond these outstanding examples, the challenges are particularly significant among least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries. Needs assessments, based on a business-as-usual scenario, point to the high level of investment needed - a doubling or even tripling of current levels of infrastructure investment.²⁰⁸ However UNESCAP stresses that the business-as-usual scenario is not a very viable option (due to urban sprawl, maintenance costs, and transport technologies).

Inclusive cities and territories (a people-centred agenda)

Cities are considered engines of economic growth, with global leadership roles in education and science, technology and innovation, but also home to widening inequalities. Poor people living in urban areas remain marginalized despite recent growth, youth unemployment is high and migrants are often greatly disadvantaged with respect to their rights. Urban population growth in the region has not been matched by growth in housing units or equitable access to land, resulting in housing shortages and the persistence and growth of slums.²⁰⁹

Adequate and affordable housing, neighbourhood upgrading. Access to affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges facing this region, home to the world's largest concentration of urban slum populations. In 2014, people living in poor quality housing were estimated to number around 440 million, representing close to 27% of the total urban population in the region.²¹⁰ Although the proportion of people living in slums is decreasing in all sub-regions, the absolute number is increasing in many cities. Right to shelter and tenure is a basic human right; and one of the key challenges is how to build inclusive

cities that avoid marginalization, fragmentation and urban segregation.

Decentralization would increase the role of local governments in housing policies, but in many cases housing policy has been recentralized. In the Philippines, for example, the Urban Development and Housing Act which in the past gave local governments responsibility for providing housing has been hindered by their lack of control over land, as well as insufficient funds.²¹¹ China is an interesting exception, because local governments are able to develop housing alternatives. More importantly, they are able to interact with their local communities and other local stakeholders to negotiate a more equitable and sustained city development strategy, in which housing for the poor is a key element. They can also develop more gender sensitive approaches, to facilitate engagement by women in community planning and initiatives.

One of the more successful examples of a collaborative approach for slum upgrading is the Baan Mankong programme in Thailand. Implemented by the national Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), in close collaboration with community organizations and with the support of local governments, the programme has provided secure land and housing to two thirds of the country's urban poor over the past decade. The institutionalized participation of informal communities in the development of the urban fabric has renewed the city's policy practices and the authorities' vision of the future of the metropolis.²¹²

In the Philippines, since 2008 the **Iloilo** Local Housing Board has facilitated coordination between local government and the urban poor federation to participate in the city's formal planning process, disaster rehabilitation and relocation strategies that operate at the citywide scale.²¹³ The Prevention and Improving the Quality of Urban Slums in **Tanjung Pinang** (Indonesia),²¹⁴ the older Cross Cutting **Agra** Programme (India),²¹⁵ and the Citywide Settlement Upgrading and Prevention Strategy in **Port Moresby** (Papua New Guinea)²¹⁶ are among many other examples.²¹⁷

Cities are supporting programmes for low-income populations, sponsoring affordable housing to protect inhabitants from evictions.²¹⁸ The **Seoul** Type Housing Voucher Programme (redefined in 2013) provides a subsidy for low-income citizens as well as other options through their Public Lease Housing Policy.²¹⁹

However, many national and local governments still refuse to acknowledge urban populations living in slums, keeping these inhabitants 'off the radar' and unregistered in official databases. The growing urgency to provide adequate, affordable housing to millions of households calls for a paradigm shift in housing policy and practice, in

In 2014, people living in poor quality housing were estimated to number around 440 million, representing close to 27% of the total urban population in the region.

order to guarantee a sustainable future for cities.²²⁰ Experience suggests that, without comprehensive public localized interventions and community involvement, private housing expenditure alone will not solve the slum problem in developing countries.²²¹

Safe and Creative Cities. Urbanization has been associated with increasing prosperity, but also with unhealthy environments, insecurity and violence that frequently affects more vulnerable groups. Local governments in the region are acting to create fair, safe and liveable environments for all, and particularly for women, children and the elderly, as well as minorities and the marginalized. A human rights-based approach contributes to more peaceful and inclusive societies.

Different modalities of gender-sensitive public policies and services, including safer and green spaces, are emerging to reduce discrimination against women and support gender parity (SDG 5 and 16). **Logan City Council in Queensland, Australia**, has introduced a Safe City Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020.²²² **Seoul's** Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Project (CPTED) targets troubled neighbourhoods, with the involvement of communities, schools, the private sector, police, and district offices in an effort to seek innovative ways to tackle crime.²²³ Other cities have adopted different policies through specific regulations to protect women's rights and avoid harassment and violence, e.g. **Guangzhou, Seoul** (Ordinance on Gender Equality), **Faisalabad** (Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016), and **Kathmandu** (Public Transport Code of Conduct 2010). Beyond legislation, **Busan** has committed specific funds to prevent sexual violence. **Hyderabad** (India) is one of eight cities in India to participate in the Home Ministry's 'safe city' plan to end sexual harassment. **Bhopal** has improved transport access and safety for women. **Guangzhou, Kuala Lumpur, Zhengzhou, Shenzhen, Kolkata, Delhi** and **Hyderabad** have created women-only spaces on public transport.²²⁴ In **Ho-Chi-Minh City**, the HCM Safe City programme adapted the National Thematic Project on Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response (2016-2020).²²⁵ Many others have launched awareness campaigns and have hotlines, mobile apps or SMS to facilitate the reporting of sexual assaults. In **Indonesia**, Women's Schools (Sekolah Perempuan) have been established to provide informal education to empower women, jointly implemented by local governments, CSOs and communities in 54 villages and towns in different districts and provinces.²²⁶ Several Indian states have implemented specific schemes aimed at empowering the most vulnerable tribal groups or castes (Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Telangana). Moreover, Kerala became the first Indian state to introduce a policy for transgender people.²²⁷

Local governments are also developing different modalities, such as participatory planning and budgeting, to boost civil society participation in local decision-making, as set out in SDG 16.7 (e.g. **Vinh City** in Viet Nam; **Solo** in Indonesia; **Hwaseong** in South Korea; and **Seberang Perai** in Malaysia).²²⁸ In the **Philippines**, the Grassroots Participatory Budget programme (formerly Bottom-up Budgeting) succeeded in the mid-2010s in expanding to virtually all local government units (1,633 in total, in 2015).²²⁹ **Chengdu** (China) has been practising participatory budgeting since 2008, and has funded over 100,000 projects. Participatory budgeting is a powerful tool to meet the SDG imperative to 'leave no one behind' by involving migrant workers (e.g. Taoyuan)²³⁰ and persons with disabilities (e.g. Sanxia district).

Cities are also taking advantage of cultural policies and people's initiatives to boost inclusion, creativity and to celebrate diversity. As part of its heritage, **Pekalongan** (Indonesia) recognizes itself as the 'City of Batik' a sector in which 60% of the workers are women.²³¹ **Kanazawa** (Japan) has fostered synergies between local artisans and other creative areas, combining tradition, innovation and new technologies.²³² The province of **Jeju** (South Korea) has committed to preserving the custom of *haenyeo* (women divers) as an eco-friendly sustainable fishing practice, rooted in traditional knowledge.²³³

Inspired by the spirit of the **Asia Human Rights Charter**,²³⁴ local governments such as **Gwangju** (South Korea) have carried out extensive memorial and human rights education programmes with a view to promoting peace, culture and human rights in both the city and its regional environment.²³⁵ Others, such as the Regency of **Wonosobo** and **Palu City** (Indonesia) have created city human rights commissions to protect religious diversity, minority groups and develop awareness-raising programmes.²³⁶

This section has highlighted a range of innovative programmes, schemes and experiences increasingly being tested and implemented in the Asia-Pacific region. Other important aspects would be worth exploring such as energy transition, local food systems, urban agriculture, open government and new technologies etc. Most of these programmes are concentrated in frontrunner cities, mostly large urban areas, and are managed by innovative local leaders often supported by an exchange of experiences between international networks and partnerships. To move to the next phase and transform urban patterns of development in the Asia-Pacific region, it will be necessary to refine and scale up these emerging local approaches. This will require more collaborative policies between local, national and international institutions and actors and a significant increase in resources available at sub-national levels. ○

4. Conclusions

As stressed in the UNESCAP Report 2019, far-reaching initiatives and reforms are needed in the Asia-Pacific region to transform the current trajectory which, if unchanged, will not allow the region to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.²³⁷ To reverse these trends, the same report calls for accelerated efforts, the adoption of coherent and integrated policies that look at the interlinkages between the Goals, as well as good governance and appropriate and effective investments to lead countries to a truly sustainable future.

Local and regional government actions can accelerate SDG implementation

This chapter has highlighted where local and regional governments (LRGs) stand in this process. It offers a brief but general overview of initiatives on the ground, in cities, provinces and municipalities and in different countries. It shows some of the progress and gaps at sub-national levels, as well as the decisive role played by local authorities, national associations and regional networks of LRGs to support territorial strategies for the localization of the SDGs and other global agendas (climate change, disaster risk reduction, New Urban Agenda). These networks ensure regional dissemination and knowledge-sharing, peer to peer exchange and a significant advocacy role with regards to national and regional institutions, as well as alliances with CSOs, academia, and the private sector. They are important players in the expansion of the localization movement.

However, the dissemination of the SDGs at sub-national level in the region is still limited and **requires more engagement from all partners — LRGs, civil society, national governments and international institutions — to make significant progress in terms of LRG involvement.**

At the same time, the chapter highlights a multitude of initiatives in cities, regions and provinces that are promoting sustainable change, although they are not necessarily 'labelled' as SDGs. Most tend to be more project-oriented, but could provide the foundations for integrated territorial approaches to climate change, disaster risk reduction, access to basic services and housing, gender equality, public mass transport, smarter cities, and circular economies. Many initiatives are putting people at the centre, enhancing opportunities for institutions and stakeholders to interact and find synergies.

These actions have enormous transformative potential, although there is still a way to go in terms of scaling up and addressing systemic flaws, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda. But they paved the way. More local governments in the Asia-Pacific region will have to rely on collaboration with civil society and horizontal coordination between territories — networks, partnerships and the exchange of resources and knowledge — in order to realize the 'quantum leap' needed to make implementation of the SDGs a reality in the region. **The mainstreaming and upscaling of local actions through integrated territorial approaches will be important accelerators to meet the 2030 targets and catalyse governance transformations.**

However, as the previous sections underlined, the potentialities of LRGs' contribution to the SDGs have not always been clearly acknowledged. Only 11 countries (out of 28 that reported between 2016 and 2019) involved LRGs in the preparation of the VNRs and only four countries involved them in the national coordination mechanisms (Australia, Indonesia, Japan, and New Zealand) (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2).²³⁸ The limited involvement of LRGs in these processes constrains their mobilization and hinders multilevel dialogue to foster coordination

and collaboration. **There is much to do in terms of involving LRGs in the VNRs and in the national coordination mechanisms in order that decisive steps can be taken towards localization of the 2030 Agenda.** At regional level, the systematic participation of LRGs in UNESCAP's annual Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and in the ASEAN's Forum of Mayors has contributed to stronger SNG representation and multilevel governance.

Next steps

Based on these findings, representatives of local government associations of several countries in the region, national governments and international institutions gathered at the Siem Reap Workshop, co-organized by UCLG, jointly with UCLG ASPAC, LOGIN Asia, Development Partners Network on Decentralization and Local Governance (DeLoG) and ADB (8-9 April 2019), to discuss the **three main reforms needed to underpin the localization of the SDGs: 1) governance reforms, 2) financing reforms and, 3) public management reforms.** These reforms can easily be linked to the 'policy proposals' defined by UNESCAP in its analysis of the links between urbanization and the 2030 Agenda.²³⁹

Governance reforms

Renewed governance policies are required that recognize the multiple benefits of interlinkages between urbanization, territorial strategies and the SDGs. There is a need to **think strategically about localization, territorial and urban development across a range of diverse city sizes** (small, medium and large), as well as across the different levels of territorial governance. Synergies between the New Urban Agenda, the SDGs and national development strategies need to be strengthened. Coordination efforts can also be explored for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) agreed at the COP 21 in Paris on climate change that countries need to submit or update in 2020. A common approach is needed to build synergies, tackle sectoral fragmented approaches and improve the allocation of resources between public administrations.

Effective decentralization policies are also central to underpin governance efforts, empower LRGs and support SDG localization through strong territorial development strategies. Although decentralization is not a panacea *per se* and countries show divergent progress and experiences in the region, the chapter shows clear differences between empowered LRGs and LRGs with less enabling environments (see Section 2.2). The former, particularly when they are led by a visionary local leader, play an active role, develop bottom-up initiatives, mobilize local actors and resources involving the whole potentiality of a territory, and

are committed partners for the accomplishment of the SDGs. On the other hand, when LRGs operate with more constrained powers and weak capacities and resources, their contribution is limited and they play a more passive role. As shown above (see section 2.3), the lack of clarity about local governments' legal mandates and areas of jurisdiction in some countries needs to be addressed through proper assignment of functions between levels of government.

Vertical and horizontal coordination remains a great challenge and requires governance reforms to foster multilevel dialogue and cooperation. Horizontal cooperation at sub-national level is also critical to foster territorial development strategies and strengthen the management of growing metropolitan areas, megacities and urban corridors, as well as for key environmental issues such as river catchments (e.g. the Ganges River catchment). The scale of the challenge and the means needed to tackle them are enormous.

Financing reforms

As mentioned in the introduction, the UNESCAP Report 2019 reveals that achieving the SDGs by 2030 would require an annual additional investment of USD 1.5 trillion for Asia-Pacific developing countries.²⁴⁰ This includes a range of urban and territorial infrastructure investments across multiple sectors.²⁴¹

Countries in the region are adopting reforms and introducing initiatives to support local investment in services and infrastructures. Certainly there are great contrasts between high income countries, with cities and regions that have access to well-developed capital markets and adequate instruments to finance urban infrastructures and, at the other end, low income countries, with cities and territories showing low revenues, low creditworthiness and difficulty attracting banks and investors. Emerging countries show different landscapes. International support will continue to be crucial for less economically developed countries, land-locked developing countries and Small Island Developing States. Further consideration is needed as to how to respond to the different regional contexts, and large, medium and small cities and their capacity to access resources.²⁴²

When adequately empowered and led by a visionary local leader, LRGs play an active role in mobilizing local actors and partners for the accomplishment of the SDGs.

In summary, reforms are needed to tackle urban and regional infrastructure gaps and improve capacity at the sub-national level to mobilize financing to respond to the SDGs. **Investment flows can be enhanced where national and local authorities clearly articulate strategies for sustainable urban and territorial development.** Applying an incremental approach to developing empowering and progressive local tax systems and a better share of national fiscal revenues (rationalize intergovernmental flows) is needed to boost resource mobilization efforts in the region. Asia-Pacific economies have boomed over the last decades, but many rapidly growing cities have failed to capture this and continue to accumulate infrastructure deficits (see Section 2.2). Enhanced local government resources — including land value capture and good urban and territorial assets management — that can act as levers to attract different sources of finances. However, fiscal strategies will not necessarily mobilize resources at sufficient scale.

There is a need to tackle inadequate borrowing frameworks and regulations to facilitate LRG loans and access to markets.

The sources and mechanisms of credit for LRGs vary considerably across countries. Stronger partnerships between central and local governments (with help from local and international finance) can help multiply sources of financing and develop innovative financial instruments to redirect funds to sustainable development projects: moving from more traditional municipal funds and banks to newer 'green' funds and investment tools that merge domestic and international funds.²⁴³ Some national governments are launching new initiatives — such as 'SDG Indonesia One Platform, — to mobilize funds from different sources (private sector, philanthropic and religious funds).²⁴⁴ At the international level, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the BRICS New Development Bank, and multilateral climate funds are increasingly a source of infrastructure financing in emerging economies.²⁴⁵

To scale investment, national and local governments require strategic, far-sighted reforms and coordinated action that recognizes those policy inter-relationships likely to have the greatest and most sustainable impact.²⁴⁶



Fishermen gathering net in Mannar, Sri Lanka (photo: Adam Jones, bit.ly/2p7TtK4).

Policy coherence and national planning systems

The governance reforms that are needed to develop policy coherence, improve coordination among different levels of government and support territorial development strategies implies a progressive evolution of management traditions within and between institutions. This is particularly sensitive with regards to the national planning systems that many countries look to as a way of localizing the SDGs.

Several countries have developed robust policies to foster national and local coordination; improve the capability of sub-national levels to lead development processes; develop training initiatives; and explore new financing mechanisms to promote vertical and horizontal cooperation. Other countries, on the other hand, even though they acknowledge the need to embed the SDGs into local processes, have not yet defined clear territorialization strategies nor followed a ‘trickle-down’ approach to galvanize the local effect of national policy. They often lack the necessary frameworks, technical assistance and incentives to support local buy-and territorial development approaches. Inevitably, those countries in the first group have recorded faster progress, although even they are experiencing difficulties and still require improvements in territorial approaches and sub-national coordination. There are still different planning approaches that co-exist, widening the mismatch between plans and budgets, the inconsistency among indicators and the availability of data — let alone the differences in political orientation. In order to accelerate action and scale up the impact of policy on sustainable development, a territorialized strategy will be necessary.

Fragmented reporting systems hinder ownership and institutionalization of the SDGs across different levels of government. Strengthening local reporting capacities and closing the data gap will need particular attention and support. National and local capacities to define and collect disaggregated and localized data should be part of territorialization strategies, to ensure that planning processes at all levels are founded on realistic targets and that effective implementation can be monitored.

One of the most important imperatives in the localization of the SDGs is to promote adequate integration of policies and strategies via improved and effective coordination mechanisms. In countries with complex geography, diversity and multi-layered government levels — many of them engaged in the decentralization process — **implementation of the SDGs needs to focus more on integrated planning mechanisms, better resource management and monitoring efforts between national and sub-national governments.** In decentralized countries, the principle of subsidiarity should be at the heart

of the relationship between different institutional tiers in order to address the structural problems of power-sharing imbalances, capacity gaps and financing shortages.

Addressing the main challenges of localization requires compliance with the 2030 Agenda’s call for a holistic approach to development. This can result in **enhanced policy coherence (SDG 17.14) and greater stakeholder involvement at all levels.** Limited consultations and uncoordinated decision-making have traditionally pervaded the governance systems of many Asia-Pacific countries. LRGs must call for better consultation, and the power to set priorities and determine the plays in resource sharing if they want to truly localize implementation.

The Asia-Pacific region’s inherent complexity, size and diversity have made progress on localization uneven throughout the region. The challenges that impact these countries are massive and diverse; the range and complexity of multi-layered levels of governance, plans, strategies and institutions vary so much across the region that it is impossible to define one standard roadmap where ‘one size fits all’. However, new governance frameworks, adequate resource mobilization and more effective management to catalyse territorial development are all urgently needed to boost SDG implementation, mainstream local experiences, and further engage local and regional governments and communities in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, thus helping to reverse the current trajectory and accelerate the region’s transition to a sustainable future. 🌀

03



Eurasia

Regional chapter



Market stall in Tashkent,
Uzbekistan (photo:
Christopher Rose, bit.
ly/2Mus3G1).

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1. Introduction

In September 2015, all the Eurasian countries reviewed in this chapter adopted the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). National governments acknowledged that the SDGs are major priorities and that the responsibility for achieving the Goals and targets should be shared between central regional and local governments.

Throughout the past three decades, countries in the Eurasia region have experienced several important transformations. According to acting Constitutions, developed in the early 1990s, all Eurasian countries, except Russia, are unitary states. Since that time, there has been no change of regime in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which are presidential republics. Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Armenia, on the other hand, became parliamentary republics in 2010, 2013 and 2015 respectively. Ukraine has gained mixed status as a parliamentary presidential republic.


Moreover, war and ‘colour’ revolutions have affected the political stability of most countries. Those include the armed conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia (1991-1994); the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1994); Chechen wars in Russia (1994-1996 and 1999-2000); the Revolution of Roses in Georgia (2003); the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004); the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005); the armed conflict between Georgia and Russia (2008); the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine (2014); the Crimea conflict between Ukraine and Russia (2014); the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine (2014- present); and the Velvet Revolution in Armenia (2018). Because of these political and armed conflicts, Ukraine and Georgia have removed themselves from the sphere of Russia’s influence.

Currently the level of urbanization in Eurasian countries varies from 77.6% in Belarus to 26.9% in Tajikistan.¹ However, the reforms of the 1990s provoked strong polarization and uneven development of regions in the majority of Eurasian countries. The agglomeration or concentration effects are a key factor of spatial differentiation that has favoured larger cities, particularly national capitals. These cities have been reporting

growth in their populations since the mid-2000s, mainly because of in-migration. At the same time, provincial regions and cities have found themselves vulnerable in the context of the new economy. Crisis conditions have been particularly pronounced in mono-sectoral industrial cities and districts that rely on one company or a localized cluster of enterprises in one industry.

The degradation of the utilities infrastructure experienced by most countries in the 1990s has in the last decade been halted and to some extent reversed. Local and regional governments (LRGs) in Eurasian countries have made significant efforts to improve public services. While the context is constantly changing, decentralization in Eurasian countries remains limited. Central governments in the region continue to promote top-down approaches and impose national programmes for regional development on LRGs.

This chapter analyses the role of LRGs in the localization of the SDGs in the Eurasia region. The first section focuses on the national SDG implementation strategies being promoted in different countries. It looks at national mechanisms to foster policy coherence, and evolving multilevel relationships towards achieving sustainable development. Moreover, it assesses the local and regional structure of governments, their responsibilities and budgets.

The second section illustrates the contribution of LRG initiatives in achieving the SDGs and highlights the role of local government associations (LGAs) and networks in raising awareness and aligning local and regional initiatives with the global SDG framework. Lastly, the chapter will showcase the transformative power of local implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 

Local and regional governments in Eurasian countries have made significant efforts to improve public services.

2. National and local institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

2.1 National institutional frameworks

Seven Eurasian countries have so far submitted Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF): Georgia (in 2016), Belarus, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan (in 2017), Armenia (in 2018), and Azerbaijan (again) and Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (in 2019).

SDGs national strategies and plan

Three categories emerge among countries in the Eurasia region according to their level of commitment and the quality of their strategies to reach the SDGs. Firstly are those countries that have drawn up new national development strategies (NDSs) in line with the global agendas. Second, are those countries that have adapted pre-existing strategies to the SDGs (or are in the course of doing so) or adopted specific roadmaps to respond to the SDGs. Third, are those countries that have not yet aligned their development strategies or plans with the 2030 Agenda.

In the first category, countries such as Belarus, Tajikistan and Ukraine are implementing NDSs designed after the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in 2015. These strategies have thus been aligned from the outset with the SDG framework.

In the second category, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, for example, adopted their current NDSs before 2015 and the 2030 Agenda. Nonetheless, in these countries the national governments either adopted new strategic roadmaps (Azerbaijan) or drafted a new long-term development strategy incorporating the SDGs, such as in Armenia (in 2017; Horizon 2030) and Kyrgyzstan (in 2018; Horizon 2040). Both drafted strategies are under discussion.

The third group of countries includes different sub-categories. Both Georgia and Kazakhstan, which have reported to the HLPF during this first cycle, are continuing to implement national strategies developed before 2015. Georgia is seeking to align its Annual Government Work Plan with the SDGs. In Kazakhstan, the focus has been on harmonizing the budget and planning. Similarly, in Turkmenistan, the monitoring and reporting systems of the 2017-2021 Presidential Programme were aligned with the SDGs after the

programme had been adopted. In the case of the Russian Federation, it has not integrated the SDGs into national development plans (NDPs) nor shown any leadership in championing the 2030 Agenda. This is demonstrated particularly by the absence of public statements made by the Head of State on how the country plans to implement the SDGs.² Uzbekistan meanwhile considers its mid-term plan (2017-2021) to be in line with the SDGs' vision and ambitions.

However, a word of caution should be sounded in the case of Russia. The country's 2020 NDS, formulated in 2008, was substituted by the new Key Guidelines for the Russian Federation Government Activities which extends until the end of the presidential term, in 2024. The Russian National Programme 2018-2024 includes 12 national projects with 150 development goals. Sectoral ministries have committed to promote sustainable development and all national and sector strategic documents are thus framed in terms of achieving the 'Strategic Development Objectives'. With regards to international development cooperation, Russia has been adapting its international assistance programmes to the SDGs.³

Almost all Eurasian national governments involve LRGs in the implementation of their countries' NDSs. However, this process remains predominantly top-down. Accordingly, in most countries central governments elaborate and adopt national and regional development programmes without explicitly engaging their LRGs. Nonetheless, national governments do give regional and local executive bodies (both

Three categories emerge among countries in the Eurasia region according to their level of commitment and the quality of their strategies to reach the SDGs. The process remains predominantly top-down.

Table 1 National development strategies and plans and their coordination mechanisms

Armenia

The country is updating the long-term Armenian Development Strategy 2014-2025. Coordination: National Council for Sustainable Development (2000), headed by the Prime Minister (multi-stakeholder), Inter-Agency Task Force for SDG Nationalization, National SDG Innovation Lab (2017). No LRG participation.

Azerbaijan

A National Action Plan in preparation (88 priority targets and 119 indicators selected in 2018). Long-Term Plan: Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future (2012) and main sectoral programmes (12) partially aligned. Coordination: National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD), chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy (inter-ministerial), four working groups. Indicators: State Statistical Committee. No LRG participation.

Belarus

National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development (NSSD-2030) (adopted in 2015) and Social and Economic Programme 2020 (December 2016). A National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2030 will be drafted. Coordination: National Council for Sustainable Development (includes national and regional government bodies), National Coordinator for the Achievement of the SDGs at the President Office (2017). Strategies for sustainable development developed for about six regional and more than 30 LRGs.

Georgia

Social and Economic Development Strategy 'Georgia 2020' (2014) and several sectoral plans. Coordination: Administration of Government of Georgia, mainly under the Government Planning and Innovation Unit of the Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department. National Statistic Office in charge of indicators. LRGs are represented in the inter-agency working group.

Kazakhstan

Strategy 'Kazakhstan 2050' (2012) and '100 Concrete Steps to Implement Five Institutional Reforms', launched in 2015, sectoral programmes. Coordination: Coordination Board on SDGs, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, five inter-agency working groups (multi-stakeholder) and coordination body by the Ministry of National Economy. No LRG participation.

Kyrgyzstan

National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2013-2017 (2013). In 2018, the government drafted a new sustainable development strategy until 2040 aligned with the SDGs. Coordination: Coordination Committee on Adaptation, Implementation and Monitoring of the SDGs (2015), chaired by the Prime Minister. No LRG participation is reported (although the decree mentions the role given to the cities of Bishkek and Osh).

Mongolia

Mongolia's Sustainable Development Vision-2030 (MSDV-2030). Coordination: National Committee for Sustainable Development under the guidance of the Prime Minister and led by the National Development Agency (NDA), Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development Goals under the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Education, Culture and Science of the State Great Khural (Parliament).

Russian Federation

Strategy of the Long-Term Socio-Economic Development for the period up to 2020 (2008); Decree of the Russian Federation President, 'On National Goals and Strategic Development Objectives of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024' (May, 2018); Key Guidelines for the Russian Federation Government Activities for the period up to 2024 (September 2018). Coordination: Inter-agency working group under the Presidential Administration on issues related to climate change and ensuring sustainable development (created in 2012). No LRG participation.

Tajikistan

National Development Strategy 2030 (NDS-2030) and Mid-term Development Programme for 2016-2020 (MTDP 2020). Coordination: National Development Council (NDC), headed by the President of the Republic, Secretariat: Ministry of Economy and Trade oversees implementation (it was in charge of the VNR), Secretariat and technical working groups (multi-stakeholder). No local government participation in NDC.

Turkmenistan

National Programme for Socio-economic Development of Turkmenistan for 2011–2030 and the President's Socio-economic Development Plan 2019-2025. Coordination: Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, Multi-stakeholder working groups. For reporting: Inter-departmental working group.

Ukraine

Sustainable Development Strategy 'Ukraine 2020' (adopted in 2015). Coordination: High-Level Interministerial Working Group, chaired by the 1st Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Economic development and Trade (2016-2017). LRG participation.

Uzbekistan

Five-Area Development Strategy for 2017-2021 (2017). Coordination: Coordination Council on National SDGs (Oct 2018), chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, supported by the Minister of Finance (includes the Chair of the National Council for the No direct LRG participation.

Eurasia



Sources: VNRs 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. UNDESA (2017 and 2018). 'Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.

decentralized and deconcentrated), responsibility for implementation of the development strategies and the SDGs. This is particularly the case in Azerbaijan, for instance, where the government of Karakalpak autonomous region, local governments of other regions, and the capital city of Tashkent are among those named bodies responsible for the implementation of the SDGs. In other countries, the central government mandates LRGs to elaborate regional and local development programmes independently, meanwhile taking account of national guidelines and indicators.

It is worth mentioning that in some countries the elaboration of development strategies is heavily reliant on international assistance and in fact, as a rule, the adoption of the sustainable development strategy appears to be a new conditionality for receiving donors financial assistance (such as in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plays a key role in supporting countries in the Eurasia region to achieve the SDGs.⁴ These Eurasia countries have benefited greatly from financial and technical support from international financial organizations as well as the international donor community. Indeed, financial assistance and donor support have been important in enhancing legal, institutional and physical frameworks and infrastructures of many countries in the Eurasia region.

National institutional mechanisms

All the Eurasia countries have institutionalized mechanisms at the highest level of government to manage, coordinate and monitor development strategies. These mechanisms or bodies are charged with leading the process of 'nationalizing' the SDGs, meaning adjusting them to the national context.

According to the seven VNRs presented to the HLPF between 2016 and 2019, LRGs have a quite significant role in the institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs. At the same time, simply mentioning LRGs in relation to the implementation stage in the VNRs, does not necessarily mean that national coordination mechanisms actually involve LRGs. In a majority of countries, LRGs are merely seen as implementing agencies without being actively involved in SDG implementation.

According to the VNRs, seven countries have created new coordination mechanisms specifically with the purpose of coordinating SDG implementation. These are Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine (in 2015); Azerbaijan (in 2016); Armenia and Belarus (in 2017); Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (in 2018).

Georgia, Tajikistan and Russia are using government bodies established before the

SDGs but assigning them with new mandates for implementation and monitoring. The governments of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan meanwhile have added new and more targeted bodies to ones that already existed. The new bodies, namely the Inter-Agency Task force in Armenia, and the Coordination Committee in Kyrgyzstan, carry out tasks of adaptation, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs (see Table 1).

In all countries, the coordinating body is at the highest level of national government, chaired by either the Prime Minister or the President. In Tajikistan, it is overseen by the President; in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan by the Prime Minister; in Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Kazakhstan it is governed by the Deputy Prime Minister; in Belarus and Russia it is situated under the Presidential Office; and in Georgia under the Administration of the Government. However, these bodies are coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Trade (Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine); the Ministry of Finance (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), or by specific offices (e.g. the Planning and Innovation Unit in Georgia).

Regardless of the design of these institutions, all include mechanisms to provide reports on SDG indicators. Monitoring and evaluation is frequently seen not as an exercise in reporting but as an active management tool that helps adjust and shape the strategy along the way. The responsibility for this task is assigned to national statistical offices, which appear to be an integral part of national SDG coordination bodies. In 2018, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS Statistical Committee) published the pilot statistical abstract on Monitoring of SDG Indicators in the CIS Region. This brought together data on progress in implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the CIS region.⁵

LRGs were directly or indirectly involved in the process of elaborating the VNR in only a handful of Eurasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Tajikistan). National governments launched awareness-raising campaigns to increase LRGs' and citizens' knowledge about the SDGs and to mobilize and engage them in SDG implementation. In 2017, the national government in Belarus and the UN organized a 'national tour' — UN70 Belarus Express for the Sustainable Development Goals — to popularize the global agenda. As part of this, the Executive Committee Chairman of each region signed a declaration of commitment to the SDGs.

A more detailed look at the national institutional mechanisms shows that only two out of the seven countries that reported to the HLPF involve LRGs into the VNR process. Meanwhile one country conducts only minimal consultations as part of their coordination, and the remaining four do not involve LRGs at all. In Belarus and

Georgia, LRGs are participating in national institutional mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs. In **Georgia**, they are represented in the relevant inter-agency working groups and should contribute to the so-called 'evaluation loop' providing policy advice and adaptation of the SDGs implementation strategy to the local and regional level.⁶

In 2017, Belarus reported to the HLPF on its strategy to align and integrate the SDGs into national, sectoral and regional/local development plans, as well as the expansion of LRG powers in the area of sustainable development activities. These are important elements of the 2030 Agenda to strengthen LRG powers and funds. In Belarus, this position was later reinforced by a shift in development strategies towards a regional approach following the nationwide Conference on Strategies and Partnership for Sustainable Development Goals.

Created in 2018, the National Council for Sustainable Development includes LRG representatives and there is a commitment to build on joint efforts of central and local governments to improve monitoring of SDG implementation. Commitment to localize the SDGs appears to serve as a trigger for decentralization reform in **Belarus**. Indeed, members of the National Council representing regions and the capital city of Minsk are heading up SDG focal groups. These groups, along with local government officials, also include business and civic association representatives. Moreover, future plans include particular attention given to strengthening the capacity of regional SDG groups, introducing national SDG indicators into local-level policy documents, as well as conducting an information campaign in the regions.

In 2017, both **Azerbaijan** and **Tajikistan** planned to integrate the 2030 Agenda in their national and sub-national plans and budget allocations. Both countries recognize the importance of local governments in achieving the SDGs; however, both use a strong top-down approach. An inter-ministerial National Development Council (NDC) was established under both Heads of Government: the Prime Minister in Azerbaijan and the President in Tajikistan.

In Azerbaijan, during the National Conference on Nationalization and Prioritization of the SDGs held in 2018, the Prime Minister stated that local communities were critical partners in policy formulation, implementation and the realization of the 2030 Agenda. In fact, the responsibility for the local implementation of national policy decisions frequently falls on regional and local executive bodies.

In both countries, local governments also have the responsibility of providing statistical data on indicators of the SDG achievements. Indeed, in Tajikistan, local governments are expected

to participate in monitoring and evaluation systems together with relevant branches and territorial bodies of state governance, civil public organizations and commercial structures, as well as development partners. This is in line with a process that involves central ministries, line agencies and the State Statistics Agency.⁷ Moreover, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, as coordinator of the VNR, has held a series of consultations, including with local governments. Still, the implementation of the SDGs at the local level is seen as a major challenge.

As with Azerbaijan, the Deputy Prime Minister heads the National Council for Sustainable Development in Armenia. In Armenia's case, the multi-stakeholder mechanism is responsible for the coordination of SDG implementation. While local governments were not represented, Armenian municipal governments participated indirectly in discussions for the drafting of the 2018 VNR report. On this occasion, it was emphasized that the transition to sustainable practices would be 'hardly possible'⁸ without empowerment of communities and municipalities.

Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan are planning to present their VNRs in 2020. In **Ukraine**, a High-Level Inter-Ministerial Working Group, chaired by the 1st Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development and Trade, has been established. Together with UNDP, the ministry has prepared a preliminary report providing the baseline indicators and benchmarks for Ukraine to achieve the SDGs.⁹ The preparation of this report has followed comprehensive consultations with LRGs — ten regions with 700 participants in 2018 — including local governments and civic organizations. Dnipro and Volyn regions were also selected for regional consultations on the localization of national SDGs.

In **Uzbekistan** the National Commission responsible for the implementation of the NDS 2017-2021 was created in October 2018. This Coordination Council includes the Deputy Chair of the Republican Council for the Coordination of the Activities of Self-Governing Bodies, but thus far no direct participation of local governments has been seen. However, the local government of Karakalpak autonomous region, and the capital city of Tashkent are named among responsible bodies for the implementation of all national SDGs.¹⁰

In **Kyrgyzstan**, the process of national consultations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda started in 2017 to inform the public and involve parties at the national, regional and local self-government level. Consultations were held in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad and at two workshops, representatives of local authorities and other stakeholders learnt about and were called on to intensify their efforts to implement the SDGs. Moreover, two cities have

In Kyrgyzstan, the cities of Bishkek and Osh by governmental decree assumed the function of assisting the Coordination Committee on adaptation, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

been involved in the coordination mechanisms for the SDGs: in 2015, Bishkek and Osh cities by governmental decree assumed the function of assisting the Coordination Committee on adaptation, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.¹¹

Lastly, **Russia** is also planning to submit its first VNR in 2020.¹² In March 2019 following the order of the first deputy prime minister, seventeen working groups (in accordance with 17 SDGs) have been created to prepare the VNR. Due to the efforts of the mayor of the city of Kazan and the president of UCLG EURASIA, representatives of this organization as well as representatives of three national municipal associations were included into five working groups. However, since 2012 an Inter-Agency Working Group under the Presidential Administration has supervised issues relating to climate change and sustainable development.¹³ Moreover, the federal law on strategic planning (2014) stipulates strategies for sustainable development elaborated by regional and municipal governments in line with the medium-term federal development strategy updated every six years (currently until 2024).

In practice, there is strict control over regional and municipal governments' competences. The composition of coordinating bodies reflects the top-down approach to elaborate and follow-up on development strategies.

As a rule, LRGs are not widely represented in national councils and working groups in charge of development strategies. The Council for Strategic Development and National Projects with the Russian Federation President includes only the Moscow city mayor and the governor of Tatarstan (one of Russia's regions). Both an Inter-Agency Working Group on Priority Structural Reforms and Sustainable Economic Growth and an Inter-Agency Working Group on Economic and Social Development of Agglomerations include only two regional representatives. However, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Spatial Development Strategy includes representatives from all 85 Russian regions. Municipalities have no representation in the aforementioned bodies. ○

2.2 Local and regional governments' institutional frameworks in Eurasia region

The countries in Eurasia region have different forms of territorial organization. Meanwhile, the distribution of the population is uneven. In Armenia, Azerbaijan Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, 35%-50% of the total urban population are concentrated in capital cities. These cities usually benefit from an administrative special status. In the remaining countries in the region, the distribution of the urban population is more balanced between large, intermediary and small cities. In Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, it is important to note that intermediary cities are well-dispersed and have been functioning as regional administrative hubs as well as educational and agricultural centres.¹⁴

This particular urban system is the legacy of the restructuring process that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union. The existing administrative structure and local governments system are the legacy of the former USSR. Although the administrative structure is a starting point for establishing a system of local governments throughout the region, differing decentralization processes have led to a more heterogeneous landscape (see Table 2).

Structure of local governments

With the exception of Georgia, all Eurasia region countries are divided into a three-tiered system of sub-national government (SNG) (decentralized) and administration (deconcentrated).

At the highest level are regions (*oblast*), autonomous republics (e.g. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan) and 'cities of national importance'.¹⁵ These are sub-divided into districts and 'cities of regional subordination'. Districts, in turn, include 'cities of district subordination', towns and villages, rural and urban settlements.

In fact, the autonomy of the regional and district governments differs across Eurasia. The organization of sub-national governance often combines deconcentrated and decentralized functions. In many cases, particularly at the regional level, executive bodies are appointed by the central or higher level of government (e.g. regional governments). These bodies are embedded in a 'vertical power structure' and are under the direct supervision of the tier of government directly above them. At the same time, they co-exist with councils or representative bodies elected by citizens. This system is often called the *matryoshka* government (after the Russian doll which consists of several dolls of different sizes one inside the other), and is also later referred to as a 'quasi-decentralized' system.

This dual system of territorial administration — i.e. decentralized representative bodies and deconcentrated administration appointed by the upper level of government — has been the starting point for establishing local governments throughout the Eurasia region. All countries under review appear to be at different stages of decentralization. In Kazakhstan, local self-government bodies only started to function in 2018. Meanwhile in Russia in the 1990s, local self-government bodies already enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. The level of decentralization varies from a highly centralized system in Kazakhstan and Belarus to relatively autonomous local self-government in Armenia and Georgia (at the municipal or district level), to a two-tiered system of local self-government in Russia. In between are states where local self-government bodies exist alongside the quasi-decentralized bodies of the central government (such as in Ukraine and Azerbaijan) (See Table 2).

This dual system of territorial administration is often called the *matryoshka* government. All countries under review appear to be at different stages of decentralization.

Table 2 Eurasia country systems and number of LRGs by tiers

Country	System of government	Territorial organization		
		1 st level	2 nd level	3 rd level
Armenia	Republic/ Unitary	502 cities and rural communities		10 <i>marzers</i>
		Latest election in June 2018		
Azerbaijan	Republic/ Unitary	1,607 municipalities	11 cities, including the capital city of Baku	66 regions
		Latest elections in December 2014	7 administrative districts of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan	The Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan
Belarus	Republic/ Unitary	23,174 rural settlements and villages 24 municipal districts	10 cities of regional subordination 118 districts	6 regions The capital city of Minsk
		1,176 urban settlements and rural councils 14 towns of district subordination		
Latest elections in February 2018				
Georgia	Republic/ Unitary	67 communities 4 self-governing cities (including Batumi) The capital city of Tbilisi (special status)		9 administrative regions
		Latest elections in October 2017		The Autonomous Republic of Adjara
* The Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia: disputed region which is not under the Georgian administration				
Kazakhstan	Republic/ Unitary	34 cities of district significance 6,904 villages and settlements		
		Latest elections in August 2017		
Kyrgyzstan	Republic/ Unitary	453 rural communities 17 cities of district significance	40 districts	7 regions (<i>oblast</i>)
		Latest elections in August 2016	12 cities of regional significance	The cities Bishek and Osh
Latest elections for mayor in 2018 were cancelled				
Russian Federation	Republics/ Federal	19,590 urban and rural settlements	1,784 municipal districts 567 cities	80 regions (republics, oblasts, krais, autonomous okrugs and <i>oblast</i>) 3 cities of national significance, including the capital city
		286 intra-city districts and territories		
Latest elections in December 2014				
Tajikistan	Republic/ Unitary	369 urban and rural settlements	65 cities and districts of both regional and national subordination	4 regions of national subordination 1 autonomous region The capital city of Dushanbe
		Latest elections in February 2010		
Ukraine	Republic/ Unitary	11,030 towns and rural settlements	490 districts 186 cities of regional significance	24 regions The Autonomous Republic of Crimea The capital city Kiev and the city of Sebastopol
		Latest elections in October 2017		
Uzbekistan	Republic/ Unitary	<i>Mahallas</i>	170 districts 30 cities of regional significance 1 city of republican significance	12 regions The republic of Karakalpakstan The capital city of Tashken
		Latest elections in May 2016		

There are two levels of SNG in **Armenia**: regional administrations (*marzers*) and municipal self-governments. The first are deconcentrated executive bodies of the central government. Since 2013, the **Armenian** Ministry of Territorial Administration has initiated a 'community enlargement process' aimed at promoting mergers of small municipalities and minimizing disparities between the regions of Armenia and the capital city of Yerevan. In 2016, as part of a national initiative, 118 former municipalities amalgamated into 15 new municipalities. Importantly, the state-led government of the capital city of Yerevan was dismissed in favour of an elected local self-government body.

In **Azerbaijan**, the system of sub-national governance is asymmetric, with Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic but no other autonomous republics. In the majority of the territory, there are deconcentrated regional and district governments, including the executive body of the capital city of Baku. Since 2009, the number of municipalities, i.e. the decentralized level of self-government, was reduced by 40%. Current legislation only vaguely describes the relationship between the municipalities and local deconcentrated bodies of central government. In reality however, municipal governments appear to be subordinate to the deconcentrated bodies of the central government. The Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, with its own constitution but subordinate to the Azerbaijan national constitution, has only two layers of government: the state government and municipalities.

The Republic of **Belarus** accords, *de jure*, autonomy to local councils; these are *de facto* included in the overall public administration system. Local councils have neither the real authority nor the resources to make and execute

decisions. The Law on Local Government and Self-Governance (2010) has not much altered this situation. This law regulates competence of local councils and of the executive committees of regions, basic (districts) and primary (towns, settlements) levels. According to the law, the regional councils (*oblast*) are superior to the councils at the 'basic and primary' levels and basic-level councils are superior to the councils at the primary level. Executive committees of the upper level of government can cancel the decisions of lower executive bodies if they do not comply with their provisions. To date, Belarus has not signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

There is also an asymmetric structure of sub-national governance in **Georgia**. Two regions have the status of autonomous republics (Adjara and Abkhazia). The other nine regions of the country are deconcentrated administrations. Since 2005, there are local self-governments only at district and city level and mayors have been universally elected since 2014 when the new Code of Local Self-Government was adopted. This code was further amended in 2017, thus reforming state administration and reducing the number of self-governed cities from 12 to five, including the capital city of Tbilisi.

In **Kazakhstan**, the regional and district governments are 'quasi-decentralized'. Indeed, to the extent that local self-governments are elected and hold powers to approve their budgets and issue regulations in the area of their competence, they are decentralized. However, each tier of government is subordinate to the tier above (and the regional governors are appointed by the President) thus decentralization is 'quasi'. Heads of local executive bodies (*akims*) are accountable to those who appoint them. The first elections of *Akims* (of rural communities) were initially in 91% of



Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
(photo: Christopher Michel, bit.ly/2VptrxO).

local governments in 2013. In 2018, communities with the population exceeding 2,000 inhabitants also received budgeting rights (including assigned taxes and spending responsibilities). An extension of budgeting rights to smaller units is planned.

Sub-national administration in **Kyrgyzstan** consists of the municipal layer — village councils (*ayil okhmotus* and *ayil keneshes*) with elected representatives' bodies, and two layers of deconcentrated state administrations: a) districts (*raions*) and cities of regional (*oblast*) significance and b) regions (*oblasts*) and cities of national significance. Besides municipalities, representative bodies exist in the two cities of national significance and cities of regional and district significance. Chief executives (governors/mayors) of regions and districts are appointed by the Prime Minister. Meanwhile in all cities, chief executives are being elected by the representative body (at the behest of the Prime Minister). Municipal mayors are elected by the representative body — at the behest of the chief executive (*akim*) — of the district where they reside.

Russia as a federal state has the following levels of public governance: the federal subjects of Russia (regional governments) and municipalities. The first represents the constituent units of the Russian Federation and enjoys significant fiscal and political autonomy compared with regional governments of other Eurasian states. The federal subjects of Russia set up various models of local self-government within their territories. In most regions, local governments have been established mainly at the level of large cities and districts. In other regions, local self-governments have for the most part been set up at the level of larger cities and rural communities, while other regions have a combination of both (the two-tier model).

Starting in 2006, the two-tier model of local self-governance became obligatory for all regions in accordance with the 2003 Law on General Principles of the Organization of Local Self-Government. Recently, many regional governments have been part of a trend to amalgamate lower tier municipalities.

In **Tajikistan**, sub-national administration can be grouped into three categories. These are local state governments of national subordination (with representative bodies elected by citizens and the executive appointed by central government), including the capital city; local state governments of regional subordination (representative bodies elected by citizens and the executive appointed by the regional government); local self-governments (with a council elected by citizens and the executive by the council).

In **Ukraine**, the fully-fledged local government is structured at the level of cities, townships and rural communities. Bodies of executive power in regions and districts, similar to Kazakhstan and Belarus, are embedded in the deconcentrated

In past years, many reforms have affected SNGs, either strengthening or reducing their autonomy. The major overall trend in the last ten years was enlargement of the size of municipalities, initiated by most central governments.

'vertical power structure'. The central government directly interacts with regions; regions in turn interact with districts and cities, while basic levels of local self-government (towns, settlements and villages) interact only with district-level deconcentrated bodies of state power.

Uzbekistan has a two-tiered system of sub-national governance: regional governments and city governments of national significance and district governments and city governments of regional significance. The executive body (*hokim*) is appointed by the President; meanwhile the councils (*kengash*) are publicly elected. The capital Tashkent has regional status. The Karakalpak Republic enjoys more autonomy. At community level, 'assemblies of citizens' are chaired by an elected local patriarch (*aksaka*) and have some autonomy.

In past years, in Eurasia countries many reforms have affected SNGs, either strengthening or reducing their autonomy. The major overall trend in the last five to ten years was enlargement of the size of municipalities, initiated by most central governments in Eurasian countries (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Russian Federation, and Kyrgyzstan). Among the arguments in favour of such initiatives are a lack of managerial capacity in small-sized local governments and a limited tax base, leading to fiscal inequalities and an inability to provide adequate funding for local public goods. Amalgamation may be viewed simultaneously as a sign of both centralization and decentralization. The process of amalgamation in Eurasian countries has a dual effect. On the one hand, enlargement of municipalities distances local governments from citizens and makes it more difficult for citizens and local governments to participate meaningfully in decision-making over matters to do with their neighbourhoods. On the other hand, small-sized municipalities do not have either the resources or the competences to undertake significant investments (e.g. in water supply or energy provision), or provide socially important public goods (e.g. education, healthcare, social protection); and amalgamation solves these problems. The optimal solution is voluntary associations of municipalities for particular purposes; but central governments often drive and mandate these processes (see Table 3).

Table 3 The key legal/regulatory reforms by country

Country	Reforms in the last ten years
Armenia	<p>2009: Yerevan received the status of local self-governing city.</p> <p>2016: Amalgamated municipalities reduced in number by 11.5%.</p> <p>2018: The central government started to promote inter-municipal cooperation. The draft law provides for establishing inter-municipal unions that will be empowered to perform important functions delegated to them by the central government.</p>
Azerbaijan	<p>2009: Mergers and consolidation of municipalities initiated by the central government reduced their number by 40%.</p>
Belarus	<p>Since 2016: Gradual steps in the direction of strengthening local governance; cities are key actors to integrate the urban economy into national development policies.</p> <p>2018: The central government revealed that preconditions for delegating particular powers to local level are in place.</p>
Georgia	<p>2006: The two-tier system of local self-government replaced by one-tier system (districts and cities).</p> <p>2013: The constitutional reform enshrined self-governments' autonomy in the Constitution.</p> <p>2014: Local Self-Government Code substituted the former Law on Local Self-Governance (reinforcing local participation and direct elections of mayors).</p> <p>2017: Under the initiative of the central government, seven self-governing cities were integrated into self-governing communities and lost their previous status.</p> <p>2018: The parliament and government of Georgia presented a new national vision of decentralization and local self-governance, which increases decision-making powers and financial resources of the regional and local authorities. A new strategy and decentralization roadmap is expected in the near future.</p>
Kazakhstan	<p>2017: First elections to municipal governments at the level of communities were held.</p> <p>2018: The municipal communities with a population exceeding 2,000 inhabitants received budgeting rights (including assigned taxes and spending responsibilities). It is planned that later budgeting rights will be extended to smaller local self-government units as well. Moreover, in 2018 the Parliament took a decision not to introduce direct elections of community mayors (<i>akims of auls</i>).</p>
Kyrgyzstan	<p>2012: Law reform abolished districts, representative bodies (<i>rayon kenesh</i>) making them deconcentrated units; at the same time a process of local self-government mergers and acquisitions was launched with the aim of strengthen LSGs.</p> <p>2018: Direct election of mayors cancelled.</p>
Russian Federation	<p>2012: Direct election of regional governors returned (decision of the regional representative body).</p> <p>2012: Healthcare function centralized from municipal to regional level.</p> <p>2014: Funding for pre-school education centralized from municipal to regional level.</p> <p>2012-2013: The central government significantly reduced the share of taxes assigned to local governments in favor of regional governments in accordance with reassigned responsibilities.</p> <p>2017: Amalgamation of first level municipalities launched.</p>
Tajikistan	<p>2016: National Development Strategy 2030 declared aimed at decentralization of public government, including fiscal decentralization.</p> <p>2017: Local self-government communities (<i>jamoats</i>) assigned their own tax and non-tax revenues.</p>
Ukraine	<p>2014: Law on Voluntary Amalgamation of Territorial Communities adopted.</p> <p>2015-2017: Voluntary municipal mergers followed by fiscal, administrative and political decentralization, complemented by the State Strategy for Regional Development 2015-2020. Between 2015 and January 2019, 4,010 local self-governments merged into 876 unified territorial communities (UTCs).¹⁷</p> <p>2017: First elections of UTC mayors.</p>
Uzbekistan	<p>2017: The Administrative Reform stated the need to strengthen the role of local self-governing bodies and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their role in the system of public administration.</p>

Responsibilities and competences of LRGs and the SDGs

LRGs in Eurasia are responsible for an extensive list of functions and their share of gross domestic product (GDP) at 9.4%, can be quite significant compared with the world average of 8.6%.¹⁶ Although in most Eurasia countries quantitative indicators of decentralized spending seem to be relatively high, in practice LRGs in Eurasian countries have rather limited powers over their expenditure policy. Only in Russia and Kazakhstan are the functions of SNGs distinct from the central government. In other countries, the allocation of functions is somewhat unclear.

Unfunded mandates are a major challenge in Eurasian countries. They appear when the central government delegates some of its functions de jure or de facto to sub-national governments (SNGs) without providing adequate funding (this is the case in Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan). In some countries, unfunded mandates are forbidden by the legislation (Russia, Kazakhstan). However, these provisions are often violated by 'underfunding' of delegated functions.

Generally, SNGs in all countries (whether they are self-governing bodies or deconcentrated bodies of the central government) perform important social and development functions, identified as key priorities for the Eurasia region: general and pre-school education, primary, specialized and general healthcare, housing and amenities, public transportation, urban planning, recreation, economic development and small business support.

Basic services in Eurasia fall roughly into two groups: one encompasses waste management, water supply and sanitation, under the responsibility of LRGs, and the other is heat supply centrally managed by higher tiers of government. The main concern for local governments is their lack of finance to maintain the existing grid or invest in sustainable green infrastructure. Major barriers are linked to the current allocation of responsibilities in Eurasian countries. Maintenance and operation are assigned to the lower level of government, while the entire responsibility for a function stays with the upper level of government. For example, general education and healthcare are the responsibility of the regional or state government, meanwhile maintenance of a school (or hospital) building stays with the municipal government (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia). This dual or joint financial responsibility for a function blurs the role of each party and leads to a lack of real incentive for either party to execute the function in the most efficient way. Thus, the school director appointed and paid for by the upper level of government is not in charge of maintaining the school premises, which falls under the responsibility of the appointed local executive body. This power-sharing scheme has

led to a lack of coordination and malfunctioning of public facilities and public services.

Similar examples relate to construction and maintenance of roads infrastructure. The construction of said infrastructure is the responsibility of the central government, meanwhile maintenance is the function of lower levels of government (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia). These functional responsibilities demonstrate that implementing the 2030 Agenda appears to be a responsibility shared by all levels of government but, as has been previously described, the assignment of responsibilities and definition of national strategies are predominantly top-down in the region. In this hierarchical control system, the bottom-up process is limited to administrative reporting which undermines the efficiency of implementation and often prevents citizens' involvement. All countries have developed to different degrees, legal frameworks for citizen participation, but this is often limited to security, and the right to access information, rather than actively taking part in the decision-making process.

Preventing the deterioration of the urban infrastructure is a main priority, particularly since the cost of this will only grow if it is delayed until sometime. Sound, transparent and accountable management of local resources and accessing long-term financing is crucial as has been highlighted in previous reports.

Financing of local governments

The following section analyses domestic public resource mobilization by SNGs. Based on available data, regional governments in many Eurasia countries play quite a significant role as investors as compared with central governments. In Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, SNG represent 40% of general government (GG) expenditure. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, they make up about one third of total expenditure, followed by Ukraine (26%). In both groups of countries in particular sectors (education, healthcare, housing), the share of SNG spending amounts to 70%-80% of GG expenditure. In Georgia, it accounts for 18% of general government spending, while in Kyrgyzstan and Armenia it represents respectively 10% and 9%. In Azerbaijan, the role and spending of local governments is minimal (see Figure 1).

The dual or joint financial responsibility led to a lack of coordination and malfunctioning of public facilities and public services.

All local governments in Eurasia countries are legally responsible for tax revenues. These are sub-divided into own and shared taxes. The most common tax is a property tax, which combines land tax and personal property tax. In most Eurasian countries, property tax is administered at the local level. In Belarus however, the property tax is a national tax redistributed within a shared tax system.¹⁸ The small share of local taxes in local budgets reveals the limited autonomy of local governments. The ratio ranges between 3%-8% in Ukraine, Russia and Tajikistan, and 15%-20% in Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

Local governments remain highly dependent on the central budget. A majority of municipal resources rely on shared taxes and intergovernmental transfers (grants). In all countries, shared taxes have increased considerably in importance among sources of local governments' revenues: up to 20%-36% of total revenues in Armenia and Ukraine; 40%-50% in Georgia and Russia, and 60%-80% in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and Tajikistan. In Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia, each level of SNG receives a fixed part of national shared taxes. This is established in the budgetary legislation. In other countries, sharing rates may differ from year to year, which makes local budgeting unpredictable and intergovernmental relations non-transparent.¹⁹

Equalizing grants are the second most important source of local government revenue after shared taxes. Eurasian countries municipalities receive two major types of grants: equalizing (or general purpose) and targeted (or special purpose). Grants may have the function of balancing current expenditures and revenues or are aimed only at capital expenditures. In some countries, a lower share of grants in SNG revenue can be observed. It is important to consider that in these countries, shared taxes have replaced the purpose of the equalizing grants.

Russia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine allocate equalizing grants to local governments in accordance with the nationally approved and publicly available equalization formula. Kazakhstan is the only country where nominal amounts of equalizing grants have been established for each local government for three consecutive years by the national law. On the contrary, in Belarus, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, grants for balancing

local expenditures and revenues are negotiated between local governments and the national Ministry of Finance as the difference between 'expenditure needs' and estimated revenues of a local government in a coming fiscal year.

Targeted grants in Russia, Georgia, Armenia and some other countries provide funding for delegated responsibilities. Special purpose transfers can also be provided in case of emergency (natural, environmental and other disasters, military actions, epidemics and other emergencies) or other special purpose unforeseen local government needs (in the case of Georgia, for example). Grants are provided to local governments on co-financing terms to raise their awareness of the importance of particular local programmes (Russia, Azerbaijan). Capital transfers provide earmarked funding for selected investment projects.

Direct investments, in particular, range from 3.2% in Russia to 30% in Kazakhstan and 32% in Georgia. As a rule, in the region, regional governments with financial autonomy usually account for a higher level of direct investment. Local governments only play a significant role in development projects in Georgia. The low proportion of direct investment in Russia can be explained by the fact that the central government over recent years mandated the growth of SNG employees' wages. This explains why Russian SNGs currently only invest the resources provided through capital grants from the upper level of government (the amount of capital grants equals the amount of direct investments). In other countries, capital grants do not exceed 50% of investments, varying from 4% in Armenia to 43% in Georgia. Ukraine (16%), Belarus (28%) and Kazakhstan (36%) sit in the middle. Other countries do not provide special purpose capital grants to local governments.

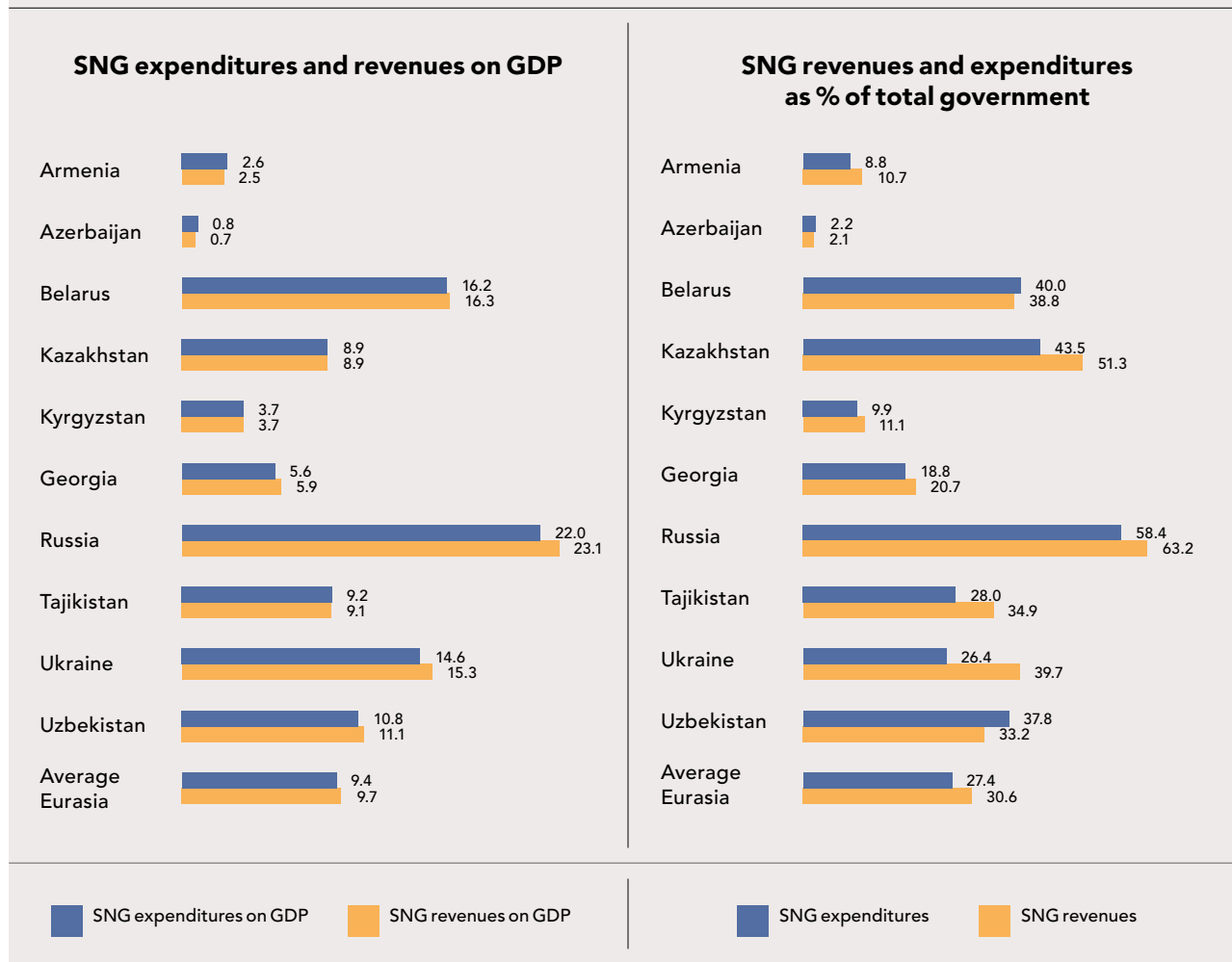
In Eurasian countries, capital cities are the largest investors. Thus, Moscow government investments comprise 35% of total Russian SNGs' investments²⁰ (while the Moscow population represents only 9% of the Russian population). In Tajikistan, about 20% of capital expenditure at the local level is by Dushanbe city (while its population makes up only about 10% of the total population).²¹ This trend is also true for other countries.

Together with capital grants, local investments are funded from SNGs own resources (including equalization grants) and/or loans. Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia provide legal rights to local governments to borrow on financial markets within the limits established by national legislation.²² In Armenia and Azerbaijan there are no formal restrictions on local borrowing, however low fiscal capacity prevents municipalities from attracting loans on the market. Armenia is set to adopt the national

Average figures of SNG finance conceal the problem of economic and fiscal disparity of localities within Eurasian countries.

Figure 1

Revenues and expenditures of SNG (% of GDP and % of total government, 2016)




law on municipal bonds, which might make local borrowing more accessible for communities (which is the case with Kyrgyzstan). Other countries restrict local borrowing only to central government loans. These loans often perform the function of an additional grant: although as a rule, their maturity should not exceed one fiscal year, in some cases, they may be prolonged or even written off. This instrument undermines the transparency of intergovernmental fiscal relations, which was the reason why Georgia got rid of it completely recently.

While the fiscal autonomy of SNGs in Eurasian countries appears to be limited, central governments guarantee increased available resources or investments into social infrastructure through direct investments. However, average figures conceal the problem of economic and fiscal disparity of localities within particular Eurasian countries. Thus in Russia there is an 18-fold gap in per capita regional fiscal resources

after the allocation of equalization grants, while in Tajikistan this gap is eight-fold, and in Kazakhstan (one of the lowest gaps) two-fold.²³

To summarize the information presented in this section, most SNGs in the Eurasia region have quite substantial budgets and investment capacities even compared with some national budgets. The exceptions are local governments in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Russian local governments are currently surviving the debt crisis due to a centrally mandated wage rise for government employees and some additional expenditures imposed by the federal government. However, the budget balance has been gradually improving over the last two years. 

2.3 Multilevel governance relations for the implementation of the global agendas

As noted above, the common feature of SDG implementation in Eurasian countries has been the persistence of a largely top-down approach. Local development plans, for instance, are generally elaborated within the framework of national strategies. Moreover, the central government delivers methodological assistance and coordinates (or even approves) sub-national development strategies. It also provides grants for strategy implementation. Furthermore, international donor organizations and agencies often play an essential role as far as financial assistance to project implementation is concerned.

Award ceremony for the "Champions of Civil Society" in Minsk, Belarus, 2018 (photo: Viasna Pravaabaron y Centr, t.ly/eYzON).



Decades of centralized and planned economy established an artificial system of spatial allocation of both industries and the workforce across Eurasian countries, which quickly proved to be non-viable within an open market environment. The massive economic transformation that followed the dismantlement of the planned economy led inevitably to the reallocation of people, generally and between urban and rural areas. The impact on urban and territorial planning was notable. In the Eurasian context, efficiency criteria had made it normal for larger cities to locate industrial zones at the core of the urban space. This had significant impact on quality of life, safety and health, not to mention the availability of public space and recreational and common areas. Growing market prices of urban land triggered a process of post-industrial conversion. This also led to the removal of hazardous industries and areas from city centres, with new opportunities for planning diversification at the core of urban life. Ultimately, the transition to a market economy made Eurasian countries rethink urban policy and planning in a way much more consistent with the global challenges of today's urban development.

Moreover, in all Eurasian countries, urban and spatial planning is regulated directly by national governments' acts, regulations and laws. Countries such as Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan adopted urban development codes as the regulatory instrument of choice. Others established laws that regulate architectural and urban development and construction. In most countries, however, the role of both local government and civil society in the actual planning of urban development is quite limited with neither having a clear or formal role or power in the process. Civil society has rarely been actively engaged in the decision-making process and generally top-down approaches are dominant.

Nevertheless, the global agendas have to some extent managed to trickle down into strategic documents and planning in most Eurasian countries. At least five countries, for example, sent national reports to Habitat III in preparation for the New Urban Agenda: Armenia in 2014; Belarus and Kyrgyzstan in 2015; and

Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in 2016. However, these reports show a substantial lack of collaboration and involvement between the national and local government(s) with regard to urban development and decision-making.²⁴

Some countries have formally addressed these gaps. **Belarus**, for example, technically engages all three levels of government in the implementation of the country's urban policy, which itself is designed according to the principles of the New Urban Agenda. However, the real impact of decisions made at the local level is relatively weak since all local development plans must be approved by the specialized bodies of the central government. The centralized administrative system reduces the ability of cities to adapt development plans to rapidly changing social, economic, and environmental conditions.

Moreover, the persistent financial dependence of the local level of government on transfers and assistance from the centre are ultimately an obstacle to effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda's or the SDGs' principles and objectives. The particular territorial organization of the Eurasian region has also had an impact on how development policy plays out in the area. Central governments have applied several anti-crisis measures. Many of these explicitly support what are known as the 'city-forming enterprises', i.e. those economic activities that become a city's main 'taxpayer' and 'employer', thus developing a direct link with the community's actual survival. This sort of mutual bond has allowed many smaller urban settlements to maintain a fairly even economic performance, without sacrificing the delivery of basic public and social services. Similarly, the Belarusian government has tried to enhance development in medium and intermediary cities across the country: the central government has created tax benefits opportunities to attract investors, enterprises and jobs in specific urban areas. The Habitat III report of Belarus, however, admits that there is still much work to be done. Decentralization and the empowerment of LRGs are essential to improve the efficiency of urban development planning and strategies. The country needs to define and regulate clear roles, power devolution and political responsibilities of each SNG level, before they can have an impact on the way urban development and planning are done in Belarus.

The situation is not dissimilar in Central-Asian republics. **Kazakhstan's** urban development policy and power distribution are centralized and unified. National legislation still imposes strict controls on local initiatives and implementation, even with regards to city and territorial planning and development. Regional and urban development plans with national significance must be exclusively carried out by a (limited) number of state-controlled organizations and agencies. In

the case of Kazakhstan, however, growing interest at the grassroots of civil society in fairer and more empowering planning at the local level has raised the profile of a more decentralized urban development process — with the aim to make it more clearly connected to and in accordance with local priorities and needs.

Kyrgyzstan's Habitat III national report of 2015 highlighted the national commitments made in line with the principles that were eventually to become the backbone of the New Urban Agenda. Since then, the national government approved a Strategy for Regional Development, which acknowledges the subsidiarity principle and discusses the decentralization of public governance, providing incentives for economic social development to local self-government bodies. These commitments notwithstanding, urban policy implementation in Kyrgyzstan is still a top-down process. The national government maintains large powers in the identification of territories of potential growth, the elaboration of their development strategies, and the definition of investment support and execution of the plans. This 'selective' process is consistent with the national government's strategy of reducing fiscal equalization among local governments, while overtly supporting cities and regions with higher growth rates, thus almost institutionalizing an unequal territorial development.

Urban development policy and implementation is also centralized in **Tajikistan**. Urban and regional plans must be designed within the framework of strict national regulation and legislation. The technical elaboration of plans and strategies is even monopolized by a national state-owned agency (*Shahrofar*), though this does at least work in collaboration with the local governments involved — even though their actual responsibilities are confined to a mere provision of information necessary to the implementation of plans. Better-faring regions are expected to pay for the *Shahrofar's* services themselves; weaker or lagging regions are assisted by the central government to (partially or totally) cover the costs. This mechanism has been at the core of urban development plans put into practice by over 30 Tajik countries in the last few years. **Uzbekistan** has been attentive to issues of regional and urban development, in a

The centralized administrative system reduces the ability of cities to adapt development plans to rapidly changing social, economic, and environmental conditions.

The persistent financial dependence of the local level of government on transfers and assistance from the centre are ultimately an obstacle to effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda's or the SDGs' principles and objectives.

particular way. On the one hand, as in the rest of the Eurasian region, the national government has always centralized the elaboration of the development plans as well as its financing for implementation. Territorial development strategies, moreover, have only loosely adapted to the values and principles of the global agendas, be they the SDGs or the New Urban Agenda. On the other hand, the government has also paid special attention to economic development of the territories involved, focusing on investment in public infrastructure (roads, engineering, etc.) and direct support to the state-owned enterprises located in 'selected' cities with the potential to trigger even more spill-over development in their territories.

In line with the top-down approach in government administration traditional to **Russia**, regional development policy is centralized and has to follow the national spatial development strategy (being updated currently) that provides for improving the spatial population placement and the priorities for locating the industries. The instruments for regional development include special economic zones, territories of advanced development, regional development zones, territorial clusters, urban agglomerations. respective policy documents at the levels of Subjects of the Russian Federation and municipal entities. Regional governments in turn develop detailed development strategies, which are meant to take into account proposals of municipal governments concerning the allocation of local businesses, social, transport and communal infrastructure.²⁵ With regard to urban policies, over the past few years, the federal government has focused on the elaboration and implementation of strategies designed specifically for single-industry towns, identified as the most vulnerable segment of the country's urban system. Larger (and relatively successful) cities have not attracted the interest of the federal government. Ultimately, the approach adopted by both the federal and regional governments is 'paternalistic', to the extent that urban and territorial development is sustained via targeted transfers to cities or agglomerations able to work as 'engines of

growth' territorially, and by tracking the spending and investment of such funds. As part of a larger and generally more complex country, cities and towns in Russia have nevertheless been more proactive in the design and implementation of their own urban development plans, and some have gone so far as to try and sustain the costs of implementation themselves. Since 2018, a significant number of cities have started to update their urban strategies, shifting the time horizon to 2030. Indeed, many of these urban strategies are compatible with the National Urban Agenda and its principles.

Operating within the federal structure of the country, regional development strategies at the level of federated republics are ultimately subjected to the approval of the federal Ministry for Economic Development; but municipal bodies and governments are fully responsible for their own plans. Federal and regional governments are even arranging competitions among municipalities to select the best urban strategies. Kynel, Stary Oskol and Kyrovo-Chepetsk were the winners of the latest edition of the nationwide Competition of Municipal Strategies in 2018.²⁶ Winners of this kind of initiative generally receive financial aid and institutional coordination to implement their awarded strategies.²⁷

The state of decentralization and multilevel organization varies slightly more in the Caucasus countries. In **Armenia**, a process of decentralization of urban development policy began in 2011 when the final approval of urban strategic documents transferred from the central to the municipal level. Nevertheless, before they enter into force, urban development acts still require the agreement of a number of central government-led bodies and agencies. The country's Habitat III report looked forward to the decentralization of the elaboration of community development programmes designed to contribute to the improvement of local self-government. Currently, 42 out of 49 urban communities and 30 out of 866 rural communities have adopted their development plans.

In **Azerbaijan**, on the other hand, urban planning policy is again structurally centralized. The national government developed and implemented a National Programme on Socio-Economic Development of Regions for 2014-2018, and this envisages the development of inter-regional, city and intra-district transport infrastructure. Similarly, the government curated another large-scale urban development project with the Baku White City initiative via a presidential decree. Decentralization in the country is more a case of wishful thinking on the part of the central government which is more aware of the potential role of local governments (rather than their actual role) in citywide and regional economic development. At the same time, the roles and



Downtown Tbilisi, Georgia
(photo: Jelger, bit.ly/31ZJhBJ).

competences of local government units in the implementation of development projects remain deliberately unclear.

Finally, **Georgia** is particularly interesting in this regard since it shows a form of ‘competition’ between the local and national level. On the one hand, the organization of the system already means that LRGs have the final say over urban development strategies. But on the other, since the mid-2000s, the central government has grown into a major player. The central level is behind many development projects, most of which have taken place in and dramatically changed the capital city. The Tbilisi government recently prepared a new City Development Strategy towards 2030, and aligned it with the principles and goals of the New Urban Agenda. Marking a new phase in the balance of power between the different levels, city councils have recently won the jurisdiction to examine *national* urban development plans before they formally launch. The 2018-2021 Regional Development Programme of Georgia²⁸ recently adopted by the central government also updated regional and urban policy development goals. These envisage cooperation between urban municipalities for the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks to encourage, develop and implement integrated projects. The programme will involve municipal governments, with a focus on the potential role of larger cities as ‘hubs’ for inter-municipal projects in their metropolitan areas — with a significant

impact on the development of fairer urban-rural partnerships.

Finally, **Ukraine** presents a slightly more cooperative cross-level institutional mechanism. Urban development planning has to comply with the principles of the 2007 Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities and does not require any coordination with agencies or units of the national government. Many Ukrainian cities — building especially on effective collaboration between NGOs, civil society and local governments — have been able to develop their own plans, often with the financial and strategic assistance of international donor organizations. While the increase in local autonomy allowed by this mechanism is noteworthy, the lack of institutional ties to the central government has exposed many of the local plans to issues to do with their long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness. [📍](#)

The Tbilisi government recently prepared a new City Development Strategy towards 2030, and aligned it with the principles and goals of the New Urban Agenda.

3. The contribution of local and regional governments to the localization of the SDGs

As indicated in the Introduction, LRGs in Eurasia have been implementing initiatives related to the different dimensions of the SDGs. One of the main challenges for LRGs in the Eurasia region after the break-up of the Soviet Union was to restore and improve local services provision and urban utilities to ensure wellbeing in local communities and environmental protection.

It is important to recall that during the 1990s, many governments were unable to continue providing the same level of public services at no cost or at non-market prices. As a result, utility assets were not renovated, which resulted in the deterioration of the quality of public services. Low salaries caused the outflow of health professionals and teachers, water supply services became unsustainable in many cities and facilities for waste water treatment and solid waste disposal stopped working. Local heat services were discontinued in many cities of the Caucasus and Central Asia, including in capital cities.²⁹

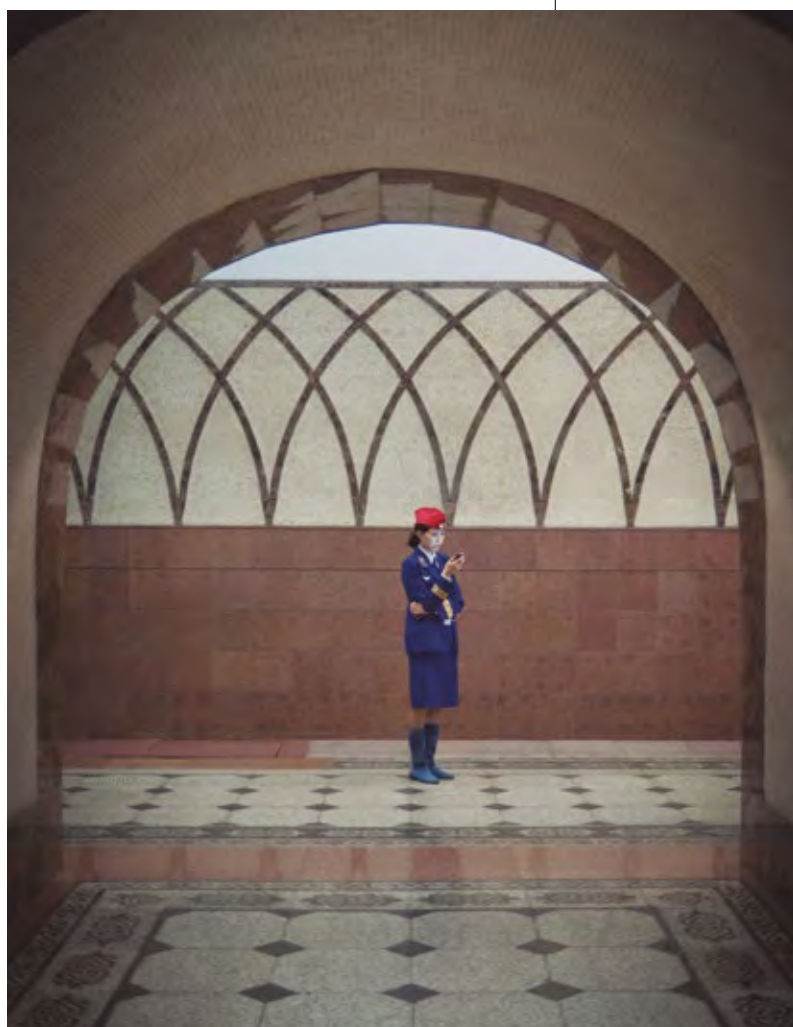
Other critical challenges faced by LRGs in the region include an increase in territorial inequalities, problems related to urban management and environmental challenges. The reforms of the 1990s provoked strong polarization and created a huge gap in the level of economic development between the central and the peripheral areas. In past years, larger cities and the dynamic regions that surround them have concentrated most investments, becoming key hubs for transport, trade, entrepreneurship, modern technology, and innovation, and enjoying diversified and agglomerative economies. In less-developed countries, their capitals also concentrate a substantial share of national budget transfers and, as a consequence, attract a great deal of national wealth and investment. On the other hand, regions outside these dynamic areas have lost population and attractiveness and many of their intermediate cities are shrinking, pushing the youth and most qualified persons to migrate.³⁰

At the same time, centralized policies and top-down approaches continue to weaken the efficiency of local governments and hinder citizens' involvement in local decision-making. Through national development programmes, central governments exercise a strong control over LRGs. Though these programmes are usually supported by fiscal grants, often such central-level initiatives create unfunded or partially funded mandates for LRGs. However, cities and regions also implement

a broad range of initiatives independently and, taking into consideration their limited budgets, strive to do this in a more efficient manner.

This section will analyse the role of LRGS in raising awareness of the global agendas and will show examples of LRG initiatives that contribute to tackling the challenges of sustainable development and urban development in their countries. [🔗](#)

A staffer at a metro station in Almaty, Kazakhstan (photo: Marco Fieber, bit.ly/2AXzPmq).



3.1 How local and regional governments and their associations and networks contribute to creating awareness and promoting ownership of the SDGs

The following examples show how Eurasian local governments and their networks can and do act as levers for sustainable development and improve the quality of life of their cities and communities. LGAs have only been established and are functioning in half of Eurasian countries. These include the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia; the Association of Small Towns of Ukraine;³¹ and the All-Ukrainian Association of Local Self-Government Councils, the Association of Villages and the Association of Towns of Kyrgyzstan; as well as several municipal associations in Russia, such as the all-Russian Congress of Municipalities³² and the Council of Local Self-Government;³³ the Union of Russian Cities;³⁴ the Union of Small Cities³⁵ and the Association of Small and Medium Cities of Russia³⁶ — as well as many regional Russian associations. In Belarus there are no LGAs yet, although in December 2018 the Belarus Parliament, in partnership with the Council of Europe, conducted a seminar to discuss the establishment of local councils associations. There is also the UCLG regional section — UCLG Eurasia — which brings together many of these associations as well as cities from across the region.

In 1998, an international association called the Assembly of Capital and Large Cities was created to promote capacity-building amongst local governments. This unites the cities of almost all the CIS countries: 55 cities in Russia, 11 in Kazakhstan, ten in Ukraine, four in Belarus, three in Georgia, two in Kyrgyzstan, one in Tajikistan and one in

Armenia. The association's priority activities are the implementation of projects and programmes aimed at sustainable urban development. The City-to-City Programme is designed to promote peer-to-peer learning and experience exchange through integration and cooperation in the field of sustainable development.

In spite of the limited presence of LGAs in Eurasia, region-wide initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable development and creating ownership of the SDGs amongst local stakeholders are becoming increasingly significant. National and international LGAs and networks play quite a significant role in this respect, contributing to the implementation of SDGs at the local level. In 2016, city members of the Association of Small and Medium Cities of Russia issued a joint statement on energy efficiency and sustainable development that was a good example of SDG ownership.³⁷ The statement demonstrates the commitment of cities in Russia, particularly in relation to SDGs 7 and 11, and reflects the cities' vision that sustainable urban development leads to sustainable economic development, increasing the availability, competitiveness and reliability of energy supply and preserving the environment. In October 2018, the Eurasian section of UCLG held the Eurasia Local Governments Congress with the objective of raising awareness of the SDGs among local authorities, involving them in SDG implementation and providing them with capacity-building support. The event was attended by representatives of ten countries and over 70 cities, as well as by LGAs and international experts. The Congress served as a platform where local and regional leaders exchanged their experiences and best practices regarding SDG implementation. An important part of the Congress was a training seminar on SDG localization for municipalities and LGAs, with the objective of providing training to experts who would then continue to raise awareness of the importance of the SDGs to local and regional authorities.³⁸

LGA initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable development and creating SDG local ownership are increasingly significant.

Also in 2018, the II Climate Forum of Russian Cities was held in Moscow to raise awareness of the need for urgent action towards climate adaptation.³⁹ The Forum brought together delegations from 36 Russian regions and the republics of Kalmykia and Komi and the Karelia, Kaluga, Murmansk and Tula regions presented their eco-strategies, as well as regional practices for the development of natural territories and technological solutions for climate conservation. The Forum plans to become a permanent platform for the exchange of best practices on the path to sustainable urban development.


In some countries, efforts to raise awareness of the importance of the SDGs open up spaces for dialogue beyond government institutions. In Russia for instance, the urgency to realize the SDGs and the role of LRGs therein attracts the attention of the academic community. In February 2018, a conference entitled 'SDGs Adaptation to Conditions and Priorities of Russian Cities and Towns' was organized under a joint initiative of the Union of Russian Cities and the Higher School of Economics. The conference brought together key stakeholders to discuss opportunities to integrate SDGs into cities' and regions' strategic documents, as well as the prospects for establishing a statistical data system to monitor SDGs and their implementation in Russian educational programmes. Participants discussed integration of the SDGs into sustainable development strategies at the regional and municipal levels. They stressed the need to ensure the incorporation of SDG indicators into cities' development strategies, management and reporting systems.⁴⁰ Similarly, in October 2018, St. Petersburg hosted the conference 'Urban and Regional Resilience: Strategies for Success'.

Actions to promote environmental sustainability developed as part of a framework of regional initiatives at the broader European level are also gaining importance in the region. On 22-23 November 2018, Kiev hosted a large regional conference on 'Municipalities for Sustainable Growth', organized jointly by the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy⁴¹ and Mayors for Economic Growth. This provided an opportunity to explore the nexus between climate, energy and economic development, and discuss future perspectives of EU support to sustainable growth at the local level.⁴² Over 350 representatives of local and national authorities, LGAs and other stakeholders from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine participated in the event. The commitment to reach the overall CO₂ emission reduction target was expressed by 99 local governments in Ukraine, five in Georgia, 29 in Belarus, ten in Armenia, one in Azerbaijan.⁴³

To represent the interests of LRGs before national governments and international institutions in support of localization, in June



2017 in Kiev, Ukraine, the national associations of local authorities of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine signed the Memorandum of Understanding to unite efforts to build better and responsible local governments and demonstrate the strong commitment to stand firmly at the forefront of local democracy.

The signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding was organized by the Partnership for Good Governance programme (2015-2017), supported by the Council of Europe. Other signatories are Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus.⁴⁴ Development of alliances and partnerships between local governments of neighbouring countries can be observed in the design and implementation of the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation (EaPTC) programmes over 2016-2017.⁴⁵ The overall objective of these programmes is to enhance sustainable territorial cooperation between border regions, with the aim of benefiting their social and economic development. EaPTC programmes address issues of local and regional development, such as environment, employment, public health and other fields of common interest. Armenian-Georgian cooperation within the EaPTC Programme has significantly improved the countries' mutual understanding by involving local communities of the border regions in a multi-cultural dialogue, breaking stereotypes and building trust amongst the neighbouring communities.⁴⁶ Eurasian local governments are also developing alliances and partnerships with other international stakeholders in support of SDG localization. The capital city of Georgia, Tbilisi, demonstrated a bottom-up initiative on sustainable development by joining the 100 Resilient Cities programme. Of all Eastern European and Post-Soviet cities, Tbilisi is the first to be included in this network and will receive financial support and technical expertise to develop and implement its resilience strategy.⁴⁷ 

Armenia, with the support of UNDP, has established its own National Disaster Observatory in Yerevan to support risk prevention and mitigation policies (photo: UNDP-Armenia, bit.ly/33e4Aj7).

3.2 Local and regional government driven initiatives to localize the SDGs

As mentioned in the Introduction, LRGs in Eurasian countries have been carrying out initiatives that have contributed to the localization of the SDGs. This section provides an overview of significant efforts that LRGs are making to respond to the challenges faced in the region, particularly in terms of improving public services, promoting sustainable economic development, addressing increasing territorial inequalities and facing pressing environmental challenges. In most of the countries in the region, LRGs' efforts towards implementing the SDGs are being supported by international organizations through technical assistance and co-funding.

LRGs' initiatives to align the SDGs with local development plans

LRG-driven initiatives that respond to the main challenges in the region contribute *de facto* to the localization of the SDGs, even if LRGs may not always be aware of the global agendas. The challenges they tackle are described in city development strategies that have to be elaborated in accordance with national legislation in most Eurasian countries. Most of the goals contained in LRG strategies can be grouped into three categories, which closely correlate with the SDGs. Firstly, they relate to human development, e.g. the need to promote job creation, overcome poverty, grant a basic level of welfare or provide social protection through targeted social assistance to socially vulnerable groups. They also include the challenges of providing education for disabled children, promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting socially oriented non-profit organizations to ensure 'no one is left behind' (SDGs 1, 4, 11).

Secondly, local strategies reflect the need to improve the urban environment, including the elimination of emergency and dilapidated housing, of adapting apartment and administrative buildings with devices for disabled people, as well as the reconstruction of worn-out water supply networks, sewage treatment plants and central heating system and the introduction of energy-saving technologies (SDGs 11, 6, 7).

Lastly, plans reflect the need to adopt an innovative approach to city development that yields liveable, people-oriented cities, including heritage preservation, the creation of public space, the reduction of industrial activities and traffic in the city centre and improvement of urban sanitation systems (SDG 11).

In Armenia, for instance, all municipalities design and adopt their development plans, such as Yerevan's 2019-2023 Development Strategy (adopted in 2018).⁴⁸ In Belarus, the strategies for sustainable development have been developed for all six regions and for quite a number of cities and districts, e.g. Minsk's 2020 Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development (adopted in 2005),⁴⁹ and Vitebsk region's 2025 Development Strategy (adopted in 2015).⁵⁰ Minsk's strategic objective in particular is based on the 'Five cities in one' formula. This implies five development priorities towards the achievement of the SDGs: 'City of Health and High Social Standards' (SDG 3), 'City of Knowledge and Scientific Technologies' (SDG 9), 'City Attractive for Entrepreneurship and Investment' (SDG 8), 'City of International Communications' (SDG 17), 'City of Smart Living and Communication with Citizens' (SDG 16).⁵¹

Most LRGs in Russia have also adopted local development plans, e.g. Kaluga City's 2030 Development Strategy adopted in 2011 and most recently amended in 2018.⁵² In Kazakhstan, city governments are required to develop their own urban development programmes for five-year terms, as is the case in Ukraine, where regions and larger cities also aim to design their own development strategies, e.g. Odessa City's 2022 Development Strategy (adopted in 2013).⁵³ Other examples of local sustainable development strategies include Almaty's 2020 Development Strategy in Kazakhstan, (adopted in 2017),⁵⁴ Rustavi's Action Plan for Sustainable Energy

Local strategies reflect the need to improve the urban environment, including housing, water supply networks, sewage treatment plants and central heating system.

Development in Georgia (adopted in 2012),⁵⁵ Tashkent-2025: Transformation in Uzbekistan,⁵⁶ or Bishkek's 2014-2018 Development Strategy in Kyrgyzstan (adopted in 2013).⁵⁷ These local plans take into account sustainable development principles and have been drawn up by working groups with the participation of NGOs and civil society in countries such as Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. In the case of Bishkek's development strategy, for instance, more than 20 focus groups were organized with citizens, leaders of NGOs, local communities' committees, representatives of business, youth, healthcare and educational institutions, among other stakeholders.

The role of LRGs in advancing inclusive policies to ensure 'no one is left behind' ['People']

As already mentioned, LRGs in the Eurasian region are taking steps to address human development challenges that hinder their populations' life opportunities and pose fundamental threats to their dignity and rights. Aware of the interconnectedness of such challenges, the city of Kazan in Russia, for example, is adopting a holistic approach to promoting sustainability in its territory through complementary initiatives that address sustainability's different dimensions. Initiatives are articulated around three lines of action that address SDGs 3 and 11. Firstly, the 'Embracing Diversity' initiative seeks to celebrate and enhance city's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic heritage. The initiative's outcomes include the creation of an online tool to map the localization of the SDGs in the city and the region, as well as the House of Friendship of Nations which provides libraries, conferences and concert facilities (SDG 11). Secondly, the 'Environmental Development' Initiative seeks to ensure universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green public spaces (SDG 11) and thirdly, the 'Healthy City' Initiative seeks to support healthy lifestyles by promoting healthy food for children and modernizing healthcare facilities and building sports facilities (SDG 3).

In Russia, for example, the cities of Kaluga and Yakutsk are directly contributing to SDG 1 by implementing social policies to tackle poverty in their territories. In Kaluga, 1,200 large families were granted free ownership of land for housing construction and more than 20 types of allowances and compensations are being paid to families with children, while in Yakutsk, Russia's coldest city, the municipal government initiated a volunteer campaign to collect and deliver essential survival goods to people in need.

LRGs in the region also carry out responsibilities with regards to the provision of healthcare. The city of Rostov-on-Don, for example, is contributing to SDG 3 having established ten healthcare centres attended by more than 100,000 people per year.⁵⁸

The centres' aim is to promote healthy lifestyles and allow more than 50,000 people to undergo screening tests each year. In the city of Nur-Sultan, in Kazakhstan, 51 outpatient clinics will be opened as part of the project 'Doctor near the House'. The aim of the project is provide citizens with access to medical services within a 20-minute walking distance. Outpatient clinics will provide basic medical help: vaccination, medical certificates, day hospitals, ultrasound or ECG among other services.⁵⁹ In Ukraine, the city of Odessa is also implementing initiatives in the area of healthcare in the framework of its 2022 development strategy. Such initiatives range from launching a family medical system and implementing a programme for emergency medical care to the construction of an emergency hospital, the reconstruction of the city's children's hospital and the improvement of facilities and their capacities (providing equipment to the newly established city perinatal centre and introducing a unified information system of electronic registration and electronic medical records).

Eurasian LRGs are also making inroads towards the achievement of SDG 4, providing educational opportunities for the different life stages of their populations in accordance with territorial challenges. In Tajikistan, for example, the low coverage of early childhood education services remains a major area of concern. To tackle this issue, LRGs are particularly involved in the construction of pre-school facilities in their territories. An example can be found in the city of Penjikent, where the local government has

Residents of Rostov-on-Don on the shore of the Don River (photo: Victor Dubilier, t.ly/jz8Rb).



opened a three-stored kindergarten in 2019. This will provide pre-school education to 200 children and, by city government initiative, training will be conducted in three languages.

In Uzbekistan, local governments also contribute to the improvement of infrastructures for early childhood and other community amenities by building local government centres (*mahalla*) with support from the national government's territorial programmes for the period 2017-2021. Similarly, the local government of Kaluga is committed to ensuring access to education for all. Over the last decade, access for children with disabilities has been provided in 42 schools and, with the assistance from regional and federal governments, more than 2,000 citizens have been able to move into adequate housing from emergency and dilapidated shelter. The newly developed housing areas have been provided with engineering infrastructure, public transportation, schools and kindergartens. Faced with a significant outflow of school graduates, the local government of the city of Ulyanovsk, in Russia, has created the WorldSkills Junior Center for Improvement and Skills Development, aimed at providing early vocational guidance and vocational training for schoolchildren aged between ten and 17. This is seen as an initiative that will contribute to promoting local employment that is aligned with local realities.

Regarding SDG 5, LRGs in Eurasian countries are seeking to consolidate and promote the advances achieved in gender equality. It is interesting to note that, across the region, women's representation is higher the lower the level of government.⁶⁰ In Ukraine, for example, the number of female mayors is higher at the village level (32%) than it is at the city (18.1%) and regional (15%) level. Contrasts exist among the different territories in the region, however. In Belarus, more than 30% of local self-government bodies are headed by female mayors, while in Armenia, progress has only recently been made. According to the Armenian Electoral Code, the ratio of genders has to be 30 (female) to 70 (male) in the national and local party lists. Yet it was only in October 2018 that Ms. Diana Gasparyan won the mayoral election in Armenia's Etchmiadzin city and became the country's first female mayor.⁶¹ In Uzbekistan, mayors (*hokims*) are still all male, yet since the introduction of the 30% female quota for political parties' lists of candidates, the proportion of women in parliament has increased from 9.4% in 2004 to 16% in 2017, while female councillors represent 23% of local councils. Action is also being taken to improve gender discrimination with respect to job opportunities. The city of Rostov-on-Don, in Russia, is implementing a set of initiatives aimed at creating the environment for women to combine child-raising with their career, as well as organizing vocational training

for women who are on maternity leave. In Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the local government has developed the nationally recognized Women and Business Incubator Centre (WBC), which provides technical assistance, training, personalized advice, and financial consultancy services for women. This also offers a co-working space with a playroom for children to reconcile maternity with career development and employment opportunities.⁶²

Towards prosperous and inclusive local development: local employment, infrastructure and service provision

Eurasian LRGs are undertaking a variety of projects aimed at improving cities' infrastructures and built environment to make the provision of public utilities better and enhance populations' life standards and opportunities. Such initiatives are the response of local governments to the challenges that need to be overcome to advance sustainable development, and thus contribute to the localization of the SDGs although oftentimes they may not be explicitly identified in such terms. The city of Tbilisi, for instance, faces many such challenges, including aging and failure of city infrastructure (SDG 9), inadequate public transportation system (SDG 11), poor air quality (SDG 13), unemployment (SDG 8), and flooding, landslides and earthquakes (SDG 15). Its response is membership of the 100 Resilient Cities initiative that proposes an integrated approach to environmental, social and economic problems to facilitate improvements of cities' resilience against natural disasters and helps to make the response to for example high levels of unemployment, ineffective transportation system and endemic violence (SDGs 8, 11 and 16) more efficient.⁶³ The city has instituted new job training programmes that have already engaged over 60,000 residents, while a government-supported loan programme has taken steps to encourage small business growth (SDG 8).

In an effort to promote local employment opportunities and support their inhabitants' life opportunities, LRGs are proposing a variety of initiatives adapted to the particular unemployment problems in their territories. For instance, the city of Ulyanovsk, in Russia, is focusing on improving conditions for the development of entrepreneurship in the city by implementing a programme to increase the number of small and medium-sized businesses: grants were given to entrepreneurs, free training seminars on business issues were held and special support was provided to innovative projects. As a result, small and medium enterprises increased by more than 2,500 in six months, as did the number of employees in such enterprises. Similarly, the Republic of Tatarstan, also in Russia, has been supporting business projects aimed at economic

growth and jobs creation over the last decade. Among them is a project launched in 2018 by Northern Niva of Tatarstan private company aimed at construction of three dairy farms for 12,100 dairy cows in Bugulma rural district. The project aims to ensure full employment for the rural population, which includes more than 300 rural residents.⁶⁴ Those already listed and the majority of Eurasian local development strategies include the goals of decent work and economic growth as fundamental pillars.

In Kazakhstan, the UN's community development programmes in East Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda, Mangystau and Aktobe are excellent channels of assistance related to the implementation of SDGs at the sub-national level. This is supported by the Ministry of Investment and Development as the key national government agency to create and manage the special economic zones (SEZs) of Kazakhstan which are located in particular cities. Currently there are ten SEZs in the country, including, for example, the SEZ Ontustik located in Shymkent city and aimed at developing textile industry or the SEZ Pavlodar located in Pavlodar city and created to develop petrochemical industry.⁶⁵

Concerned with its communities' prosperity, in the city of Yakutsk in Russia, the municipal government has put in place an integrated strategy for city development with a strong focus on the role played by urban infrastructure and utilities, effectively mirroring the complexity and inter-relatedness of the sustainable development challenges and Goals. It also provided funding for transforming dilapidated buildings, to reduce temporary resettlements by expanding the housing stock (SDGs 10 and 11) and is developing an SEZ to attract investments and increase employment opportunities in accordance with the city's 2032 development strategy (SDG 8).⁶⁶ Similarly, over the period 2014-2017 and with the assistance of UNDP and the Russian Federation, nine of Tajikistan's most vulnerable districts implemented over 50 priority initiatives embedded into new and updated district development programmes. These initiatives were aimed at improving inhabitants' employment opportunities in the districts, as well as at reinforcing local authorities' capacity to support local economic development (SDGs 8 and 17).⁶⁷ Also with assistance from the Russian Federation and UNDP, local governments in the Naryn and Osh regions in Kyrgyzstan have implemented a wide range of initiatives to improve infrastructures and living conditions in their territories (SDGs 8, 9, 11). Local governments in the Naryn region built 53 irrigation canals, which gave access to drinking water to 25,000 people and approximately 2,000 people gained access to uninterrupted power supply. In the framework of an integrated regional development approach, roads were repaired, 13 villages were granted access to modern

veterinary services and 84 small enterprises and four vocational schools were opened in the region. Furthermore, during 2014-2015, LRGs in another seven Kyrgyz regions improved hygiene infrastructures in more than 150 educational and medical institutions, in which water supply, sinks and water heaters were installed, together with toilets and hygiene rooms for women and girls (SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 6). These activities have been supported by UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programme and implemented jointly with the Russian Federation.⁶⁸

LRGs's commitment to improving infrastructure and services is also serving as a catalyst to enhance citizen participation in city-making decision processes and thus, empower citizens to actively shape the future of their own city,⁶⁹ as is the case with the Community-Based Approach to Local Development Programme (CBA) in Ukraine. This promotes sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development at the local level by strengthening participatory governance and fostering community-based initiatives, thereby laying the foundation for successful implementation of decentralization and regional policy reforms and thus contributing to the achievement of SDG 11. Within the CBA framework, Ukrainian local authorities, community organizations and private sector actors plan and carry out joint projects to improve the living conditions of people in disadvantaged urban and rural areas. Almost 4,000 local development initiatives have been implemented since 2008, including the construction of 810 schools and kindergartens, the renovation of 708 health posts, and the development of 157 water supply schemes. Moreover, 18 environmental and 1,044 energy-saving projects were launched and 64 agricultural service cooperatives were founded. Local development resource centres were established in 201 districts and 27 municipalities have been expanded to provide service hubs for community-based development.⁷⁰

Another remarkable example comes from the city government of Almaty, Kazakhstan, where a project based on participatory land planning and upgrading of city grounds was launched. The local government engaged the city's residents

LRGs' commitment to improving infrastructure and services is also serving as a catalyst to enhance citizen participation in city-making decision processes and thus, empower citizens to actively shape the future of their own city.

in the decision-making process regarding the future of disused and abandoned parts of the city, such as the Almaty tram depot, to make these zones into people-oriented public spaces. The city of Rustavi, in Georgia, has undertaken several initiatives to enhance multi-stakeholder cooperation and design a more inclusive local public governance scheme. Rustavi's local government has translated the successful national public innovation, ServiceLab,⁷¹ into the city's local governance structure.

Among its first initiatives, in 2018, the city launched a collaborative design workshop, which brought together citizens, public servants, architects and students to design the new space for Citizen Service Halls, to be built in 2019.⁷² Due to its proximity to the capital, Tbilisi, Rustavi is increasingly becoming a commuter city, with citizens travelling to the capital for jobs and entertainment. To reverse this trend, the local government is seeking to turn Rustavi into a 'City of Innovations', developing the local economy and attracting new investors, engaging citizens in co-designing public services and creating a better living standard for Rustavi's inhabitants. With such a purpose, the city also launched an innovation hub in 2018, which includes a collection of methodological tools to support policy-makers in developing resilient and forward-looking strategies. The hub works to articulate a vision for the city towards 2050 and creates strategies, services, and processes that catalyse change to fulfil this vision while simultaneously encouraging citizens to take part in the localization of the SDGs 8, 9, 11. In a similar vein, the first online platform 'Smart Urban' in Russia was launched in the city of Novosibirsk. Through this online service, international companies, citizens and experts may offer their ideas and projects to address pressing urban problems in four categories: transport and communications, architecture and residential buildings, ecology, and culture and art.⁷³

Local action and cooperation to promote environmental sustainability, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation ['Planet']

In the area of climate action, LRGs in Eurasian countries have been implementing a range of different initiatives to adapt to and mitigate the consequences of climate change, such as flooding, degradation of forest resources and pastures, including inappropriate tree harvest for fuel wood and timber, and over-grazing of livestock. These include projects in the area of ecosystems and biodiversity, water, forests, agriculture and energy, infrastructure and waste management, which link to a number of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement goals.

LRGs in Central Asia are directing significant efforts at forest protection, and reforestation in particular. A notable example is the Sustainable Land and Forest Management project in 11 districts in northwestern Azerbaijan implemented by local governments over 2013-2018 with the assistance of UNDP. District governments' actions are aimed at mitigating climate change by managing natural forests, emphasizing the importance of promoting natural regeneration through improved grazing and wood collecting in forests.⁷⁴ The Green Bishkek project implemented by the city of Bishkek, for instance, seeks to contribute to the implementation of SDG 11 by expanding the existing park area and creating new green areas in the city. The aim of the project was not only to create a new green zone, but also to slow down the process of soil erosion,⁷⁵ which was achieved through planting 90 seedlings of rare trees on the embankment zone of the Ala-Archa River with the support of business structures. As a consequence of the shrinkage of the Aral Sea, and within the framework of the Forest Protection and Reforestation project (2007–2015), local administration of the Kyzylorda region guarantees the continuity of a project initiated by the Government of Kazakhshtan, the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility, that developed a forest nursery and research station for sexual seed propagation/reproduction. Between 2015 and 2018, the Kyzylorda region administration planted 20,000 hectares using this method. A total of 61,000 hectares of the Aral seabed have thus been covered with vegetation. Consequently, the sandstorms that carried toxic waste from the lakebed and buried communities' houses are starting to recede as propagated trees' roots fix the lakebed's ground.⁷⁶

Equally, local governments are taking action to support the provision of affordable and clean energy (SDG 7). For example, signatories of the Covenant of Mayors, such as the city of Lviv and the association known as 'Energy Effective Cities of Ukraine', organizes 'Energy Days' each year to enhance citizens' awareness of the necessity to create a safe energy-efficient future; and familiarize them with the main provisions of the 2020 Sustainable Energy Action Plan.⁷⁷

The Tbilisi government undertook the modernization of public transport aimed at reducing its environmental impact by optimizing bus routes, introducing thorough technical check-ups of vehicles, and renovating the municipality's service cars with smaller low fuel-consuming automobiles.⁷⁸ In Armenia, 18 municipalities have committed to developing sustainable energy action plans (SEAPs).⁷⁹ Rustavi's (Georgia) 2020 Action Plan for Sustainable Energy Development until 2020 includes actions such as the insulation of buildings and the use of energy-efficient lamps, as well as the installation of solar collectors in

kindergartens to produce hot water, building a new energy-efficient social hostel for 12 socially vulnerable families, and replacing street and traffic lights with energy efficient lights.

Moreover, the city is adopting an energy sustainability strategy based on the importance of urban renewal to enhance energetic efficiency, and replacing and repairing residential buildings' frames, roofs, insulation, doors and windows. The city government will grant one energy-efficient light bulb per family in some targeted houses.⁸⁰ In Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, solar collectors were installed at two city boiler houses to reduce air pollution and improve the city's environmental situation. A main advantage of solar power plants is that they require almost no maintenance and attention from the operating enterprise thus saving on operational costs and in turn electricity costs for citizens. This contributes also to the energetic poverty component of SDG 1. The initiative was launched by the city government and implemented by the municipal enterprise, Bishkek Heating and Energy, co-funded by the Environmental Protection Fund.

The issue of municipal waste management has become increasingly urgent for Eurasian local governments over the last decade and indeed is present in the majority of SNG development strategies that consequently contribute to the realization of SDG 15. Yerevan's 2019-2023 Strategy for example, involves the creation of a solid waste management system and the promotion of a waste recycling culture. Similarly, the city of Tashkent (Uzbekistan) launched the programme 'Hashar Week' in March 2019, to promote domestic waste sorting amongst its citizens. At the end of the week, prizes were awarded for best garbage sorting.⁸¹ Moreover, 21 of the city's garbage collection sites began admitting only sorted waste. In 2018, Rostov-on-Don's city administration, together with the ecological NGO *Poryadok* and joint stock company 'Rostov secondary recycling', undertook actions aimed at promoting separate garbage collection. As a result, more than 27 tonnes of solid domestic waste were collected.⁸² In Kyrgyzstan, self-government bodies of rural settlements are concerned with the problem of garbage removal and accordingly, the Kum-Dobinsky municipal government prioritized the creation of a municipal garbage disposal enterprise within its action plan.⁸³ In Belarus, the issue of waste treatment has become particularly pressing for the country's capital and its surroundings. The Puchavi y District, located near Minsk, suffered greatly from unauthorized solid waste dumps which contaminated the environment. As a response, Puchavi y's local government launched a project with the objective of improving environmental conditions in the district.⁸⁴ The local government developed a three-year municipal waste treatment

The issue of municipal waste management has become increasingly urgent for Eurasian local governments over the last decade.

strategy (2016-2018), which included the establishment of a system for collecting electrical and electronic equipment and the elimination of unauthorized dumps. It also entailed large-scale awareness-raising efforts aimed at bringing the attention of the local community to the importance of properly managing waste.

DRR initiatives and local strategies to mainstream climate change adaptation into broader development plans are also starting to emerge in the region. For instance, to protect the city of Almaty (Kazakhstan) against mudflow, the city government and its subsidiary enterprise applied a new method of pumping water from the surface of the lake in the mountains which causes the mudflow. The innovation allowed the manifold reduction of the volume of water in the lake basin. Moreover, two new mudflow dams were built and one reconstructed, and rock slopes were reinforced on dangerous sections of the road.⁸⁵ A particularly notable example of mainstreaming resilience strategies into local development planning is that of the city of Stepanavan. The city, which is in one of Armenia's most earthquake-prone territories, took the lead in promoting a disaster-resilient development plan at the local level.⁸⁶ Using the Local Government Self-Assessment Tool (LGSAT) provided by the Making Cities Resilient campaign, a City Resilience Task Force was created to assess Stepanavan's disaster resilience, which identified gaps in the city's management capacities and developed a detailed action plan based on the LGSAT assessment results. The plan was created at a workshop convened by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Education and Training Institute (GETI) and later mainstreamed into the citywide development plan.

The Kaluga Region, moreover, is implementing the project 'Tarusa - Russia's first eco-city', winner of the aforementioned II Climate Forum of Russian Cities.⁸⁷ This is based on the principles of integrated development, looking to strike a balance between the protection and development of the existing urban ecosystem, economy, society and nature. 

4. Conclusions

The commitment to reach the SDGs, and the approach to their implementation, differs from country to country in the Eurasia region. Seven countries have already submitted their VNRs to the UN and four more are planning to do so in 2020.

As in all other regions, **LRGs in Eurasian countries carried out responsibilities related to the different areas of the SDGs**, long before the Goals were formally adopted by the international community. Generally, SNGs in Eurasia (whether they are self-governing bodies or deconcentrated bodies of the central government) perform important social and development functions relating directly to the SDGs and identified as key priorities for the Eurasia region. These are to reduce poverty, ensure prosperity and environmental sustainability and include general and pre-school education, primary, specialized and general healthcare, housing and utilities, public transportation, affordable energy, urban planning, recreation and cultural activities, economic development and small business support, environmental protection and resilience, among others. Nevertheless, the implementation of particular SDGs appears to be a new challenge for LRGs in Eurasia region (SDGs 8, 9, 12, 13, 16). The application of the 2030 Agenda generally seems to be a shared responsibility of all levels of government, but LRGs play the most important role in the process.

However, in Eurasia region a **top-down approach to SDG implementation is largely dominant**. Local development plans are situated within the framework of national strategies. The central government delivers methodological assistance and coordinates or approves sub-national development strategies as well as providing grants for implementation of these strategies.

The activity and initiatives of local governments in achieving the SDGs are closely linked to the degree of political decentralization in the country. This is corroborated by examples of local-level initiatives to localize the SDGs in Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan (see Section 3.2). The different geographic, climatic, economic, demographic and ethnographic characteristics across regions of the country impel LRGs to find their own and original approaches to the implementation of their tasks, even when mandated by the national government. Similarly, local governments, especially when they are elected, cannot efficiently carry out their tasks in SDG implementation without involving civil

society and local business, which in turn would have an impact on local performance. This is being observed in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia, Russia and Ukraine.

The major obstacle for Eurasian LRGs in contributing to the implementation of the SDGs seems to be the generally low level of local resources, in particular in Tajikistan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The other problem facing SDG localization in Eurasian countries seems to be an unclear division of powers between different levels of government (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Ukraine). In most of these countries, this problem is recognized and the central governments make efforts to clarify assignment of spending powers. No less important for decentralization and SDG localization is the limited availability of stable and predictable revenue assignment and transparent fiscal grants allocation. This problem concerns an even larger number of Eurasian countries (adding Armenia and Kyrgyzstan): only a small portion of local revenue sources are provided to local governments on a regular basis, while a major part are distributed through irregular and non-transparent rules. This leads to uncertainty about the fiscal capacity of local governments to provide funding to initiatives aimed at sustainable development.

The experiences in this chapter show LRGs in the region are very interested in increasing the economic and social efficiency of their tasks while achieving sustainable development, but that they need a revision of current frameworks to strengthen local governance and local institutions accountability to do so.

The improvement of intergovernmental fiscal relations, which is the basis of the decentralization process and necessary for the localization of the SDGs, should cover all three components in Eurasia: the delimitation of competences and expenditure powers; endowing local governments with their own tax resources on a stable basis; and establishing a clear, transparent and predictable distribution of fiscal transfers. Russia and Kazakhstan have made some steps in this direction with positive results.

The overall trend in intergovernmental relations in Eurasian countries over the last five to ten years was the occurrence of mergers and enlargement of municipalities' size, initiated by central governments in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Russia and Kyrgyzstan. Among arguments in favour of these initiatives are the

lack of managerial capacities in small-sized local governments, the limited tax base, which leads to fiscal inequalities, and the inability to provide adequate funding for local public goods provision. The process of amalgamation in Eurasian countries has had dual effects.

On the one hand, enlargement of municipalities distances local governments from citizens and makes it more difficult for them to participate in decision-making over matters to do with their neighbourhoods. On the other, small-sized municipalities do not have the resources nor the competences to undertake significant investments (in water supply or energy provision), or provide socially important public goods (education, healthcare, social protection). Meanwhile amalgamation results in economies of scale in spending public funds that contribute to solving these problems. However, even in the larger self-governing cities, local taxes contribute only a small share of the local resources needed to carry out local responsibilities.

The implementation of the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and the other global agendas, affects the organization of national-sub-national institutional and political relationships in Eurasian countries. A few countries have involved local governments in high-level mechanisms of coordination for the implementation of the SDGs (Belarus and Georgia). The common feature for Eurasian countries is that national governments recognize that local governments have significant responsibilities with regards to the implementation of the SDGs. Although LRGs in Eurasian countries acquire sufficient expertise to carry out the tasks to achieve the SDGs, in most countries it is assumed that their role is mostly to implement the goals and initiatives determined by the central government. Because of this, close attention is paid by national governments to ensure the inclusion of the regional/local executive bodies in the action plans for SDGs. Local governments are also assigned with the responsibility to provide statistical data on indicators of SDGs achievement.

One of the cross-cutting issues of the SDGs is to promote a new governance approach. The Goals bring a paradigm shift in governance as an integrated framework, calling for whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. The policy of achieving the SDGs *per se* makes it clear to central governments that they need to endow local governments with greater responsibility for implementing the SDGs at the local level, but at the same time, give them greater autonomy. As an example, in Belarus, the commitment to localize the SDGs appears to serve as a catalyst for decentralization reform. The meeting of the National Coordination Council in June 2018 confirmed a shift in development strategies approach and placed more accent on regional development. Likewise, in Kazakhstan

and Kyrgyzstan, Development Strategies for the 2030 Horizon call for strategic steps towards decentralization.

Furthermore, **localization of the SDGs makes the dialogue between government and civil society a necessary condition to implement the SDGs most efficiently.** There is a need for more innovative and transformative policies, with more visionary local leaders and more civil society involvement to ensure a new path for more sustainable urban and territorial development. Thus, in recent years, in quite a number of countries (Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan), local sustainable development strategies were elaborated by working groups with the participation of NGOs and the most proactive civil society activists.

International cooperation and exchanges between LRGs play a critical role. In all countries (besides Russia), LRGs' SDG implementation efforts are being supported by international organizations through technical assistance and co-funding. As the UN's development arm, UNDP has a key role to play in supporting countries in Eurasia region to achieve the SDGs. These countries have greatly benefited from financial and technical support from international financial organizations, as well as from the international donor community. Regional and international decentralized cooperation through peer-to-peer exchanges and platforms for knowledge-sharing could act as levers to support the localization of the SDGs in the region.

Although this is an important prerequisite for LRGs to become the owners of the SDG localization process, there are challenges that must still be addressed by national governments to make this a reality. These are further decentralization; increased fiscal autonomy and more transparent intergovernmental fiscal relations; reduced top-down and excessively paternalistic approaches to intergovernmental relations; reduced extreme economic disparity between regions and localities to promote a more balanced regional development; and equalization in access to basic public services. LRGs in turn need to strengthen their position in relation to central governments, at the same time maintaining their responsibility and accountability to their citizens. ☉

The common feature of Eurasian countries is the recognition by national governments of LRGs' significant responsibilities with regards to the implementation of the SDGs.

04



Europe

Regional chapter



Brussels, Belgium (photo: William Murphy, t.ly/0X6jX)

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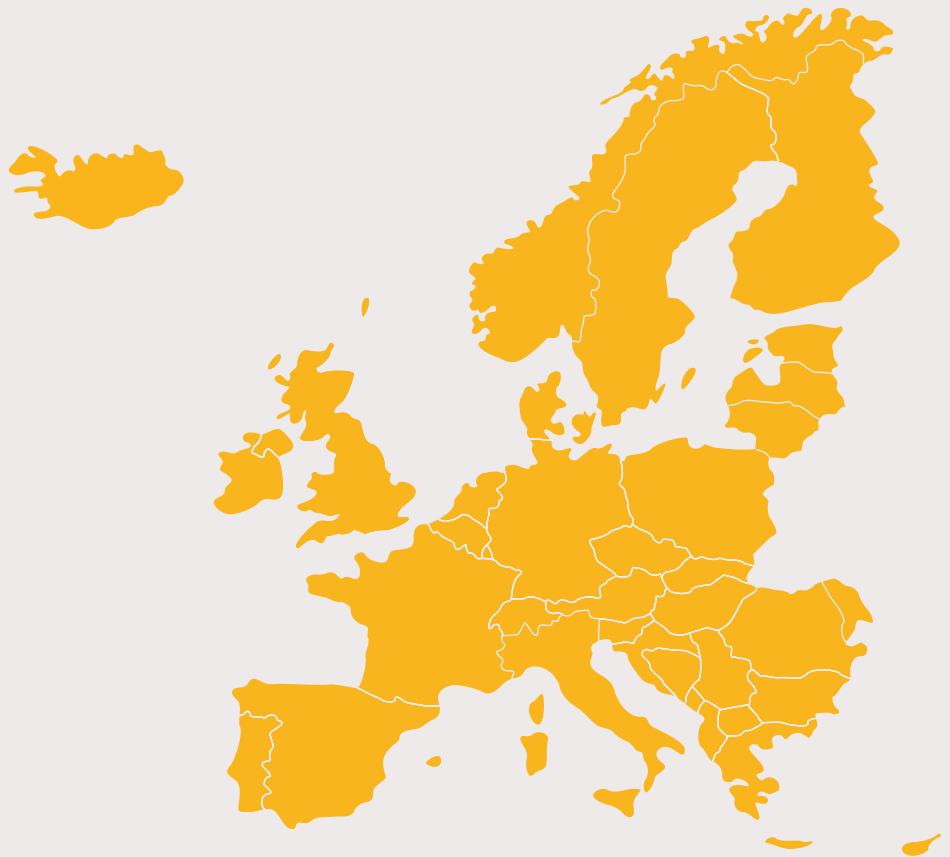
3.1. Local government associations' and regional networks' actions to support local ownership of the SDGs

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Europe

Albania	Liechtenstein
Andorra	Lithuania
Austria	Luxembourg
Belgium	Malta
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Moldova
Bulgaria	Monaco
Croatia	Montenegro
Cyprus	Netherlands
Czech Republic	Northern Macedonia
Denmark	Norway
Estonia	Poland
Finland	Portugal
France	Romania
Germany	San Marino
Greece	Serbia
Hungary	Slovakia
Iceland	Slovenia
Ireland	Spain
Italy	Sweden
Latvia	Switzerland
	United Kingdom

1. Introduction

The current situation in Europe is affected by the core strategies and policies adopted over the past few years by nearly all the countries in the region, as well as by the European Union (EU). Despite the economic recovery that has been taking place following the 2008-2009 global crisis, some territories in Europe are still struggling to catch up. Territorial and socio-economic inequalities in the region are growing, fuelling social unrest and political developments that have led to institutional changes within the countries in Europe and have compromised the influence of many EU institutions. The result of the British referendum that initiated the 'Brexit' process is one of these critical manifestations of unrest. Migratory policies are creating huge controversy among European countries, while the social mobilization of the 'yellow vests' in France was perceived as the protest of people living in peripheries who feel they 'have been left behind'. At the same time, to fulfil its commitments on climate change and biodiversity, Europe needs to accelerate implementation. Moreover, at the sub-national level, local and regional governments (LRGs) are still finding it difficult to recover the level of investment they had before the crisis, which is hindering their capacity to respond to new challenges. These new challenges include mitigation of climate change, impacts of new technologies, increasing social demands — such as the housing crisis and increasing precariousness — or adaptation to aging population in most countries.

Europe, and particularly Western Europe, is the third most urbanized region of the world after North America and Latin America.¹ Detailed information of urbanization trends in the 28 EU Member States provided by Eurostat highlights that in 2016, cities made up 59% of EU total population, accounting for 68% of EU gross national product (GDP) and providing 62% of EU employment.² It also means that 41% are non-urban inhabitants and that specific policies are needed in order to address territorial imbalance.³

This chapter looks at the situation of LRGs in Europe with particular reference to the extent to which they are actively engaged in the implementation of sustainable policies and especially in the localization of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as other key global targets, for example on climate change.

The chapter analyses both the national enabling environments for SDG implementation, decentralization trends and the current situation of LRGs in Europe, drawing on a range of statistical data from the last ten years. It also explores the emergence of what are termed 'cooperative multilevel partnerships' at both national and EU levels. It then reviews detailed LRG contributions to SDG localization, citing examples at local, regional, national and EU level. Finally, some broad conclusions and lessons are drawn and some recommendations proposed to boost SDG implementation and localization in Europe. ☉

Londonderry, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom (photo: PLACE Built Environment Centre, t.ly/800DP).



2. National and local institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

2.1 National institutional frameworks

European countries have committed to implement the 2030 Agenda, and other key global pacts agreed since 2015-2016 (notably the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Financing for Development, and the New Urban Agenda). The 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs are therefore a potential 'game changer' for achieving policy coherence across governments by establishing national SDG implementation frameworks through SDG localization by LRGs.


Thirty-seven European countries submitted Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) between 2016 and 2019, and they have expressed their political commitments to implement the 2030 Agenda. Many are in the process of aligning national strategic frameworks to the SDGs (see Table 1 and related endnote for the full list of countries that reported to the HLPF).⁴

Institutional mechanisms for SDG implementation

National SDG coordinating mechanisms have been established or designated in European countries. These can either be new mechanisms created for SDG monitoring, or existing bodies or ministries, such as Commissions on Sustainable Development. Many countries place the coordination mechanism at the centre of government, at the Head of State or Prime Minister's Office, for example. Most coordinating mechanisms are inter-ministerial, to encourage policy coherence across governments, given that the SDGs affect most governmental ministries' policies. They also sometimes entail multi-stakeholder engagement, including LRGs and their representative associations (see Table 1).

Finland has one of the most developed institutional structures for SDG implementation, involving a National Commission on Sustainable Development, with LRG representation, chaired by the Prime Ministers' Office, an Inter-ministerial Coordination Secretariat, a Development Policy Committee in Parliament, and an Interdisciplinary Sustainable Development Expert Panel. In

France, there is a High-Level Commissioner for Sustainable Development under the authority of the Prime Minister, located within the Ministry of Environment, in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since April 2018, a High-Level Steering Committee for the SDGs is in charge of developing a roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs. This committee includes representatives of LRG organizations.

In Germany, there is a State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development, a Parliamentary Advisory Council and a German Council for Sustainable Development (dating back to 2001). Switzerland has an Inter-Departmental Sustainable Development Committee and National 2030 Agenda Working Group. Similar coordinating mechanisms exist in most other European countries, as shown in Table 1. In a number of instances, such as in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, well-established procedures for consultation ensure effective dialogue and involvement. Research undertaken by UCLG however indicates that LRGs are only formally represented in (or consulted by) national SDG mechanisms in 20 countries to date (over 37 countries that reported to the HLPF between 2016 and 2019), and in many of these only on multi-stakeholder advisory committees, and not the main policy commissions or intergovernmental structures.⁵ In Spain, for example, in February 2019, the national government created a National Commission for the 2030 Agenda as a specific mechanism to ensure cooperation with LRGs (see also Section 3.1).⁶ 

In a number of instances, such as in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, well-established procedures for consultation ensure effective dialogue and involvement of LRG representatives and local stakeholders.

Table 1 National strategies for integrating SDGs, coordination mechanisms and LRG participation

Albania

Inter-ministerial Committee on SDGs chaired by Deputy Prime Minister (multi-stakeholder); inter-institutional technical working groups support the implementation (liaise with local governments). National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020 (NSDI II) closely aligned with SDGs.

Andorra

Council of Ministers oversees the implementation. Coordination: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The 2030 Agenda integrated in Andorra's policies and plans.

Austria (Federal)

The liaison office of the *Länder* is involved with the Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs in developing a Three-Year Programme 2019-21 that incorporates the SDGs. It will report in 2020.

Belgium (Federal)

Inter-ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development led by Ministry of Sustainable Development; Inter-departmental Commission for Sustainable Development (coordination between federal administration) and Federal Council for Sustainable Development (regions represented). In Wallonia an independent SD advisory unit was set up in 2013 within the Walloon administration. In Flanders a specific working group on sustainable development is guiding the translation of the SDGs into goals relevant for Flemish policy and to further their implementation. The local government association, VVSG, is represented in the Flemish Council for Sustainable Development as well as involved on an ad hoc basis. In the Brussels-Capital Region, new legislation concerning development aid was adopted in the summer of 2017. The Long-Term Vision Statement for the Belgian 2030 outlook as well as the three regional strategies (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels-Capital) and German community) are aligned with the SDG.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federal)

Intergovernmental SDGs Rollout Working Group. SDG Rollout Roadmap (document) developed. A consultation process during 2018 – 'Imagine 2030' - will be finalized in 2019.

Bulgaria

Council for Development, chaired by the Prime Minister; Coordinating Committee for the National Programme for Development (not specifically for SDGs). SDGs aligned with National Programme for Development: Bulgaria 2020. It will report in 2020.

Croatia

National Council for Sustainable Development chaired by the Prime Minister, includes local government organizations (LGAs). The 2030 National Development Strategy will be adopted in 2020.

Cyprus

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and inter-ministerial contact group. SDGs incorporated in the Action Plan for Growth and the National Reform Programme.

Czech Republic

Government Council on Sustainable Development chaired by the Prime Minister (advisory). Coordination: Office of the Government and the Ministry of Environment. LRGs represented in the Council. SDGs integrated in the Czech Republic 2030 Strategic Framework.

Denmark

Inter-ministerial group led by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; formal agreement with municipalities/region to implement SDGs including with Local Government Denmark (LGDK) and Danish regions. In 2017, the government launched a National Action Plan containing 37 national targets on SDG implementation as well as a new strategy for international development cooperation and humanitarian action titled "The World 2030".

Estonia

Inter-ministerial working group on sustainable development led by Government Office Strategy Unit and Sustainable Development Commission (includes association of cities/municipalities). 'Sustainable Estonia 21' close to the SDGs.

Finland

Two representatives each from the regions, cities and municipal administrations sit on the National Commission on Sustainable Development chaired by the Prime Minister. SDG alignment at national and local level. SDG implementation strategy includes 'The Finland we want by 2050 – Society's commitment to sustainable development'

France

Office of Commissioner-General for Sustainable Development (within the Ministry of Environment) and the High-Level Steering Committee for Sustainable Development (CPHN, multi-stakeholder). The National Strategy for Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Development 2015-2020 (SNTEDD). In April 2018, a High-Level Steering Committee for the SDGs was created to develop a roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs.

Germany (Federal)

State Secretaries Committee for Sustainable Development led by Federal Chancellery; Council for Sustainable Development; extensive engagement with states and local government on preparation of its renewed Sustainable Development Strategy; LRGs participate in Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Sustainable Urban Development. SDG alignment under NSDS 2017.

Greece

General Secretariat of the Government, in particular its Office of Coordination, Institutional, International and European Affairs (OCIIEA); inter-ministerial coordination network; Economic and Social Committee (with LRG participation). National Growth Strategy and National Priorities for SDGs (2018). National Implementation Plan will follow in 2019.

Hungary

National Council for Sustainable Development, chaired by the Speaker of the Parliament (multi-stakeholder), supported by a Secretariat and four working committees; Inter-ministerial Coordinative Committee for International Development Cooperation. SDGs aligned within the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development (NFSSD) 2012-2024 (adopted in 2013).

Iceland

Inter-ministerial working group involving all ministries, including the Association of Local Authorities and Statistics Iceland. The representative of the Prime Minister's Office is chairman of the group and the Foreign Ministry's representative vice-chairman. SDGs linked to the government's five-year fiscal strategy.

Ireland

Minister of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Senior Official Group chaired by the Prime Minister; National Sustainable Development Unit and SDG Inter-departmental Working Group; National SDG Stakeholders Forum including local government. SDG National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 and Project Ireland 2040 composed two documents: National Planning Framework to 2040 and National Development Plan 2018-2027.

Italy

Prime Minister coordinates, supported by the Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance. National Forum for Sustainable Development (multi-stakeholder). Regional government involved. SDGs aligned with NSDS 2017-2030.

Latvia

Cross-Sectoral Coordinating Centre (CSCC) led by the Prime Minister (LRGs consulted), and National Development Council. In preparation for the 2018 VNR, the CSCC had a working group in which the national LGA was represented. SDGs aligned with the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvia 2030) and the National Development Plan 2020 (NDP2020).

Liechtenstein

Interdisciplinary working group led by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture. SDGs integrated in the 2017–2021 Government Programme.

Lithuania

National Commission for Sustainable Development chaired by the Prime Minister (advisory, multi-stakeholder). Coordination is overseen by the Ministry of Environment and inter-institutional working group on sustainable development. SDGs aligned with National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2003-2020, revised), in Lithuania's Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030', and the government's four-year action programme.

Luxembourg

Inter-departmental Commission for Sustainable Development. Coordination: Minister of Environment; High-Level Council. SDGs aligned to National Sustainable Development Plan that was revised in 2018.

Malta

Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change and Foreign Office and Trade Promotion act as focal point network. SDGs integrated in the NSDS 2050.

Moldova

Council for Sustainable Development. Coordination: State Chancellery, with the support of National Bureau of Statistics. SDGs partially aligned with the National Development Strategy Moldova 2020 (2012). A National Development Strategy Moldova 2030 is in preparation. The country will present its first VNR in 2020.

Monaco

Coordination: inter-ministerial working group chaired by the Minister of State, managed by the Department of External Relations and Cooperation. The government prioritized the SDG related to environmental protection. No local governments.

Montenegro

National Council for Sustainable Development and Climate Change (2013, multi-stakeholder), Sustainable Development Office in the Office of the Prime Minister (oversight). Coordination: Ministry of Finance. SDGs aligned with the NSDS until 2030.

Netherlands

Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation; national coordinator; inter-ministerial focal group with focal points in ministries and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) (LGA); regular dialogue with LRGs. SDGs mainstreamed in the Netherlands Action Plan on Inclusive Development. Aruba, Curaçao, St Maarten integrate the SDGs in their National Development Plan or in the Roadmap of the SDGs (Aruba).

Norway

Ministry of Finance (budget alignment); Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate and Environment coordinate external and internal actions. Regular dialogue with LRGs. SDG follow-up linked to the budget process.

Poland

Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology and Strategy for Responsible Development (SRD) Coherence Task Force within the Coordination Committee for Development Policy (LRG representation). Political guidance by the Council of Ministers. SDGs integrated in the SRD.

Portugal

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Planning and Infrastructures lead inter-ministerial commissions (domestic and overseas SDG implementation). SDGs integrated in the National Reform Programme.

Romania

Department for Sustainable Development under the Office of the Prime Minister, Inter-ministerial Committee for the Coordination of the Integration of Environmental Protection headed by the Ministry of Environment. Revision of NSDS of Romania Horizon 2013-2020-2030.

Serbia

Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (IMWG) chaired and coordinated by the Minister without Portfolio responsible for demography and population policy. LGA participates in the Joint National Steering Committee co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator. SDGs aligned with National Plan for Adoption of the EU Acquis from 2018 to 2021 (NPAA) and with the Development Partnership Framework (DPF) for the period 2016 – 2020.

Slovakia

Multi-stakeholder Government Council for the 2030 Agenda led by Deputy Prime Minister; Working Group for the 2030 Agenda. Including the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia (ZMOS). Strategy: National Priorities of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Table 1 National strategies for integrating SDGs, coordination mechanisms and LRG participation

Slovenia

Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, in close cooperation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs; Permanent Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Development Policies. The 2030 Agenda is aligned with the Vision of Slovenia, released in 2017. In December 2017, Slovenia's Government adopted also the National Development Strategy 2030.

Spain

High-Level Commission (inter-ministerial) with LRG observers; Office of the High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda, under the Office of the President of Government. Action plan in process of elaboration.

Sweden

Minister of Public Administration and the Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate; inter-ministerial working group; thematic commissions; regular dialogue with LRGs. Adopted an Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

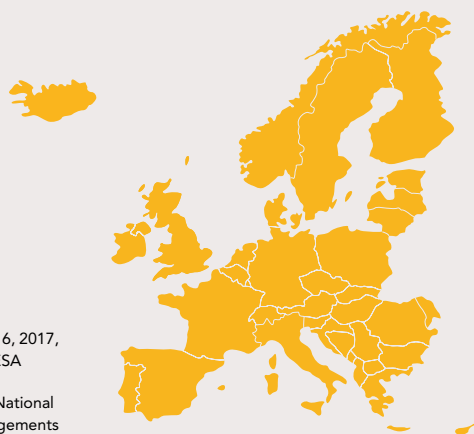
Switzerland (Federal)

Oversight: Federal Council of Switzerland. Coordination: inter-departmental National 2030 Agenda Working Group, co-led by the Federal Office for Spatial Development and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); strong engagement of cantons and communes. SDGs aligned to NSDS 2016-2019 (revised every four years).

United Kingdom

Cabinet Office and Department for International Development. Strategies: UK Government's Programme of Work; Welsh Government SDG alignment through 2015 Wellbeing of Future Generations Act; Scotland's National Performance Framework.

Europe



Sources: VNRs 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. UNDESA (2017 and 2018). 'Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.

SDG alignment to national policies and local and regional government involvement

The majority of European countries have national strategies for sustainable development, supported by national commissions/committees, which pre-date the 2030 Agenda. These are still in force and in most countries are being mapped against the SDGs to align them with SDG targets; examples include Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania and Switzerland. In other countries, national development policies (NDPs) (Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania), or government work plans (Croatia, Iceland, Portugal) are being aligned with the SDGs.

According to an EU statement in 2019, 'about half of the Member States are about to take measures to operationalize their strategies or to link them to the budget: Croatia, Estonia, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden'.⁷ A few countries have not yet defined a specific national framework or cross-sectoral strategy (Austria, Iceland, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and UK). Bosnia and Herzegovina and Spain are currently doing so.⁸

By way of example, Estonia undertook a 'gap analysis' of its policies and the SDGs and identified a range of differentials which need to be addressed. The Swiss Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-19 is linked to SDG implementation; Switzerland also submitted separate VNRs in 2016 and 2018. Finland's strategy for sustainable development likewise references the SDGs, following its updating in 2017. Moreover, Denmark has formulated an action plan for the achievement of the SDGs nationally.⁹

At regional level, the European institutions have reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda worldwide.¹⁰ However, the EU does not yet have sustainable development strategy. The Council of the European Union asked the European Commission (EC) to develop a comprehensive implementation strategy during 2019.¹¹

Most national frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs adopted by European countries reference the need to support LRGs, and LGAs in 13 countries have been involved in the design of the national strategies.¹²

LRGs and their national LGAs were consulted by national government and involved in SDG implementation in a number of European countries. For example, in Switzerland the federal level felt it critical to integrate sustainable development principles into all levels of government, including the cantons and communes, to create and increase ownership: many communes have in fact defined their own strategies for sustainable development. In such

cases, there is clear recognition that the process of SDG alignment should extend equally to the plans and policies of LRGs as to national government. However, a considerable number of countries show no reported evidence of LRGs being directly engaged in national SDG mapping or alignment processes.

The GTF's 2017,¹³ 2018¹⁴ and 2019¹⁵ reports to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), 'Towards the Localization of the SDGs' examine the extent to which local governments have been consulted in the preparation of VNRs and how far their work is reflected in final submissions. They identify key policy issues, drawing on a wide range of country and city-specific examples. According to the 2019 report, 23 countries in Europe (63% of 37 European countries that reported) involved prior consultation with local governments for the drafting of the VNR (compared with 44% at the global level) (see Section 3.1).

A similar analysis by CEMR (the Council of European Municipalities and Regions) and Platforma (European Platform of Local and Regional Authorities for Development)¹⁶ shows that LGAs' participation in the drafting of the European VNRs is increasing (from 50% in the 2016–2018 period to 60% in 2019), mostly through various forms of multi-stakeholder consultations. However, LGAs are still found to be 'generally passive' and contribute only indirectly to the VNR content.¹⁷ This is also the case with LGAs' participation in the national coordination mechanisms mentioned above (in 20 out of 39 countries).

The degree to which local governments are consulted and involved in a country's SDG system and implementation is partly a function of their political relationship with central government and the extent of decentralization. However, it is also driven often by how much a LGA is proactive in its engagement in the VNR process and the extent to which local political leadership is committed to SDG implementation.

In the case of Spain, the partnership with LRGs is underlined in its 2018 VNR, with a section detailing the localization of SDGs in each region and at local government level, with particular focus on the role of the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP). The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG) was proactively engaged in the preparation of the country's 2018 VNR. LALRG was represented (its Secretary-General) on a working group of the national SDG Cross-Sectoral Coordinating Centre (CSCC). This meant it was able to submit draft sections of the report with reference to the role of local government. Latvia's VNR has a separate section on local government, which notes that all local governments have sustainable development strategies and which

According to the GTF's 2019 report, 23 countries in Europe (63% of 37 European countries that reported) involved prior consultation with local governments for the drafting of the VNR.

acknowledges the work of LALRG.¹⁸ Likewise, the 2017 VNR of the Netherlands documents the work of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) in SDG localization.¹⁹ Serbia's 2019 VNR emphasizes the role of the country's LGA – the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) in the creation of the local community-led hub. The 2019 VNR of Iceland cites SDG implementation as 'a joint project of the state and municipalities, as they have an important role for successful implementation of the SDGs.' Both Iceland's and Serbia's VNRs dedicate specific sections or spaces to explaining the role of LRGs, likewise the United Kingdom and Bosnia and Herzegovina VNRs give particular emphasis to the localization process.²⁰ Other VNRs that make explicit reference to LRGs are the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland.

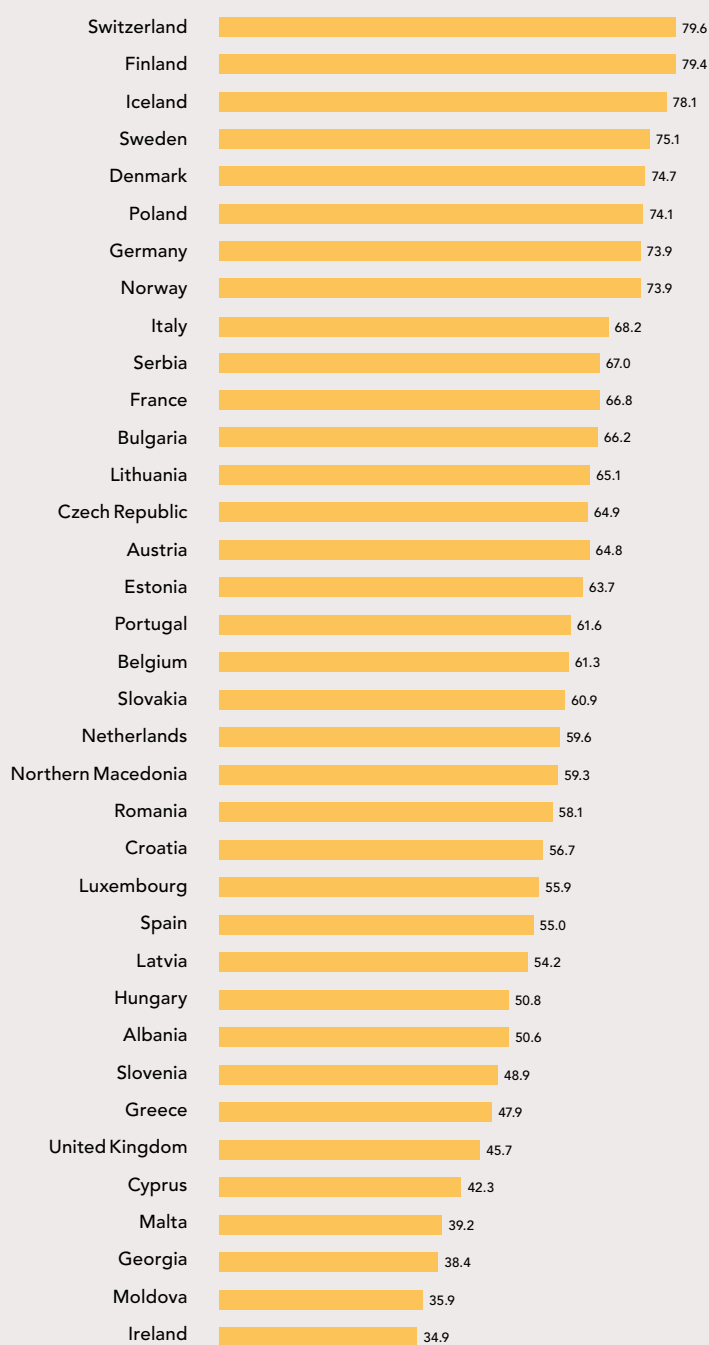
While in some countries, LRGs and their LGAs are taking the lead to support the implementation of the SDGs at sub-national level, in others, they lack the financial resources and support to ensure effective localization. This is exacerbated by the reforms and cuts in local budgets since the 2008–2009 global crisis that affected many LRGs (see Sections 2.2 and 3.1).

Thus, the importance of building local government capacity is highlighted in various VNR reports. For example, Montenegro has underlined that public sector capacities, especially of local governments, needs to be significantly increased. Moreover, Serbia has in its 2019 VNR highlighted the need for international financing support. Greater support and joint efforts between national and sub-national governments (SNGs) to undertake SDG-related work, such as SDG awareness-raising among members or promotion of SDG alignment, are urgently required.²¹ ◉

2.2 Current situation of local and regional governments in Europe

Figure 1

Local Autonomy Index (LAI) 2014 country rankings



Sources: Extracted from OECD (2019), 'Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers', OECD Multi-level Governance Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9faa7-en>.

Decentralization trends: policies and reforms

In the past decade, LRGs in several countries in Europe have increasingly put pressure on national government to make important changes in local governance. The reforms, decentralization trends and associated policies that have followed have been analysed in a number of academic studies, as well as by international organizations such as the EU and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).²²

In federal or quasi-federal European states (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Switzerland), reforms have mainly aimed to improve distribution of responsibilities between different levels of government, improve intergovernmental fiscal relations, and strengthen internal stability pacts, altering equalization mechanisms and enhancing policy coordination. In unitary states, public sector reforms have sought to strengthen decentralization and improve multilevel governance systems (the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, France, United Kingdom), improve economies of scale and efficiency (France), and improve public management (Ireland). Furthermore, after the global crisis, many reforms were linked to austerity measures, spending control and rationalization.²³

In general, in federal and quasi-federal countries (Spain), LRGs enjoy wider functions and responsibilities, particularly at regional or state levels, and have higher levels of sub-national expenditures and revenues as a percentage of gross national product (GDP) than unitary countries, but wide variations exist throughout Europe, according to the extent of decentralization.

In federal countries, LRG expenditures account for 21.5% of total public spending compared with 9.7% in unitary countries. However, in some unitary countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden, LRGs represent a larger part of public spending (27.4%) (see Figure 3).²⁴

The Local Autonomy Index (LAI) for Europe, is a measurement developed by academia to try to analyse the extent of sub-national functions and responsibilities. The LAI combines measures on (1) legal autonomy, (2) policy scope (range of functions/tasks in service delivery), (3) political discretion (decision-making power in fulfilling tasks), (4) financial autonomy, (5) organizational/administrative autonomy, (6) non-interference (related to vertical relations with higher levels of government), and (7) access to influencing higher-level decisions (see Figure 1).²⁵

The Regional Authority Index (RAI) is another measure designed to track the evolution of administrative regions and intermediary governments in more than 81 countries, including 38 European countries.²⁶ According to the OECD, 'the Regional Authority Index and the Local Autonomy Index also show an increase in the degree of authority of municipalities and regions over the past decades', although trends in recent years have been more varied.²⁷

The different measures and studies show four Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden — as being in the top ten countries in Europe, along with Switzerland, Poland and Germany, and followed by Italy, France, Norway and Austria; the LAI adds Serbia to this list.²⁸ According to the LAI, as summarized by the OECD,²⁹ in France there is high local autonomy with the exception of features of the local political system and administrative organization. In Switzerland, municipalities are autonomous in their financial and organizational affairs and enjoy legal protection, but they are to a lesser extent able to decide on their own policies, due to their smaller size and the more discretionary powers of cantons. The much larger German municipalities — despite Germany's federalist structure — are more autonomous with respect to policy scope and political discretion. In Spain, decentralization is advanced at the regional level, but more restricted at municipal level. In the United Kingdom, financial autonomy is limited while organizational autonomy is not. Ireland, finally, shows very low levels of autonomy in virtually all dimensions.

Apart from Poland, which has made progress towards decentralization, most EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe are still in a process of further decentralization. Countries tend to have high legal and to some extent organizational/administrative autonomy, but less autonomy in other areas (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovenia).³⁰ Hungary is the one major exception with recentralization of powers back to central government, and with the share of sub-national expenditure decreasing by 5% in the past 20 years. In Hungary, education, healthcare and some social services have also been recentralized, especially after 2012 (and the institution of Cardinal Law). Transfers are now mostly earmarked, having changed from an income-based system to a task-based system.³¹

Although local self-government is enshrined in most of their constitutions, decentralization is in its very early stages in non-EU Member States in the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), with the exception of Croatia, where resources are more decentralized (particularly at county level). In some countries such as Moldova and Serbia, reform processes have recently stalled and in others, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and

Montenegro, there are serious ongoing problems because of political and ethnic divisions.³²

The reforms implemented during the past decade have had an impact on the responsibilities and capacities of LRGs, albeit to different degrees, in the whole region, but most pronounced in the countries of the South of Europe — most affected by the global 2008-2009 crisis. Because of budgetary restrictions in Greece and Portugal, the oversight of local government finances was reinforced, salaries and staff recruitment frozen, and the sub-national territorial organization revised. In Greece the 2010 Kallikratis Reform created 13 fully self-governing regions with new responsibilities in the area of regional planning and development, including structural funds (transferred from the prefectures) and merged municipalities. In Spain, several laws have increased the control on budgets and limited the indebtedness of local governments, reducing their competences (particularly for the smaller municipalities) and restricting remunerations of all civil servants including at sub-national level. In Italy, the measures adopted in 2012 and 2013 imposed budgetary and spending restrictions as well as territorial reorganization, impacting local autonomy.

Laerdal, Norway
(photo: © Andrea Ciambra).



As well as the South of Europe, France's multifaceted local government reform in 2010 included several measures, such as the reform of the local taxation system (reduction of local taxing power) and equalization mechanisms; a streamlining of inter-municipal cooperation; and the creation of a new status of metropole. Important parts of the 2010 legislation were later revoked and the 2013-2015 Act III of Decentralization resulted in new territorial and decentralization reforms, including the law on metropolises (2014), regional mergers (2014) and the NOTRe law (2015). The latter modifies the allocation of responsibilities across different SNG levels, strengthening the responsibilities of regions (on economic development, territorial planning, environment protection, vocational training).

In Germany, meanwhile, the number of municipalities decreased and financial controls were put in place in several Länder, but responsibilities increased, inter-municipal cooperation (*Gemeindeverband* and *Zweckverbände*) was facilitated, and privatization and externalization of public services were developed to reduce expenditures. Today however, municipalities are trying to regain control of public services (re-municipalization of water and other basic services). The Netherlands moreover imposed some budget and transfers restrictions on the sub-national level, with new devolution of responsibilities (e.g. youth health, long-term care, etc.) accompanied by a historical merger process, and compelled local governments to rationalize and develop new modalities for services delivery (e.g. implementation of Service Charters).

In Finland, the regionalization process launched in 2013 was interrupted in 2019. National governments also set minimum standards for the provision of local services. In Norway, this was done under the KOSTRA performance measurement system.

Reference should also be made to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe,³³ which is responsible for monitoring the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government³⁴ adopted in 1985 and ratified by all 47 Member States of the Council. The Charter has at its core the principle of subsidiarity and its five-yearly monitoring reports provide a useful insight into decentralization throughout

Europe. The reforms experienced during the last reporting period have had a varied impact on local autonomy: 'In a majority of countries, the perception of some loss of autonomy was due more to the reduction of resources than to institutional restrictions.' However, this is not a small issue (see Financing local development, below).³⁵

National territorial organization: structure of sub-national governments

As already mentioned, the reforms also had an impact on the territorial organization in Europe. In the early 1990s, the 28 EU Member States alone had approximately 97,500 municipalities, which fell to around 87,182 in 2017-2018. A huge variation in average population per municipality remains however, ranging from 168,000 in the United Kingdom and 151,000 in Ireland (since the 2014 local government reform) to only 1,700 in the Czech Republic, 1,850 in the Slovak Republic and 1,890 in France in 2017-2018.³⁶ There are another 5,056 municipalities in non-EU Member States, thus the total number of local governments across the continent is still close to 100,000.³⁷ In addition, there are intermediate level local governments (e.g. departments in France, provinces in Belgium and Spain), metropolitan bodies areas and regions, which add significantly to the total numbers of LRGs in Europe.

Recent territorial reforms have resulted in amalgamations of both municipalities and regions and in some cases their outright abolition. Ireland saw particularly dramatic changes in 2014, resulting in 114 councils being reorganized into 31 local governments and the abolition of the previous eight regional authorities. In Estonia in 2017, the number of municipalities was reduced from 213 to 79 (14 urban and 65 rural). However, in most instances, changes have been more gradual, including in many of the non-EU Balkan States. For example, Moldova (population 3.46 million) still has 1,679 local authorities (villages, communes, cities and municipalities) and 35 regions (districts). Overall, there has been relatively little change in the distinction between federal, unitary and quasi-federal states in Europe in the past ten years (see Table 2).

The complexity of structures has increased in the past ten years, with sometimes overlapping functions between the different levels of government, driven by ambitious reform programmes. Such territorial organization reforms are often triggered by political, demographic and socio-economic changes. These include growth in services, transport or new ICT requirements, considerations around the need for local management, and financial considerations around sharing services to effect economies of scale due to shrinking revenues.

Recent territorial reforms have resulted in amalgamations of both municipalities and regions and in some cases their outright abolition.

Table 2 Types and numbers of sub-national government (2017-2018)

Federal or quasi-federal States	Municipal	Intermediate	Regional/state	Total
Austria	2,098		9	2,107
Belgium	589	10	6	605
Bosnia and Herzegovina	145		10	155
Germany	11,054	401	16	11,471
Spain	8,124	50	17	8,191
Switzerland	2,222		26	2,248
Unitary states				
Albania	61		12	73
Bulgaria	264			264
Croatia	555		21	576
Cyprus	380			380
Czech Rep.	6,258		14	6,272
Denmark	98		5	103
Estonia	79			79
Finland	311		1	312
France	35,357	101	18	35,476
Greece	325		13	338
Hungary	3,178		19	3,197
Iceland	74			74
Ireland	31			31
Italy	7,960		20	7,980
Latvia	119			119
Lithuania	60			60
Luxembourg	102			102
Malta	68			68
Moldova	1,697		35	1,732
Montenegro	68			68
Netherlands	390		12	392
N. Macedonia	23			23
Norway	422		18	422
Poland	2,478	380	16	2,874
Portugal	308		2	310
Romania	3,181		41	3,222
Serbia	174		2	176
Slovakia	2,930		8	2,938
Slovenia	212			212
Sweden	290		21	311
United Kingdom	391	27	3	421

Sources: OECD, 'Making Decentralisation Work'. Annex B, p.161; CCRE, CEMR, 'About Members'; OECD-UCLG, SNG-WOFI.

Functions and responsibilities: core competences as defined by law

The impact of territorial reforms can be complex, involving changes of powers at different sub-national levels, as has been seen in the regions, e.g. in Norway. In many cases, reforms are directly linked to significant decentralization, intended to be politically attractive and to result in stronger, more empowered local government. In Iceland in 2011, municipalities gained new responsibilities for service provision and support for disabled people; in Ireland in 2014, local authorities were given an expanded role in economic development (but water was recentralized), and in the Netherlands, reforms that took effect in 2015 involved new municipal responsibilities for social care. Under the 2014-17 reforms in Norway, additional competences in secondary education and transport were transferred to municipalities from the counties and central government.³⁸ In Belgium, the 6th State Reform (2014) transferred additional responsibilities to regions (labour market policies, mobility and justice), and municipalities (family allowance, long-term care, health). In Italy, reforms introduced in 2014 resulted in ten metropolitan cities taking over competences of the former provinces with additional powers for local police, roads, transport, and spatial and

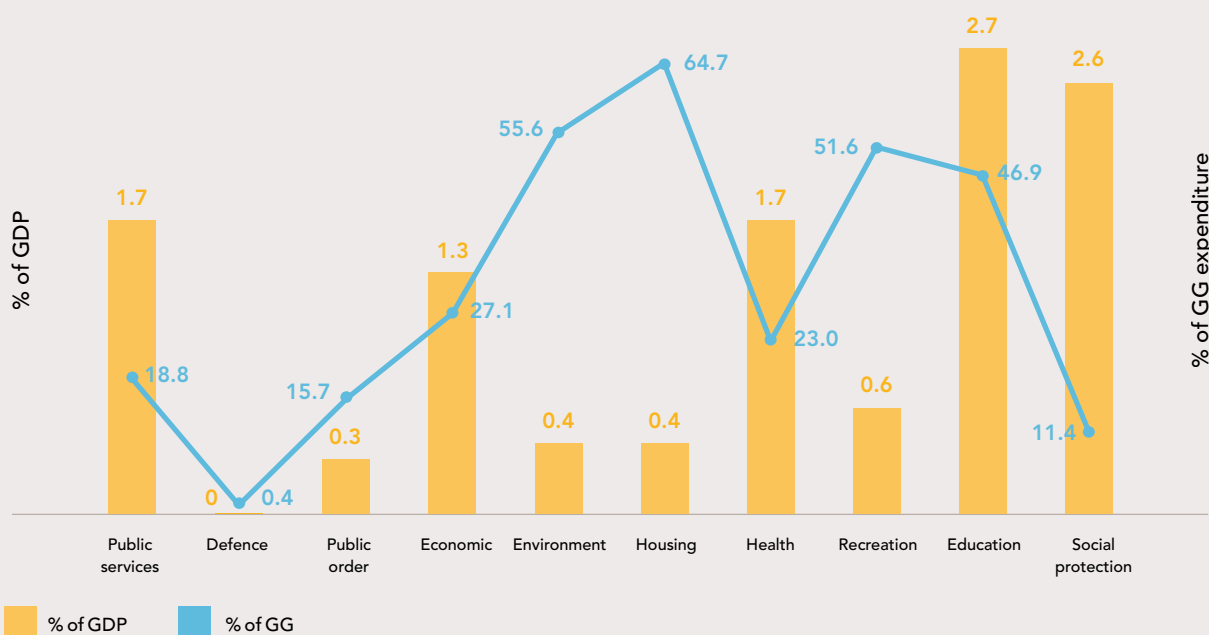
urban planning, and the metropolitan city mayor directly elected. In Czech Republic, in 2015, some municipal responsibilities were reallocated from small municipalities to larger municipalities (to overcome municipal fragmentation), and to the central government in the social reform framework.

Statistics regarding sub-national expenditure by sector or function are compiled by the Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG), which has ten main categories.³⁹ These give some indication of core roles and responsibilities of European LRGs in relation to central government. They relate to education, economic affairs and transport; social protection; health; housing and community amenities; recreation, culture and religion; general public services; security and public order; defence and environmental protection. Each category also has sub-functions. Figure 2 gives a breakdown of the different areas as a percentage of GDP and of total general government expenditure (GG).

As shown in Figure 2, SNG spending responsibilities (as a percentage of GDP) are more significant in education, social protection, health, general public services and economic affairs (including transport). However, LRGs represent a substantial part of GG expenditures in housing and

Figure 2

Sub-national government expenditures of European countries (34) by sector/function as % of GDP and of general government expenditure (GG) (COFOG, 2016)



Source: Authors' calculation based on unweighted averages in 34 countries. OECD/UCLG (2019), World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investments, <http://www.sng-wofi.org/data/>.

amenities, environmental protection, recreation, culture and religion, and education. The spending contributions to GG of the state/regional level are often greatest in areas such as housing, education, recreation/culture, environment, public order, economic development and health while local governments' contribution is higher for housing, environment, recreation/culture and education. There is significant variation by country: in countries where the extent of decentralization is low, local government functions tend to be more restricted to sectors such as general public services, recreation and culture, and, to a lesser extent, economic affairs, transport and housing, and community amenities.

In recent years, municipalities in Denmark have received new competences over social welfare and education while the regions have obtained more responsibilities for healthcare, regional development and environment. However, since 1 January 2019, the regions have seen their role reduced in the implementation of structural funds programmes (the European Regional Development Fund – ERDF and the European Social Fund – ESF) and in business development. In the United Kingdom (and England in particular), the 2011 Localism Act, City Deals and the 2016 Devolution Deals gave powers to combined authorities on housing, transport, planning and policing, and allowed for the introduction of directly elected mayors. At the same time, the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments received enhanced powers, including new fiscal powers in the case of the former. In France, reforms since 2010 have been gradual, addressing metropolitan governance, reform of regional boundaries, sub-national responsibilities and inter-municipal cooperation; greater powers are also envisaged for the French regions.

Much decentralization is of an 'asymmetric' nature where the same SNGs have different political, administrative or fiscal powers. Among federal states, Spain and Belgium are highly asymmetric, whereas Austria, Germany and Switzerland show more symmetry. Among unitary states, Italy and the United Kingdom are notable in their asymmetry.⁴⁰ Likewise, most non-EU Member States in the Balkans display asymmetrical functions and responsibilities.⁴¹

Metropolitan and urban governments in general have responsibilities on economic policy, including 'industrial promotion, environmental planning, refuse collection, public transport, regional spatial planning, regional economic development, recreation, regional parks, tourist promotion, traffic planning and regulation, and water supply.'⁴²

Finally, LRGs have taken on an increasingly significant role in international development cooperation, notably through 'decentralized cooperation'. There has been growing legal

and other formal recognition of this at both the national and the EU level. Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden all have legal provision to allow decentralized cooperation activities; meanwhile several other countries such as Austria, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and many Central and Eastern European countries also facilitate such activities in less formal ways.⁴³

Financing local development: fiscal decentralization

The impact of the 2008-2009 global economic crisis and its aftermath, with the imposition of fiscal austerity measures in many countries, led to a reduction in the overall percentage of LRGs' share of GDP and of total public expenditure. EU data shows an overall decline in Member States' local government expenditure relative to GDP (down from approximately 13.94% in 2009 to approximately 10.8% in 2016), and relative to GG (down from approximately 27.3% in 2009 to approximately 23.3% in 2016). Needless to say, these indicators also relate to the extent of fiscal decentralization.⁴⁴

Over a longer period, 1995-2016, the sub-national share of public expenditure increased in Spain, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Finland (over 5%); there were also smaller increases in Italy, Slovenia, Latvia, Slovak Republic, Austria, France, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Portugal and Greece. Conversely, there were decreases in Lithuania, Iceland, Estonia, Norway, the Netherlands and particularly in Hungary and Ireland. It is reasonable to assume that the long-term trend towards greater fiscal autonomy is likely to continue in Europe, assuming there are no further major global economic shocks, especially since fiscal decentralization is still at an early stage, notably in the Balkan countries and elsewhere.⁴⁵

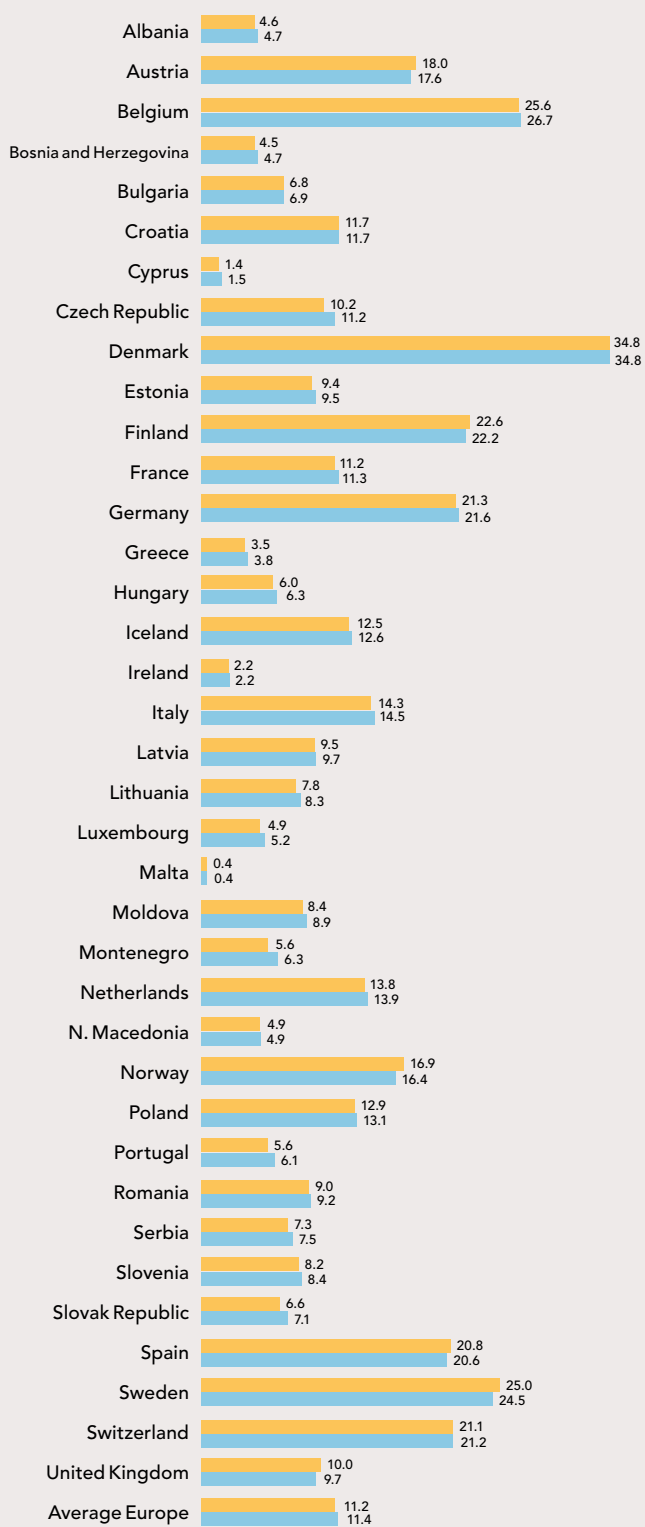
The decrease in financial resources has had consequences for staff expenditures (and a reduction thereof) in three out of four European countries. As already mentioned, trends are accompanied by major service reorganization, notably in Spain, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Bulgaria and Greece. The rules of budgetary discipline can also affect local elected officials, as was the case, for example, in Spain, where remuneration of elected representatives has been limited. In the Netherlands and Ireland, reforms have reduced the number of elected officials in order to save money.

Another fiscal indicator that is often used relates to the SNG percentage of general government revenue (see Figure 3). In general, the ratios for revenues are very close to those of expenditures. In the majority of countries, taxes (both shared and own-source taxes) are the prime source of revenue,

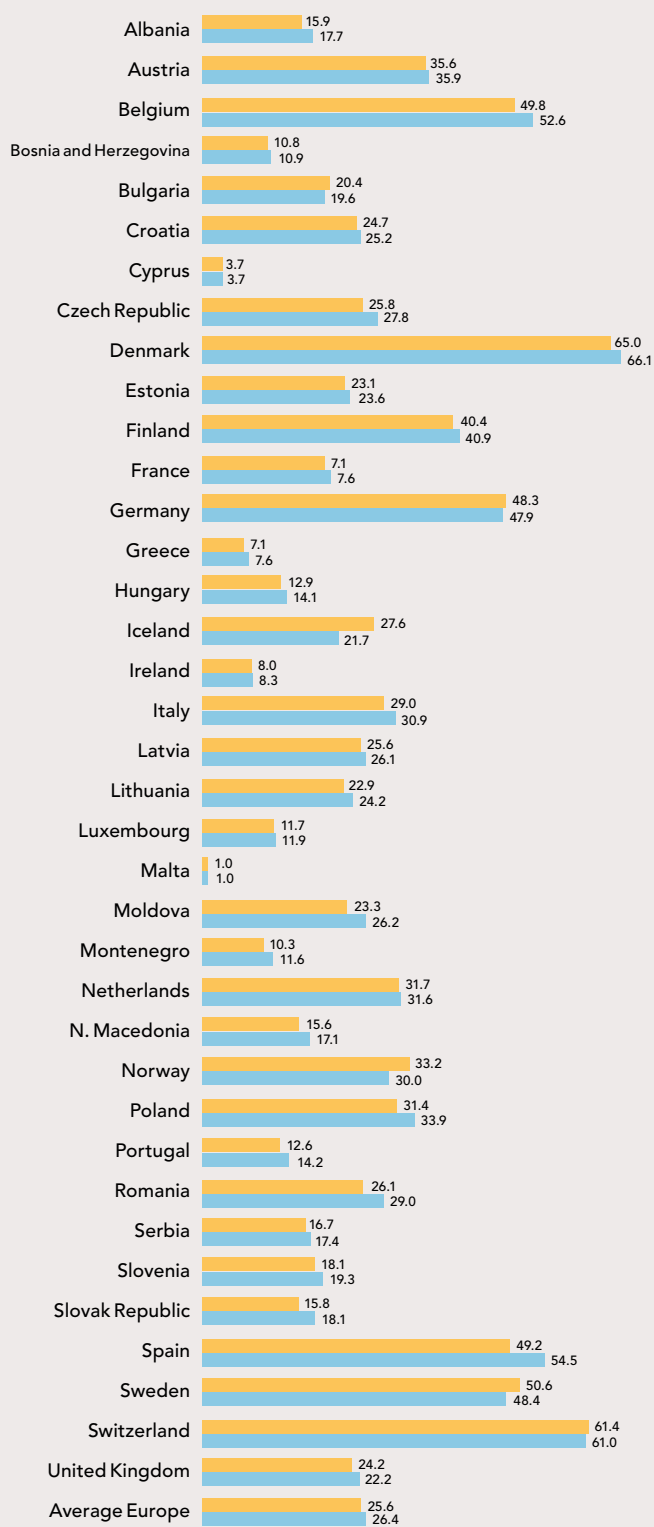
Figure 3

SNG expenditures and revenues on GDP and on GG by country

SNG expenditures and revenues on GDP



SNG expenditures and revenues on GG



■ SNG expenditure % of GDP
 ■ SNG revenues % of GDP
 ■ SNG expenditure % of GG
 ■ SNG revenues % of GG

Source: OECD/UCLG (2019), World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment (data 2016): <http://www.sng-wofi.org/data/>.

followed by grants and subsidies and local public service charges. Nevertheless, the share of own revenue sources in sub-national revenue varies considerably and is close to 70% (or more) in Iceland, Bosnia, Montenegro, Switzerland, Germany, Latvia, Finland, France, Sweden and Portugal. In Norway, Italy, Croatia, Ireland, Spain and Hungary, own sources represent around 50% of sub-national budgets, but this falls below 30% in Moldova, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovak Republic, Kosovo, Albania, Romania, Estonia and Lithuania. Meanwhile Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Greece and United Kingdom are between 30% and 40%. This means the last groups of countries rely principally on transfers, grants and subventions from central governments due to important vertical imbalances in local budgets.⁴⁶

Share of tax revenues however does not provide a truly accurate picture of local fiscal autonomy, since this depends on many other factors such as the right to set or abolish taxes or define the tax base. All the more, because tax revenues encompass shared taxes and own-source taxes.⁴⁷ A more accurate picture of fiscal decentralization is given by the OECD's tax autonomy indicators, which show that tax autonomy increased in Finland, Portugal and Italy in 1995-2011, and meanwhile decreased in Denmark and France. Examples of important reforms include the Belgian fiscal reforms which reinforced regional tax autonomy allowing regions to raise additional income tax and gain other tax powers ('regionalization' of the PIT). Likewise, in Spain after 2011, the financial autonomy of the regions was enhanced and their part in shared taxes increased from 33% to 50%.

Aggregate national data can moreover hide important variations. In some cases, there were countervailing trends and complex fiscal arrangements, which often distort the actual extent of fiscal decentralization. The United Kingdom (England) significantly reduced central-local government fiscal transfers because of austerity measures since the 2008-2009 global crisis which mean many local governments — and especially larger cities — have seen dramatic decreases in their local revenues. This in turn has impacted on their ability to deliver essential services effectively, an issue picked up in a 2014 Council of Europe monitoring report.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the sub-national level is an important investor, underlining the role of LRGs in finding the necessary funding for the SDGs. Table 3 shows the role played by local and state government as public investors, with the highest percentages achieved in federal states such as Belgium, Switzerland, Spain and Germany, as well as in some unitary states such as France, Finland, Italy, Portugal and Sweden (over 50% of total public investment). If we only look at local

government, Belgium, France, Finland, Italy and Sweden achieved 50% of total investment.

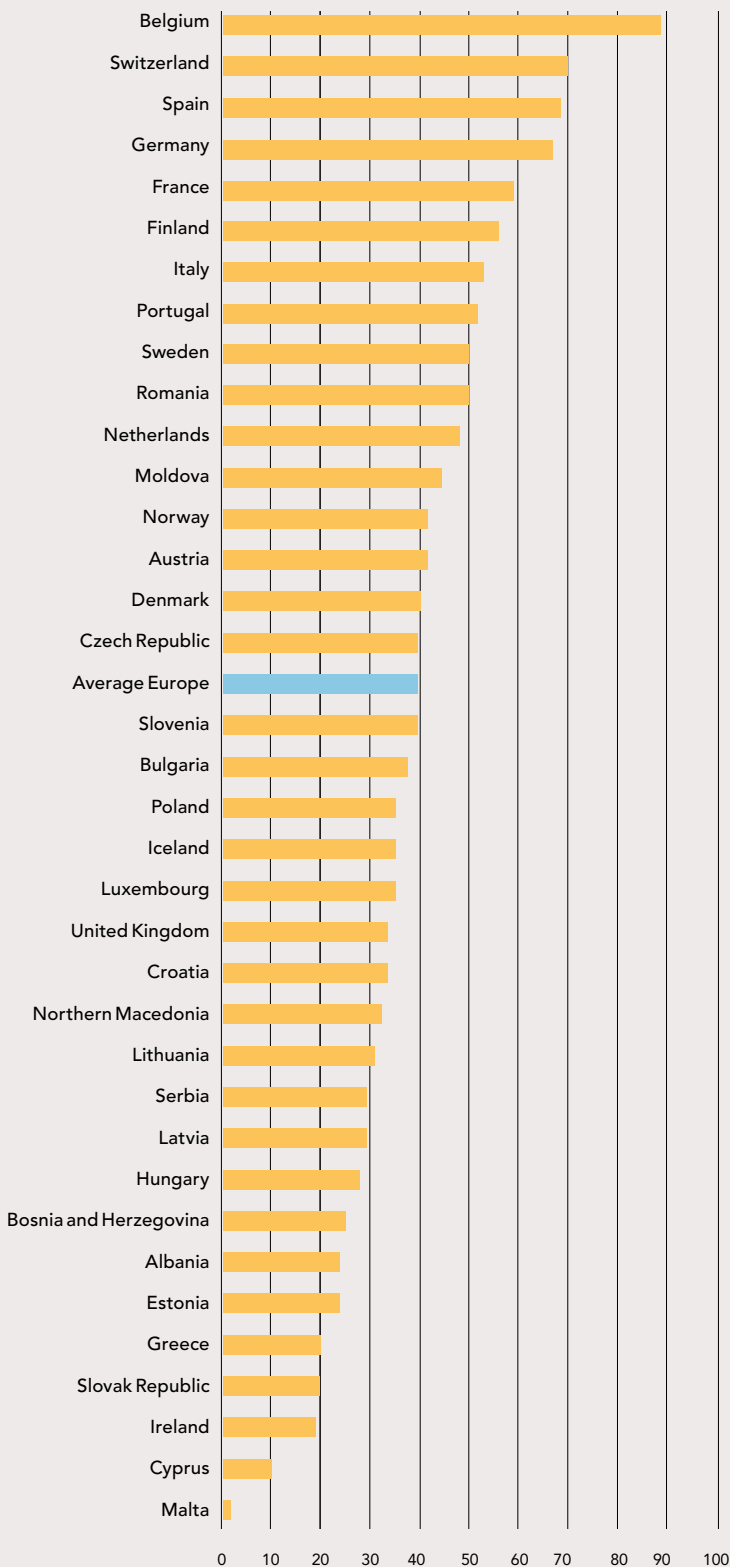
As highlighted in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, it is desirable for local governments to be able to access external financing through borrowing, including credit and access to the financial markets (bonds). Legislative provision for this varies in different countries. Sub-national consolidated financial debt as a percentage of total public debt provides a useful indicator for the relative significance of the sub-national sector and therefore potentially for fiscal decentralization (according to the 2016 OECD data, the average sub-national government debt as a percentage of national debt in the EU is 14.4%, but ranges from 42.4% in Norway to 0.6% in Greece). Local governments in some countries have been able to improve access to external funding on financial markets and share common mechanisms; this has often been because of the initiative of national LGAs. This has happened in France and the UK, for instance, based on the successful municipal agencies model prevailing in the Nordic countries. In France, the *Agence France Locale* was created in 2013 and is wholly owned by French local authorities. Its mandate is to raise cost-efficient resources by pooling the funding needs of all local authority members and to provide alternative funding with a target of achieving 25% of market share.⁴⁹

Ribbon-cutting ceremony at a new school in Jacou, Languedoc-Roussillon, France (photo: Isabelle Blanchemain, bit.ly/2OxxUNv).



Figure 4

SNG direct investment as % of total public investment



Source: OECD/UCLG (2019), World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment (data 2016): <http://www.sng-wofi.org/data/>.

From the data available, it appears that the 2008-2009 global economic crisis and the ensuing Eurozone crisis, accompanied by austerity policies in many countries, have halted or even reversed current and planned reforms in some instances. In others in contrast, according to the OECD, the crisis actually served as an impetus to accelerate fiscal reforms (e.g. Czech Republic, Estonia), and to seek optimization of revenues from property taxes, through new local taxes or revaluation of existing taxes (e.g. in Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, France). In general, the 2008-2009 crisis led to a general tightening of fiscal rules at all levels of government relating to budget balances, spending and borrowing constraints. In the Netherlands, local governments have since 2013 had to transfer excess liquidity to the central government Treasury. Denmark in 2012 legally introduced a multi-annual expenditure ceiling at all levels of government. Similar legal fiscal restrictions have been enacted in Estonia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, France, Finland and elsewhere.⁵⁰

Since the crisis, particular efforts have been made to reinforce intergovernmental fiscal coordination in macro-economic management through cooperation agreements, internal stability pacts and 'fiscal councils' with the aim of promoting sustainable public finances and fiscal discipline (in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain).⁵¹

As already indicated, municipal mergers have been seen as a way to effect cost savings, and financial and other incentives to encourage mergers are frequently offered by central government, e.g. merger grants in the Netherlands, Estonia, Italy and Finland. Other non-fiscal incentives include giving special status to larger cities or permitting former administrative structures to be kept at the sub-municipal level (e.g. in UK, Greece, France).

Overall, European states and sub-national and local authorities are therefore facing significant budget restrictions, which may affect the implementation of the SDGs. As a result, most LRGs are under significant financial pressure. They must develop and implement new policies related to climate change, migration or social change while facing a decline in own tax revenues, reductions in financial transfers from central government and fluctuating borrowing conditions. They are also impacted by the new financial rules of the EU, introduced to deal with the financial crisis. This is the case with the 'economic governance' package, the budget surveillance package and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance, which all limit opportunities for LRGs to make the necessary investments to build infrastructure and prepare for a sustainable future. ☉

2.3 Cooperative multilevel governance partnerships

Partnerships at EU level

A cooperative multilevel governance partnership approach involves active collaboration between central, local and state/regional government. Multilevel governance in the EU was first presented in the White Paper of the European Commission in 2001,⁵² and further discussed at the European level. In 2009, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR)⁵³ adopted its own White Paper on Multilevel Governance as: ‘coordinated institutional action by the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities, based on partnership and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies.’ Underlying this concept is the principle of subsidiarity, which places decisions at the most effective level and as close as possible to the citizens, and is enshrined by EU law under the Lisbon Treaty.⁵⁴

In 2011, the Presidents of CEMR, the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) and Eurocities⁵⁵ — the relevant European organizations representing regions, cities and municipalities in Europe — adopted a declaration, ‘Governing in Partnership — United to Build a Stronger Europe’. This was in light of the negotiations of the future of the cohesion policy at that time for the period 2014 – 2020. Its objective was to promote an approach that involves all relevant actors in cohesion policy via vertical and horizontal cooperation.⁵⁶

Reports and studies, including those carried out by CEMR’s own member associations, have shown that municipal statutory functions in the Member States of the EU are affected by EU legislation by as much as 75%. LRGs have been represented in Brussels since 1970 via the Council of Municipalities and Regions and, since 1994, via the aforementioned CoR, which was established with the Treaty of Maastricht as a formal consultative body to the European Parliament, the Council or the Commission.⁵⁷ Following the treaties and institutional practices, several formal procedures give recognition

to multilevel governance in EU policy and practices, particularly under the EU’s Cohesion Policy, established in 2006, since when the EU has engaged closely with the sub-national government level and provided significant financial and other support including to the new Member States of Central and Eastern Europe. Provisions for partnership with LRGs through EU structural and investment funds — the Partnership Principle⁵⁸ — were strengthened in 2013, obliging Member States to organize a partnership at all stages of programming and at all levels, the importance of which was highlighted in the 2014 Van den Brande Report.⁵⁹

In 2014, the CoR adopted a Charter for Multilevel Governance in Europe. This committed to the principles of transparent, open and inclusive policy-making, participation and partnership, policy efficiency, policy coherence and budget synergies, subsidiarity and proportionality, and fundamental rights protection at all levels of governance.⁶⁰ The Charter also deals with implementation and delivery of multilevel governance through citizens’ participation, cooperation among public authorities, institutional capacity-building, creation of networks and fostering a European mindset.

Following the 2016 European Commission (EC) Communication on the Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future,⁶¹ a European multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs with a sub-group on delivering SDGs at local and

A European multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs has been established, with a sub-group on delivering the SDGs at local and regional level including CEMR, Eurocities and other stakeholders.



UCLG Executive Bureau in Strasbourg, hosted at the European Parliament (photo: UCLG-CGLU, bit.ly/2AULQJg).

regional level has been established.⁶² The sub-group includes CEMR, Eurocities, the CoR and other stakeholders. It has prepared recommendations, which were largely integrated in the final report of the platform to the EC.⁶³ The report advocates for a territorial approach and a 'two ways dialogue' that associate LRGs and civil society at all levels in the implementation of the SDGs in the EU, including in respect of the policies of the EC. Both the EC Reflection Paper on a sustainable Europe by 2030 (2018),⁶⁴ and the EC Communication on subsidiarity and proportionality, take these views into account and note the importance of ensuring policy cohesion at all levels of government in the EU, as well as the need to respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.⁶⁵ The European Parliament has also underlined the importance of a joined-up, multilevel governance approach to SDG implementation, including respect for the principle of subsidiarity and recognition of the role of LRGs.⁶⁶ Furthermore, it has highlighted the role of LRGs in the institutional framework of the EU, and recognizes their important role 'at all stages of the SDGs' implementation, from planning and programming to evaluation and monitoring', calling on the EC to enhance support to LRGs.⁶⁷

Eurostat has since 2017 published an annual report on 'Sustainable Development in the EU'.⁶⁸

This seeks to provide a detailed assessment on how the EU is performing in implementing the 17 SDGs, deploying 100 indicators, of which some 55 align to SDG indicators. It does not however provide a breakdown of data at sub-national level.

Nevertheless, a recent study by the European Economic and Social Committee takes the view that the annual Eurostat report does not adequately address the 'distance to targets' of EU Member States to achieve the SDGs. It says this could be done by using measures such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboard. It also proposes a shadow report produced in collaboration with the European multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs, which could also offer a means to address sub-national data gaps.⁶⁹

An innovative approach to multilevel governance was also adopted for the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU (see multilevel urban governance below), whereby the European Commission's relevant Directorate-Generals (DGs), Member States, individual cities and representative associations gather in thematic partnerships to exchange and implement actions on very specific issues of urban development, working around three pillars: better regulation, better knowledge and better funding.⁷⁰

Partnerships at national level

Even in federal states and strongly decentralized countries, responsibilities for specific government services are shared between central and sub-national government, underlining the essential nature of cooperative multilevel governance and partnership-working in modern economies (see Table 3) and OECD Recommendations on effective public investment across levels of government in 2014.

Coordination mechanisms are well developed in federal countries and some regionalized states, e.g. the conference of Minister-Presidents in Germany, or the Conference of Presidents in Spain. Other examples of cooperative multilevel coordination include the long-standing Austrian Conference of Spatial Planning (OROK). Similar structures for dialogue between central and local/regional government exist in Italy and the Nordic countries, and are often chaired at the most senior level by the Prime Minister and attended by national ministers and top representatives of all LRG levels, including from the respective national LGAs.⁷¹ There are some interesting recent examples of bringing together various multilevel functions as shown at the Council for Territorial Dialogue in Portugal, set up in 2015.⁷² Since 2008, fiscal councils and internal stability pacts have also been deployed as mechanisms to strengthen multilevel fiscal coordination in macro-economic management in Belgium,

Austria, Spain, Germany, Portugal and Italy. Other forms of multilevel coordination include standing commissions and intergovernmental consultation boards. These relate to a wide range of areas such as environment, infrastructure, transport, technology and development.⁷³

It is perhaps no surprise that this type of cooperative multilevel governance is especially well-developed in countries showing a high degree of decentralization, and it can serve as a model for countries seeking to implement successful decentralization. In Norway, four consultative meetings are held each year to ensure coordination of regulatory proposals affecting local governments. These bring together key central government ministries and representatives of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). Similar meetings address issues pertaining to counties and municipalities. The KS and local government also receive for comment those government draft regulations deemed of special significance for local government. Furthermore, there is a continuous informal dialogue between central and local government on political as well as technical and professional issues.⁷⁴

There is little evidence of such cooperative multilevel governance or intergovernmental mechanisms in non-EU Member States of the Balkans and some like Moldova remain strongly centralized in their governance structure despite

Table 3 Shared responsibilities across levels of government – proportion of decisions involving more than one level of government

Country	Education %	Long-term care %	Transport services %	Social housing %	Healthcare %
Belgium	59	42	16	23	39
Germany		35	82	45	20
Italy	11	58	44	59	29
Switzerland	28	21	54	48	65
Spain	21	68	76	93	19
Luxembourg	6	38	13	28	32
Denmark	23	11	33	25	67
Latvia	19	36	42	15	16
Netherlands	0	60	45	40	26
Norway	37	35	37	31	26
Finland	31	31	42	22	44
Poland	43	44	61	48	41
Estonia	38	58	51	78	20

Source: OECD, 'Making Decentralisation Work', p.82.

various attempts at decentralization since 2012. However, many of these countries have now established national LGAs and these should provide a means to initiate intergovernmental dialogue with their central government in future, ultimately leading to the kind of multilevel governance mechanisms and partnerships in existence elsewhere in Europe.

The SDGs are also creating opportunities to develop new high-level coordination mechanisms to ensure the implementation and follow-up of the SDGs, which in many countries adopted a multilevel and multi-stakeholder approach, including SNGs with different roles (full members, advisor or consultative levels) (see Sub-section 3.1).

Multilevel urban governance

Given the degree of urbanization in Europe, there has also been significant attention given to the concept of multilevel urban governance. The Belgian Presidency of the EU in 2010 published a handbook for multilevel urban governance in Europe,⁷⁵ and, following the adoption of the Riga Declaration by the ministers responsible for urban matters in 2015, the Urban Agenda for the EU (Pact of Amsterdam)⁷⁶ was adopted in 2016. This sets out a new approach for the EU and Member States to address urban development, in particular to apply an integrated and sustainable urban development approach, in direct partnership with cities. The Pact of Amsterdam is also following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and therefore commits to the implementation of the SDGs (especially SDG 11 on cities and human settlements), the Paris Climate Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

Some countries have developed national urban policies (NUPs) as a lever to better coordinate and ensure more policy coherence: France has for a long time had its Policy of the City (*Politique de la ville*), embodied in city contracts and agglomeration, contractual approaches that have followed a decade of failure of the city policy decided at the central level. Belgium has had the Federal Big City Policy (*Politique des grandes villes*) since 1999, complemented by regional urban policies (also implemented through city contracts). Switzerland adopted the Federal

Agglomeration Policy in 2001 and revised it in 2016 in cooperation with SNGs. Germany has had an NUP since 2017 ('Towards a National Urban Development Policy in Germany'), with a multi-stakeholder approach in close collaboration with the parliament and is working now to adapt the New Urban Agenda. The Netherlands has developed a Dutch Urban Agenda to support cooperation with local governments through City Deals. Poland created an NUP in 2015 with a participatory approach. Portugal adopted in 2015 Sustainable Cities 2020. Spain developed a national strategy on urban sustainability and adopted in 2018, after a national consultation, a national strategy to implement the New Urban Agenda. Sweden adopted its Strategy for Liveable Cities in 2018. Several countries are working on the formulation of their NUPs (Slovak Republic).⁷⁷

Other countries do not explicitly have an NUP, but have developed specific national urban programmes that could be considered the main elements of national urban frameworks (e.g. Finland through its Urban Growth Agreements). Beyond several city sectoral programmes, already mentioned, the United Kingdom adopted in 2016 the City and Local Government Devolution Act that provides a national legal framework to devolution and City Deals. Other countries developed policies on specific urban dimensions: on large urbanized areas (e.g. Italy), revitalization of urban districts, deprived areas or peripheral areas (e.g. Denmark, Italy), and framework documents to provide guidance (e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary). Finally, some countries have not put in place proper urban policies but have spatial development policies that cover different dimensions of urban policies (e.g. Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia), or the responsibility of urban development falls to local authorities that benefit from close collaboration with the national government (e.g. Norway).

Partnerships and international development cooperation

There is a close link between European countries' implementation of the SDGs domestically (and at EU level), and the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda in non-European partner countries through international development cooperation in line with SDG 17 on global partnership for sustainable development.

The last Joint Synthesis Report of the EU is devoted to Member States' contribution to the implementation of the SDGs *outside* Europe.⁷⁸ So for example, in Germany, the implementation of the SDGs is looked at in terms of its domestic achievement, as well as its development cooperation and the wider global context. Most European

The Urban Agenda for the EU sets out a new approach for the EU and Member States to apply an integrated and sustainable urban development approach, in direct partnership with cities.

bilateral development cooperation agencies have integrated SDG implementation into their Official Development Assistance (ODA) and related policies. The same can be said of many other EU countries.

At the EU level, LRGs and their representative national, European and global associations, all active in decentralized cooperation, have gathered under PLATFORMA to further exchange practices, develop a common language around the SDGs with their peers in the world, and trial new approaches that can use the SDG framework as a blueprint to build their cooperation.⁷⁹

Increasingly, they have been acknowledged by EU institutions as important partners in development cooperation. Of particular importance was the formal recognition of local governments in Article 4 of the Cotonou Agreement⁸⁰ in 2005. This is reinforced by a number of EU policy decisions since, such as the 2013 EC Communication on empowering local authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes,⁸¹ and by a growing EU focus on the territorial approach to local development (TALD) policy to implement the SDGs.⁸² This is now leading to EU delegations to drawing up LRG 'roadmaps' in partner countries.

The role of LRGs and cities in the implementation of the SDGs was explicitly acknowledged in the European Consensus on Development, agreed by the EU in 2017. This places strong emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships and local government stating, 'the achievement of most of the SDGs is strongly dependent on the active involvement of local and regional authorities'.⁸³ The Consensus also mentions the commitment of the EU to support decentralization reforms and to empower LRGs.

Cooperative multilevel governance is reflected in the engagement of the EC with umbrella LGAs (e.g. PLATFORMA, UCLG, UCLG Africa, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum – CLGF and the *Association Internationale des Maires Francophones* – AIMF) through both policy dialogue and the channelling of financial support to them via Framework Partnership Agreements, first concluded in 2015/16.⁸⁴

LRGs, as well as the OECD, have emphasized the link between multilevel governance mechanisms and SDG implementation in Europe, and development cooperation undertaken by LRGs through decentralized development cooperation. The OECD takes the view that 'cities and regions have a crucial role in attaining the SDGs' and 'a territorial or place-based approach to SDGs provides a conceptual and operational framework to address the multi-sectoral, multi-actor and multilevel nature of the SDGs'.⁸⁵

LRGs and their representatives have been increasingly acknowledged by EU institutions as important partners in development cooperation and crucial actors in the achievement of most of the SDGs.

The majority of countries in the region have made efforts to integrate the SDGs into national strategies, create high-level coordination mechanisms and improve stakeholder participation in the process. Most countries are also engaged in developing regular reports to the UN and national level. However, there is a continuing need to better mainstream sustainability to ensure greater policy coherence. Despite its commitments, the EU still lacks a formal implementation strategy of the 2030 Agenda, the integration of the SDGs in sectoral policies, as well as in the multi-annual financial framework, and an adequate monitoring system. Policy cohesion is at risk within Europe. Although progress has been made in the governance frameworks for SDG implementation in the region – and some countries' efforts are particularly noteworthy – the involvement of LRGs is still insufficient and needs to be strengthened, as shown in their limited participation in the reporting process and in coordination mechanisms. It is difficult to know precisely the extent to which the structures created to coordinate the 2030 Agenda and other global agreements will influence the multilevel governance mechanisms developed by the EU and Member States in recent years.

Even though Europe is one of the regions where decentralization is strongly embedded in institutions and policies, LRGs in the region have in recent years experienced major challenges and critical reforms in their institutional environment that have impacted on the scope of their responsibilities, resources and autonomy. Despite changing conditions in a majority of countries, LRGs have adapted to ensure the continuity of public services, which can respond to the increasing demands of their communities, and support sustainable inclusive local development, taking the lead in many cases in transformative policies in several areas (climate change, social inclusion and cohesion, local development). The following section analyses a number of these policies and initiatives developed by the territories, as well as the challenges that LRGs face in delivering them. 🕒

3. The contribution of local and regional governments to the localization of the SDGs

3.1 LRG associations' and networks' actions to support local ownership of the SDGs

European LRG networks and LGAs have shown a strong commitment to the localization of global agendas. However, the way in which they approach these agendas differs considerably, depending on the geographical scope of their intervention, be it European or national, and on the resources they are able to mobilize. Their focus is on mobilizing and supporting their constituencies to engage with the global agendas, report and capitalize achievements, advocate for more enabling environments, and stimulate and facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge.

Brussels-based networks and national LGAs, particularly in Northern and Western Europe, have been leading the localization process in the region by allocating growing resources and building commitment.⁸⁶ The involvement of LRGs and LGAs in other countries remains challenging and has a long way to go, although some positive experiences can also be underlined.

European network and supranational association initiatives

European supranational LRG networks and LGAs have made a concerted effort to contribute to the SDG localization process. Firstly, they have fostered spaces for information, dissemination, learning and training, and generated support tools for their members. Secondly, they have taken advantage of the strong global consensus around the 2030 Agenda to upscale territorial priorities in the framework of EU policies.

Information and dissemination campaigns have contributed to the mobilization of networks and associations' members and their peers and very often have created an enabling environment for interaction and alliance-building with other stakeholders (CSOs, private sector or the EU institutions). In fact, some Directorate-Generals of the EC, members of the European Parliament and

the CoR have been good allies of European LRGs and their efforts to localize the 2030 Agenda and capitalize their contributions (see Section 2.3).

It is difficult to map all the initiatives developed by European LRG networks.⁸⁷ CEMR⁸⁸ and PLATFORMA,⁸⁹ for example, have established a task force where members share information and experience on the implementation of the SDGs in their countries, and the way in which national governments coordinate and cooperate with the sub-national level, and whether it in turn is included in the reporting process to the UN. Furthermore, in 2018, PLATFORMA organized several exchange meetings with different national LGAs (e.g. AICCRE — Italy, LALRG — Latvia, FEMP — Spain, VNG International – VNGi — the Netherlands, ALAL — Lithuania) as part of a pilot project entitled 'National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues on Development'.⁹⁰

In December 2018, the CEMR Policy Committee had a debate on the SDGs and the adequacy of public policies; members expressed strong support for the SDGs and agreed that CEMR would develop a multi-annual strategy for the SDGs. This strategy will be adopted at the spring policy committee meeting, before the CEMR 2020 Congress, 'Local Action. Global Shift. Living the Sustainable Development Goals' on 6-8 May 2020 in Innsbruck, Austria.

Eurocities⁹¹ organized its Social Affairs Forum in Utrecht (March 2018), 'Making the city together: co-creating city strategies to deliver the SDGs at local level', which included panel debates, workshops, site visits and speed-networking sessions. Similarly, jointly with the city of Ghent, it organized SDG Summer Deals in June 2018,⁹² and co-organized workshops with CoR and CEMR on the implementation of the SDGs at regional and local level on several occasions.⁹³ Other regional government networks, such as the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR),⁹⁴ AER⁹⁵ and CPMR,⁹⁶ as well as thematic networks — Climate

Alliance,⁹⁷ Energy Cities⁹⁸ — and global networks — C40, CLGF, Global Parliament of Mayors, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), Regions4, Metropolis, the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI)⁹⁹ — are particularly active.

The joint work undertaken between the LRGs and EU institutions in the framework of **the 2030 Agenda acts as an accelerator or lever for the EU and its Member States to enhance LRG-related policies** in important fields, such as cohesion (and structural funds), urban development, the fight against climate change and housing affordability. Eurocities, CEMR and CoR, together with the EC and EU Member States, actively participated in the negotiations leading to the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU (Pact of Amsterdam, 2016).¹⁰⁰ In the implementation stage, several partnerships bring together the EC, Member States' cities and associations' representatives of local and regional governments to develop joint initiatives at the EU and local level.¹⁰¹ In other areas, the EU has listened to the demands made by LRGs, their associations and local stakeholders, for example through the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy to implement the EU climate and energy objectives.¹⁰² The Covenant will also be key to improving local, national and European policies that implement the Paris Climate Agreement, SDG 11 and SDG 13.

LRG networks have now launched a process for reflection and dialogue around the shared stance of European LRGs on the pending Cohesion Policy 2021-2027. Different topics, such as the need to link the new cohesion and structural funds to the commitments made by the international community regarding the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement (as well as the localization) of SDGs through the European Structural and Investment Funds, are on the agenda. The Cohesion Alliance,¹⁰³ funded by the CoR, CEMR, AEBR, AER, CPMR and Eurocities, will work ceaselessly to ensure that cohesion is not sacrificed in the post-2020 EU budget and that LRGs are included in the shaping and managing of investment programs.¹⁰⁴

The increasing role of LRGs in the framework of the sustainable development agendas (2030 Agenda, NUA, the Conference of the Parties (COP), Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration) needs to be reflected in

European political agendas. European LRGs have fully engaged with EU policies for a long time, seeking to make them respond to local needs through formal channels, such as the CoR, ad hoc mechanisms and/or informal channels. Their political agenda has been raised to EU level, whether through their LGAs or directly. A large share of EU regions and some of the main cities and their LGAs have offices in Brussels that allow direct communication channels with EU institutions.

Awareness-raising, training and platforms for the exchange of experiences at national level

Two surveys in 2018 and 2019 by CEMR/PLATFORMA give more detail of the work undertaken by European LGAs on the 2030 Agenda.¹⁰⁵ Seventy percent of the 26 LGAs that represent local government in 23 countries said they are familiar with the SDGs, 52% that they use the SDGs as a reference and 44% that they align their work priorities with the SDGs, including exchange meetings and awareness-raising initiatives, campaigns, training, advocacy, knowledge-exchange. The majority (20) promote activities to support the SDGs among their members.

The **Swedish** Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) is working in collaboration with the Swedish UN Association, with financial support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), to coordinate a three-year project called Glocal Sweden, whose mission is to raise awareness, and educate and engage municipalities, county councils and regions in relation to the 2030 Agenda. In 2019, 81 municipalities and 15 regions joined the seven entities that took part in the original pilot project.¹⁰⁶ This is also true of the **Austrian** Städtebund, Danish Regions (DR) and Local Government **Denmark** (LGDK), the Italian branch of CEMR (AICCRE),¹⁰⁷ LGAs in **Belgium, Czech Republic,**¹⁰⁸ **Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Lithuania, Latvia,**¹⁰⁹ (see Boxes 1 and 2) and more recently their Scottish peers.

In Iceland in 2019, the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities organized a seminar to encourage the country's 72 municipalities to promote the SDGs. As a result, cities such as Kopavogur, Mosfellsbaer, Reykjavik and Akureyri worked to integrate the SDGs into their local plans. In **France**, the Association of Mayors of France (AMF), the French section of CMRE (AFCCRE) and United Cities France (CUF), as well as the Assembly of Departments and the French Associations of Regions (RdF), were invited to the High-Level Steering Committee for the SDGs. A number of them created a working group on the SDGs and decentralized cooperation bringing together various French cities and regions.

Supranational LRG networks and LGAs have taken advantage of the global consensus around the 2030 Agenda to upscale territorial priorities in the framework of EU policies.

Consequently, cities and regions began to align their plans with the SDGs.¹¹⁰

In **Germany**, LGAs have been active from the outset and municipalities signed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Building Sustainability at the Local Level Declaration, calling on 'federal and state governments to involve local authorities and their representatives as equals when developing strategies to achieve the SDGs. With the support of the Federal Ministry (BMZ) and the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW), LGAs are assisting German municipalities in developing their local strategies to introduce the SDGs (see also Box 6).¹¹¹

Similarly, **Serbian** LRGs and their LGA SCTM have fostered cooperation with national institutions to achieve the SDGs and, with UNDP, launched the project, 'Support for Improving Governance and Economic Planning at the Local Level for Accelerating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Republic of Serbia'.¹¹² In the **UK**, LGAs have raised awareness among members and contributed with positive experiences to the 2019 VNR, while the **Scottish** LGA, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), co-signed the National Performance Framework that led to mainstreaming the SDGs into middle and long-term plans at national and local level.¹¹³ Transnational cooperation has also proved essential: in 2019, the **Lithuanian** LGA, in cooperation with the national government, organized a high-level conference for mutual learning and the exchange of experiences on the SDGs with Moldova. Other LGAs, however, have had a more passive role and have participated in national conferences organized by the national government or international partners (**Romania's** LGA) or made public commitments but must move towards implementation (**Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina**), or are still discussing how to act (**Albania, Moldova**).

Despite all these efforts, LGAs still need to enhance their role as SDG implementers. Many LGAs, particularly in Central and South Eastern Europe, still perceive the SDGs as an additional and external framework that does not necessarily pertain to the territory.¹¹⁵ In the aforementioned survey, only seven LGAs indicated that they had set up inter-departmental working modalities; eight had developed joint activities with external stakeholders; two mentioned that their organization had chosen to focus on a limited number of SDGs; and eight LGAs were combining all these approaches. For almost half (40%) of the LGAs, the SDG framework has reinforced their work with European and international fora. However, one third of the respondents said that no strategy was yet in place. LGAs need to strengthen an integrated approach to the SDGs, ensuring inter-departmental work and broader partnerships.

Box 1

LGA actions to disseminate the 2030 Agenda

The Netherlands has seen the emergence of a myriad of local projects thanks to the Municipalities4Global Goals Campaign, fostered by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). This campaign has been welcomed by the municipalities. As the association itself points out: municipalities prefer 'an umbrella project/campaign which provides support, inspiration and exchange of good practices, rather than a uniform or top-down campaign that tells municipalities what to do'.

Examples of the projects of this initiative are the SDG 'Time Capsule', the annual most inspiring LRG competition, and the creation of communication materials. Each year, VNG International (VNGi), the international agency of VNG, organizes an annual competition for the 'most inspiring Global Goals municipality' as part of their New Year's reception.

For local elections in March 2018, VNG launched a booklet signed by mayors to support the SDGs. In September 2018, furthermore, it held four regional Global Goals meetings, with the Dutch Municipal Bank, and the Global Goals Social Impact Challenge to involve responsible entrepreneurs. It also set up Global Goals lectures and sessions during the annual VNG Mayors Day. Together with SNGs (provinces and water boards), VNG each year drafts a chapter for the annual SDG report for the Dutch Parliament.

Moreover, the Association of **Flemish** Cities and Municipalities (VWSG) has been very active supporting local governments on awareness-raising on the SDGs and integrating the SDGs into policy plans with publications, tools, information sessions and workshops. VWSG developed, for example, tools and recommendations supporting a project with a pilot group of 20 municipalities. At the political level, VWSG proposed an SDG Declaration of Engagement that has already been signed by one out of four Flemish municipalities.

It also offered recommendations during the last local election for local political parties to integrate the SDGs into their manifestos (discussing the SDGs within the party and through citizen participation, including visual presentation and key messages to link the SDGs with party priorities, etc.). Following the election, it organized information sessions for approximately 2,000 newly elected councillors. In addition, VWSG launched in 2018 the yearly Sustainable Municipality Week with the participation of over 80 municipalities and 650 'local heroes', committed citizens, companies, schools and organizations that contribute in their own way to sustainable development.

In **South-East Europe**, as part of its efforts to raise awareness of global agendas at the local level, in February 2019, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities (NALAS), in collaboration with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), published a handbook for practitioners, 'Agenda 2030 in my municipality', and organized several training workshops in the region.¹¹⁴ This handbook provides key information about the SDGs, explains the role of municipalities in their implementation, and explores awareness-raising tools that municipalities could use to bring the SDGs closer to their citizens. It also provides a variety of examples from the region that illustrate what municipalities have done to promote the SDGs and how this has affected their wellbeing.

Upscaling local and regional interests towards national strategies and policies

Across Europe, LGAs, through the advocacy strategies, signal their aim to participate in the national mechanisms for the coordination and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, and in the national VNRs. According to the CEMR/PLATFORMA survey, two thirds of the 26 LGAs that responded reported that LRGs are mentioned in their national strategies for the implementation of the SDGs; 60% have been involved in the VNR process, and 69% in the national coordination mechanisms of the SDGs. The level of involvement varies: ten LGAs were strongly involved in the reporting process, some only attended informative workshops or were invited to comment once the VNR was finalized.¹¹⁶ Only 23% reported that national coordination mechanisms have triggered any change on cross-level governance relations.¹¹⁷

In countries such as the **Netherlands** and

Denmark, where multilevel governance is strongly developed, LRG representatives were from the outset involved in or consulted on the preparation of the VNRs or coordination policies (also in **Belgium** at regional level). In **Switzerland**, the federal government has committed to intensify the dialogue with the cantons and communes through the Swiss Association of Towns and the Swiss Association of Municipalities. In some countries, LRG representatives participate in working groups at an advisory level, for example in **Germany**, where LGAs take part in the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Sustainable Urban Development ('IMA-Stadt'). LGA participation also occurs through pre-existing mechanisms such as a Council for Sustainable Development (e.g. **Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Moldova, Montenegro and Switzerland**), or new multi-stakeholders forums (**Ireland, Slovakia**); in **Greece** through the Economic and Social Committee, and in **Poland** in the Joint Central Government and Local Government Committee. In **France**, as mentioned, an LGA representative was invited to the High-Level Steering Committee for the SDGs established in April 2018 and charged with creating a roadmap for the localization of the SDGs. In **Spain**, while several regions, provinces and municipalities initiated actions much earlier than their national government, still LRG representatives were invited as occasional observers to the High-Level Group for the 2030 Agenda (inter-ministerial mechanism). More recently, in February 2019, the Spanish government created a specific mechanism to ensure the cooperation of the SNG level (see Box 2).¹¹⁸ The involvement of LGAs in the process of reporting and follow-up is particularly weak in countries such **Albania, Cyprus and Malta**.¹¹⁹

Greater involvement of LRGs in the design and follow-up of national strategies will facilitate better integration of local realities and policies. Capitalizing on the LRGs' innovation and added-value solutions will help develop a new paradigm in which public policies are jointly defined and implemented by the different spheres of government and with the participation of key stakeholders.

It is therefore advisable to promote local and regional level reports that could be included in the national reviews and monitoring processes to facilitate effective harmonization and more coherence of public policies in line with the 2030 Agenda.¹²⁰ 📍

Box 2

The advocacy role of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities (FEMP)

The **Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)** has played a major role in SDG localization throughout the country. This LGA has approached the 2030 Agenda in a strategic manner, captured in the document, 'FEMP Commitment 2030'.

FEMP deployed a set of actions to: a) foster institutional strengthening and awareness-raising of local stakeholders to improve knowledge around the SDGs and their localization; b) strengthen and legitimize the strategic role played by LRGs, towards more strategic advocacy actions; c) strengthen alliances with LGA networks, national, European and international organizations and amongst the Spanish LRGs, through the exchange of experiences, technical assistance initiatives and decentralized cooperation for the achievement of the SDGs; and d) contribute to monitoring.

Moreover, FEMP and regional governments drafted a document detailing sub-national SDG achievements to be incorporated in the Spanish VNR; organized the Local Week for the 2030 Agenda and a decentralized cooperation meeting to share experiences and discussion around the SDG localization with national and international peers, and organized training sessions on SDG localization aimed at LRGs.

During 2018, representatives of FEMP and regional governments participated as occasional observers in the High-Level Group (inter-ministerial) in charge of the coordination of the 2030 Agenda. In February 2019, the Spanish government created the National Commission for the 2030 Agenda to ensure coordination with SNGs, and the Sustainable Development Council to facilitate cooperation with civil society, as part of the governance of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2lzLU3>.

3.2 Local and regional government initiatives for the implementation of the SDGs

In large part due to the work of networks and associations, European LRGs are showing a growing commitment to the global agendas related to sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda is a very good opportunity to influence all policy-making processes and strengthen citizens' participation mechanisms.

The CEMR/PLATFORMA survey in 2019 was responded by 49 cities, departments, provinces and regions, while the CoR, with the support of the OECD, undertook another survey between December 2018 and March 2019, with 400 respondents.¹²¹

In the first survey, 71% of respondents were aware of and in the process of aligning their work with the SDGs, while in the CoR survey, 59% were familiar with the SDGs and working to implement them. In the CoR survey, furthermore, the percentage of large and middle-sized cities and regions engaged in implementation was especially high (87% and 78% respectively), but was lower for small municipalities (37%). However, very few LRGs were directly involved in the VNR process (21%) or in national coordination mechanisms (9%).¹²²

In the following countries, different sources reported a large number of local governments involved in the localization process: Belgium (e.g. 63% of Flemish local governments), Denmark, Norway (25%-30% of LRGs), Sweden (81 municipalities and 15 regions), Switzerland (16 cantons and 234 municipalities), and the Netherlands (64 municipalities).

Albeit to a lesser extent, a significant number of LRGs are also engaged in localization in countries such as Austria, Finland and Germany.¹²³ In many others, mobilization is growing (e.g. France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, UK, Baltic countries), but is more limited in Ireland, and Central Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, or Hungary — particularly limited). More generally, mobilization is still in the preliminary stages in East and South-East Europe (with the exception of Serbia where a national project is promoting the SDGs at local level).

Alignment of the SDGs with local strategies and local actions

The transformative power of the 2030 Agenda links to the founding principles upon which this universal agreement was based rather than on the achievement of the sectoral targets integrated in each of its goals. To unlock the transformative power of the 2030 Agenda through the process of aligning local or regional development strategies and public policies, LRGs should move towards more multi-dimensional, integral, participative, inclusive and accountable approaches for defining, implementing and monitoring policies. This, however, depends largely on the institutional and legal environments in which LRGs operate. Fostering an enabling environment, as described above, remains crucial to realizing the potential of LRGs' contribution to the 2030 Agenda, particularly when local development plans are guided (or even determined) by national development strategies (NDSs).

LRGs approach the SDGs differently. Many cities, provinces and regions are already or are in the process of aligning the SDGs with their local development plans or policies (e.g. cities such as Amiens, Besançon, Bonn; provinces such as Cordoba, Barcelona, Gironde; regions such as Brussels, Basque Region, Catalonia, Kronoberg).¹²⁴ Many big cities are taking the lead to localize the SDGs (e.g. Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Madrid, Paris, Vienna) — their experiences are developed further in the Metropolitan Areas Chapter.

While some LRGs are adopting a more integrated approach to mainstreaming the SDGs in their development plans, their policies to address sectoral challenges have some way to go in this regard. The conceptual framework of the 2030 Agenda may however help change this approach. A recent analysis commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers to assess the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level reveals the holistic approach adopted by the 'first movers' municipalities in the five Northern countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway

and Sweden). Many municipalities are adapting management systems and tools to align local goals and plans with the 2030 Agenda (see Box 3).

Many local governments are taking the opportunity of having newly local elected officers to promote new approaches. Examples include the work done by VNG in the Netherlands to foster new multi-annual strategic plans to be adopted after the October 2018 elections; by the Flanders' VVSG in Belgium to foster the inclusion of the SDGs in various local political agreements (2018-2022) following local elections also in October 2018;¹²⁵ by the Barcelona Provincial Council¹²⁶ through a roadmap for the cross-sectoral integration of the SDGs in the next Mandate

Implementation Plan following the May 2019 elections (and its support of the municipalities in its territory to take the same path); the Integrated World Heritage Management Plan of Regensburg¹²⁷ (which integrates cultural heritage in all aspects of city life, be it culture, building, economy, tourism, or others); and the Mannheim Model,¹²⁸ through its eight strategic priorities to foster resilience. In Balkan countries, in 2018, Bijeljina (Bosnia and Herzegovina) revised its Integrated Development Strategy to mainstream the SDGs.¹²⁹

Other examples of regional level integrated approaches being adopted are Wallonia (second sustainable development strategy,¹³² with a focus on consumption and production patterns regarding food, energy and resources); in Spain, Valencia,¹³³ Catalonia,¹³⁴ and the Basque Country, which all integrated the SDGs in their development plans; Kronoberg and Västra Götaland,¹³⁵ in Sweden; or North Rhine Westphalia in Germany, whose strategy was accompanied by the development of 15 other local strategies in the region (e.g. the city of Münster) as a pilot project (see Box 4).¹³⁶

When asked about the main challenges they face in working towards the achievement of the SDGs and the other global agendas, LRG respondents in the CEMR/PLATFORMA survey point to insufficient financial resources and lack of multilevel coordination, followed closely by limited local awareness and inadequate human resources and capacities. Respondents to the CoR/OECD survey, meanwhile, mainly highlighted lack of awareness and capacities or trained staff (50% of all respondents), difficulty to prioritize the SDGs over other agendas (49%), followed closely by insufficient financial resources (45%). In the CEMR/PLATFORMA survey, other challenges were limited support from national governments, the need for legal and institutional reforms to empower LRGs and limited access to information. In the CoR/OECD survey other challenges were lack of high-level commitment and follow-up, difficulties in communicating on the SDGs, lack of harmonized data at different levels or difficulty in selecting appropriate indicators.¹⁴⁵

Involvement of crucial stakeholders (public and private) and 'leaving no one behind'

The 2030 Agenda is leveraging the involvement of local stakeholders (grassroots and CSOs; foundations and the private sector — usually through business and employers' organizations; trades unions, universities, other knowledge-based organizations etc.) in the policy-making and planning process. As mentioned, involving territorial stakeholders is necessary not only to make public bodies and their interventions more accountable, but also to define effective policies and plans that respond to the real needs and interests of citizens and

Box 3

Holistic approaches adopted by Northern European municipalities¹³⁰

The Nordregio study analyses 27 municipalities that chose to use the 2030 Agenda to mainstream a sustainability perspective. The municipalities are located in all the Nordic countries and regions, and include small towns and capital cities, island, coastal and inland municipalities, municipalities with vast territories, and those with smaller areas.

Some local authorities linked the SDGs with their core steering documents such as local plans or strategies (Hurdal, Bergen, Copenhagen, Kópavogur, Gladsaxe, Kronoberg and Västra Götaland); to their local objectives (Kristiansund, Örebro, Uppsala) or their sustainability and quality of life programmes (Åtvidaberg, Växjö, Helsingborg, Odense).

Others adapted management systems (Kemi, Malmö), or used the SDGs to guide a merger of municipalities (New Asker).¹³¹ Other local authorities, moreover, work with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in specific projects or policy areas or for specific purposes (environmental policies, urban development, climate issues, health and wellbeing).

Each city has specific experiences that they can share with others: Copenhagen how to use living labs to engage local population in developing innovative solutions; Bergen how to link a business strategy to the SDGs; Uppsala how to use spatial analysis to define its priorities; Helsingborg how to link the SDGs to a Quality of Life Plan; Kópavogur how to develop and use indicators systems such the Social Progress Index; and Hurdal how to promote green housing, among others.

Some proposed recommendations are: greater support and customized training; better access to funding; more communication between national and local authorities on their priorities; harmonized indicators; and more opportunities for knowledge-sharing, and spread of best practice and solutions for inspiration.

The study also calls for more information and educational campaigns about the 2030 Agenda and emphasizes that selection of priorities, implementation and measurement of their impact must be adapted to local conditions.

Regions, provinces and cities' examples of integrated SDG strategies

Barcelona Provincial Council (Spain)¹³⁷

In 2016, the Barcelona Provincial Council, with its 311 municipalities, made a strong commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. It developed a comprehensive strategy to implement the SDGs within the institution while providing support to the province's municipalities to localize the SDGs in their territories. The strategy promoted a communication and awareness campaign called "*Sí m'hi comprometo!*", which offered opportunities for awareness raising, exchange of experiences and dissemination of materials, and launched a specific SDG website, to provide municipalities with the necessary information to develop their own strategies. Along these lines, specific training sessions on SDGs have been made available to both the municipalities and the departments of the Provincial Council. These training sessions comprise an introductory course and a specialized one to train LRGs on how to define their SDG localization strategies. In addition, the Provincial Council provides technical and economic support for municipalities to align their strategic plans to the SDGs, as well as to localize their municipal policies.

Besançon (France)¹³⁸

With a specific focus on the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, the city of Besançon has put forward a comprehensive set of actions to steer sustainable development in its territory, structured along the five axes of sustainability adopted after the Rio 1992 Earth Summit. These are: the fight against climate change; the preservation of biodiversity; the promotion of social cohesion; the protection of human life conditions; and the shift towards responsible production and consumption modes. The city council has developed initiatives along these lines, engaging a broad scope of local stakeholders, including a broad strategy to enhance energy efficiency (urban renewal, renewable energies), while reducing the ecological impact and improving environmental protection. Moreover, the city seeks to embed cohesiveness combining actions based on the promotion of culture and the inclusion of vulnerable populations with the elaboration of local development action plans via citizen participation.

Bristol (UK)¹³⁹

Based on the experience of Bristol Green Capital City, the Bristol City Council is working on its first ever One City Plan. The SDGs offer a common language for city partners — across the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability and across the private, public and third sectors —. 75 of the 169 SDGs targets were found to be directly relevant to the One City Plan. The process has been supported by the Bristol SDG Alliance, made up of more than 45 stakeholders (business sector, CSOs, academia, health institutions, women's organizations), advocating for the practical use of the SDGs in the city. In October 2017, Bristol City Council organized a Festival of the Future City and created an ambassadorial cabinet member role. Citizen-led engagement is planned to reach out to schoolchildren and business networks; and universities will develop assessments, prepare sustainable plans and commit to develop learning for SDGs. The city adopted a manifesto for women (2016) and created a Global Goals Centre. In partnership with the UN Global Compact, in November 2018, it organized an SDG Roadshow 2018 for the UK.

Harelbeke (Belgium)¹⁴⁰

The municipality fully embraced the momentum of local elections in October 2018 and the subsequent development of the multi-annual strategic plans for 2020-2025 to move towards a more sustainable local policy aligned with the SDGs. Harelbeke has created broad support for the SDGs within the local administration, council and with external stakeholders such as citizens, private sector and schools. For example, a participatory analysis of the municipality was developed around the five P's of sustainable development (people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership). Moreover, in the run-up to the local elections, the civil advisory boards of the municipality wrote a manifesto aimed at the politicians, structuring their demands on the five P's. In addition, new multi-annual strategic plans integrate the SDGs with the municipality's sustainability priorities (e.g. mobility, smart cities and housing for elderly); and Harelbeke is also using the SDG framework to communicate about a city-to-city link with Eenhana (Botswana), and to revise this particular programme.

Münster (Germany)¹⁴¹

The German city of Münster has involved the whole local administration (22 offices) in planning and implementation of SDG strategies, both from a political and technical perspective, and produced changes in the local governance approach. There is a core team for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (six departments), as well as an advisory board (multi-stakeholder platform). Several operational objectives have been agreed: orientation of the Council's public procurement towards the 2030 Agenda; implementation of eco-fair procurement by at least 50 pilot stakeholders; capital procurement of the city and local businesses, alongside capital investment, based on sustainable criteria; development of resilient structures and processes for global justice through enhanced networking, and the establishment of at least one city or project partnership with a community and/or stakeholders from the global South, together with a civil society structure.

Utrecht (Netherlands)¹⁴²

In 2015, Utrecht Council decided to become a Global Goals City. One of the main priorities is the creation of a 'healthy urban living' environment, focusing on areas such as innovation, health economy and infrastructure, sustainable mobility, air quality, and reducing CO₂ emissions. Working towards an integrated, interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach, the city mobilized a large coalition of citizen initiatives and local stakeholders (business, NGOs, knowledge institutions): for example: the Heelutrecht Campaign to stimulate citizens, grassroots initiatives and businesses that contribute to the SDGs; Fairtrade Utrecht and Utrecht 4 Global Gifts to promote fair trade and sustainable products from Utrecht-based businesses. In 2018, Utrecht4GlobalGoals organized the Climate Planet which attracted an estimated 70,000 visitors. Furthermore, the municipality developed the Global Goals Dashboard. Other cities, such as Oss, have included the SDGs in their programme budgets for 2019-2022 and developed their own local indicators and dashboards,¹⁴³ Meanwhile, Rheden has decided to base its municipal reorganization on the Global Goals.¹⁴⁴

Strengthening pre-existing and new alliances with territorial stakeholders, including CSOs, the private sector, schools and knowledge-based organizations, is key to improving national SDG implementation strategies and better linking them to the local level.

communities. Their involvement makes it possible to pool knowledge, resources, innovation capacity and legitimacy.

The campaigns, conferences, trainings and exchanges of experiences are fostering joint actions by LRGs and LGAs with other stakeholders and, particularly, with CSOs, the private sector, schools and knowledge-based organizations. Strengthening these alliances is key to improving national SDG implementation strategies and better linking them to the local level. Since 2016, the **Belgian** SDG Charter has been signed by local governments, among numerous other stakeholders and governmental bodies. The **Netherlands** SDG Charter signatories include large private companies, CSOs and the VNG (around 500 parties). **Finland's** Civil Society Commitment, 'The Finland We Want 2050', is a multi-stakeholder platform supported by all levels of government. In **Italy**, AICCRE is a member of the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS), also a multi-stakeholder initiative. In **France**, the multi-stakeholder Committee Agenda 21, in 2018 initiated a 'Tour de France' in partnership with the Association of French Regions that will continue to run during 2019.¹⁴⁶ In **Portugal**, the Inter-Municipal Network for Cooperation and Development (RICD), with a membership of 20 municipalities, organized in 2016-2017 a travelling exposition on the SDGs and their localization that has been touring the country. In **Latvia**, both LGAs LALRG and LPS have promoted SDG multi-stakeholder dialogues during 2017 with civil society and organized two grant competitions for development education among Latvian local governments. Likewise, in **Croatia**, the national LGA has worked hand-in-hand with NGOs to improve dissemination through joint events and the publication of a brochure. In 2018, during the European Days of Local Solidarity (EDLS) (15-30 November 2019), a growing number of elected representatives signed the EDLS Charter and up to 120 activities were organized across Europe by city councils in partnership with CSOs and education centres.¹⁴⁷

Many LRGs have also used pre-existing platforms to engage their local stakeholders. For

example, the former Madrid City Council launched the strategy 'Madrid 2030: a city for all persons and generations' to reduce social inequalities and exclusion. This was a cross-cutting and cross-sectoral exercise based on the outcomes of the *Foro Madrid Solidario*, a forum where all local stakeholders involved in development cooperation and global justice work together in an open, flexible and dynamic manner.¹⁴⁸ It also complements the citizen participation Decide Madrid website.¹⁴⁹

The most important aim of the 2030 Agenda that has become one of the key references of the entire implementation process is the joint commitment of 'leaving no one (and no territory) behind'. This powerful and transformative principle refers to the need to reach out to the most vulnerable groups to understand the disadvantages these people face; and empower and involve them directly in the inclusive definition, implementation of monitoring of global, regional, national and local strategies for sustainable development. They are migrants, children, the elderly, LGBTQIA+ members, and women, among others. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area's Sustainability Service and the Housing Public Entity (IMPSOL) launched an SDG-related pilot project that aims to protect the rights of tenants and offer affordable and adequate housing by listening to and working closely with the most deprived citizens.¹⁵⁰ In Lisbon, the awareness-raising Lisbon Programme on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (SOMOS) focuses on the rights of the child, racism, LGBTQIA+ rights, disability, gender violence and bullying, covering the most vulnerable groups. It has built SOMOS schools (in conjunction with partner organizations including migrants NGOs), and brings together people from particular sectors, such as NGOs, academies, public institutions, corporate bodies, schools, volunteers etc. in an inclusive way.¹⁵¹

Finally, Brussels is working to transform and revitalize the Brussels Canal Area and old slaughterhouse with the principal aim of bringing economic and social opportunities for inhabitants living in the area (many immigrant ethnic groups with usually low incomes). It is turning the former slaughterhouse into an everyday infrastructure with a farmer's market, and urban agriculture, and completely revitalizing this region at an economic, social and environmental level. The city was shortlisted for the 3th Guangzhou Award (2016) for the project.

Making LRGs accountable and measuring their achievements

Defining efficient monitoring and evaluation systems is complex, especially at the territorial level where mechanisms to collect information and reliable data raise problems of resources and capacities. SDG indicators were established at the national level and many of them are not applicable in local and regional contexts. The complexity and

divergences between UN, Eurostat, national and regional monitoring systems further complicate the process. However, 64% of the LGA answers to the survey collected by CEMR/PLATFORMA indicated that LGAs know about initiatives in their countries to develop local indicators to monitor the SDGs and/or disaggregate data collection. In the CoR survey, moreover, 58% of respondents currently use indicators to monitor progress.¹⁵²

To monitor progress in an EU context, Eurostat has developed the European SDG indicator set in close coordination with the national statistical divisions.¹⁵³ However, this uses national indicators that do not always respond to local contexts. Meanwhile, the SDG 11 indicators are a very useful tool to measure some achievements at urban level,¹⁵⁴ but they clearly fall short of monitoring implementation of most other SDGs at the local level (and at national level too), as was highlighted by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) study, 'Exposing EU policy gaps to address the Sustainable Development Goals'.¹⁵⁵

The need for data collection and analysis at the local level has been recognized by a number of countries such as Belgium or Sweden (which envisages a comprehensive National SDG Statistical Platform involving LRGs), even if they are still exploring the most appropriate ways to localize indicators that are aligned to those proposed by the UN.

At the same time, several cities, provinces, regions and associations, either by themselves or in close alliance with knowledge-based organizations, are working to set up systems of local/regional indicators aligned with those proposed at the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). Interesting examples are being developed in Germany and in the province of Barcelona (see Box 5). These are also being designed to be reliable and verifiable through the data collection systems available at local/regional level, and are sometimes linked to the monitoring of other policies such as Vienna's Smart Monitor.¹⁵⁶

Another initiative is the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC), an online toolkit designed to assist cities in their self-assessment of the performance and alignment of local strategies and plans in relation to the European Vision of Sustainable Cities. This provides a framework of 30 objectives comprising spatial, governance, social, economic and environmental dimensions, and the 17 SDGs, to 'localize the SDGs'. Suitable for cities of all sizes and open to all stakeholders, the tool promotes the principles of integrated planning, and a place-based and multi-stakeholder approach.¹⁵⁷

At local level, Utrecht, shortlisted for the 4th Guangzhou Awards for Urban Innovation (see Box 4), is currently developing a local SDG data dashboard with existing local indicators connected

to the SDG targets. This aims to be accessible to the different departments of the municipality and partners to complement the municipal data with examples of local SDG progress by urban stakeholders.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, VNG and Statistics Netherlands (CBS) are working to create a set of indicators at sub-national level. In Flanders, an indicator set was developed for 91 SDG sub-targets with a basic set of 34 indicators for municipalities, in line with the goals of Vision 2030, the SDG agenda of the Flemish government. Some of these indicators are made available to municipalities by higher levels of government, while for others data have to be collected by the municipalities themselves. Municipalities decide

Box 5

Bottom-up initiatives to develop SDG indicators – the German and Spanish experiences¹⁶⁰

The association of German cities, *Deutscher Städtetag*, reports on the initiative it shares with its sister associations (DL and DStGB), the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), the German Institute of Urban Studies (Difu), the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung (BSt).

The aim of the initiative, SDG Indicators for Municipalities, is to develop appropriate indicators for the depiction of the SDGs at municipal level (i.e. to compile and, where necessary, redefine them) and, to the greatest possible extent, provide access to the indicator parameters.

The recently proposed 47 SDG indicators should be regarded as recommendations: individual municipalities decide voluntarily which indicators they want to use to depict or control sustainable development in a local context. The data and methodology are now available through a portal: <https://sdg-portal.de/>.

Similarly, the Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan (*Pla Estratègic Metropolità de Barcelona — PEMB*), together with the Barcelona Provincial Council have launched an initiative to develop a set of indicators to measure the achievement of the SDGs in the municipalities of the Province of Barcelona.

To this end, a working group was created bringing together different actors, including local governments, research centres, international institutions, third-sector organizations and private companies working within the framework of the SDGs and with expertise in the development of indicators and local information systems in the territory. The working methodology included face-to-face and online sessions through a specific platform.

As a result of this initiative, 109 indicators were developed, consistent with the existing information systems and aligned to those established by the United Nations. In addition, 69 complementary indicators were suggested that, although not required by the UN, were considered useful to measure the sustainable development of the territory.

voluntarily which indicators they want to use in accordance with their own context and goals.¹⁵⁹

The Spanish¹⁶¹ and Italian¹⁶² partners of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) have published country reports that measure the progress of the SDGs in a number of cities of all sizes through selected indicators adapted to their context and to the official statistical sources available to obtain robust data. Several Portuguese municipalities belonging to the Centre of Studies and Opinion Surveys of the Catholic University (CESOP) local network, which is following the same methodology as SDSN, have worked together in order to create the Municipal Sustainability Report.¹⁶³ In Italy in 2017, ASviS also developed a set of composite indicators that include disaggregated data at the level of regions and complete the process begun by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

Finally, many cities and regions are also developing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) that can be included in national reporting. These include the Basque Country, Barcelona, Bristol, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region, the Gironde department,

Helsinki, Paris and Vienna. City-to-city exchange, and decentralized cooperation, can facilitate peer-to-peer learning to support monitoring and ensure coherent implementation, developing a common language and plans, putting the SDGs at the heart of policy and action with partners and discussion with both national governments and citizens, as well as developing partnerships with LRGs in the Global South.¹⁶⁴ 🌍

Bilbao, Basque Country, Spain
(photo: © Andrea Ciambra).



3.3 Local and regional governments as providers of innovation and solutions to achieve the SDGs

Although at different stages, LRGs across Europe are moving forward in the SDG localization process. They have continued to conceive of and implement policies, plans and initiatives to respond to the challenges they face, complying with their formally devolved and de facto competences, most of them related to the SDGs (see Section 2.2) to contribute to the wellbeing of their communities.

Particularly in the EU, cities, provinces and regions have been encouraged by and are taking advantage of the EU Cohesion Policy and its various instruments for the 2014-2020 period, as well as the important linkages to EU (and national) development cooperation policy referred to in Section 2. This EU policy framework has been translated into a number of national policies that determine to a greater or lesser extent the challenges and actions of LRGs. The following section shows some examples of policies and actions developed by LRGs to address different sectoral dimensions of the SDGs.

Inclusive economic growth: back to economic convergence

Cities and territories are the backbone of European economic growth. They are promoting innovation, alternative economic models to boost their local fabric and reduce inequalities within and between territories.¹⁶⁵ Inclusive territorial development policies are determinant for European cohesion policies seeking to have a more balanced territorial development. As emphasized in different European reports, regions in Europe seem to be converging again after the economic crisis of 2008-2009 but, although disparities are narrowing, there are still important differences between and within regions, underlying some critical issues for territorial inclusiveness.

Many regions still have a GDP per capita and employment rates below the pre-crisis level of 2008. While at the EU level, for example, unemployment rates have been reduced (from

10.9% in 2013 to 8.3% in 2018), there are still important differences between regions.¹⁶⁶ The regions most concerned with this problem are the less-developed (24%) and especially transition regions (27%).¹⁶⁷ Outside of the EU, in the Western Balkans, the situation is however still worrying.¹⁶⁸ The big differences in unemployment and income encourage people to move. Some regions have rapid population growth, particularly capital and large cities, while others depopulate.¹⁶⁹

In order to overcome these challenges, many cities and territories are committing to **innovation-driven progress**. Thanks to their capacity to support their Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), foster new employment, promote new economic models (such as the social and collaborative economy) and sectors (cultural and creative industries), they are able to mainstream social and technological innovation. In this sense, many medium-sized cities have become urban labs (or living labs), promoting innovation ecosystems where the different stakeholders jointly come up with and implement new solutions to the local challenges, through an approach focused on 'user-centred' innovation and development. In Cornella, the Citilab tool has been created to introduce social and digital innovation in the city using design thinking and citizen-based co-creation methodologies. Similarly in Ljubljana, the Technology Park (owned by the municipality) has a catalysing role that promotes networking, flexibility and co-creation of ideas and opportunities.¹⁷⁰ Some cities and

Cities and territories are promoting alternative economic models to boost their local fabric and reduce inequalities within and between territories.



Heraklion, Crete
(photo: alh1, bit.ly/318blMq).

regions have developed their own urban lab as a joint strategy with urban stakeholders (e.g. the Maastricht-LAB,¹⁷¹ and the living labs integrated in the Smart City Graz Action Plan 2020),¹⁷² while others may not run their own urban labs but offer the territory as a testing ground (e.g. Malmö).¹⁷³

It is however important to note that innovation is in general concentrated in a limited number of regions, mostly in the North-West of Europe (UK, South of Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden). Meanwhile, other regions spread across Europe (in the Baltic countries, Spain, South of Italy, Greece, but above all Poland, Romania and Bulgaria), have a modest regional innovation performance.¹⁷⁴ Taking into account that SMEs (SDG 8.3) are the backbone of Europe's economy and provide 85% of all new jobs, LRGs should link their programmes to support innovation to those that foster SME creation and development (access to funding, etc.). Lombardy, for example, is offering grants for investments aimed at the optimization and innovation of the production processes of micro and small enterprises in the manufacturing, construction and crafts sectors.¹⁷⁵

To support regional development, wider territorial solutions (including urban-rural linkages) and cooperation within functional urban areas are necessary. The Pact of Amsterdam and recently adopted Bucharest Declaration 'Towards a common framework for urban development in the European Union'¹⁷⁶ also highlight this point. It is particularly relevant for less-developed regions, where the share of employment in agriculture in 2016 was 11 percentage points higher than in highly developed ones (13% versus 2%).¹⁷⁷ For this reason, the development of the smaller cities and their connected hinterlands should carry as

much importance as the competitiveness of larger cities.¹⁷⁸ Precisely because of this need to take not only big cities into account but also smaller ones and the hinterlands (rural areas included), many regions have developed active policies to promote innovation in EU programmes and policies. Several EU Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization (RIS3) strategies are adopted annually in Europe (over 120 by 2017), each highlighting their own fields of specialization, in order to boost the knowledge potential, strengthen economic competitiveness and drive growth and job creation. The Greek region of Crete,¹⁷⁹ for example, opted for revitalizing traditional and emerging specific activities, and updating its production potential. In the region of Salzburg,¹⁸⁰ five priorities were considered key: life sciences; ICT; smart materials; intelligent building and settlement systems; and creative industries and services innovations.

Additionally, LRGs are giving increasing importance to the leading role **technological innovation** plays in economic sustainable development and the increase in productivity and employability, as well as in urban governance and the creation of better and more accessible services, which has fostered the growth of 'smart city' and 'smart region' solutions (see Section on environmental challenges below). LRGs are fostering many practices that ensure digitalization and technological innovation, such as the growing number of EU municipalities offering free Wi-Fi hotspots (in 2018, over 21,600 EU municipalities registered to apply for the vouchers to the value EUR 15,000 to create free Wi-Fi hotspots in the framework of the WIFI4EU programme).¹⁸¹ The Digital Transition Partnership, with the support of Eurocities, Open and Agile Smart Cities and

CEMR, has called for a financial framework for cities and regions in digital transition to be guaranteed in the EU post-2020 budget.¹⁸²

Innovation, however, does not always need to be technological. **The social and collaborative economy** offers alternative models that put the person and their needs at the core of the development. These models support productive activities, decent job creation and entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and prioritize collaboration in sectors such as culture, education, care for people, housing, food production and the protection of the environment. LRGs in many EU countries are taking action to promote these alternative models. They are creating networks of actors within the social economy to experiment with innovative financial infrastructures such as social impact bonds, crowd-funding, impact hubs and digital platforms, enhancing urban innovation and encouraging smart city solutions from the bottom up. For instance, Gothenburg is offering financial support and skills development opportunities to social entrepreneurs (EUR 200,000 per year awarded in grants and EUR 500,000 per year given in micro-loans), Milan has launched the first incubator dedicated to social businesses, and Rennes has included social responsibility clauses in private and public sector contracts.¹⁸³

All of the innovative models mentioned above are crucial for local development involving two million companies in Europe, representing 10% of all businesses in the EU and more than 11 million people (about 6% of the EU's employees), and very often involving vulnerable citizens. These initiatives should not be associated with the models of Amazon, Uber, Cabify or Airbnb that take advantage of transnationality and new technologies promoting practices that are unregulated and that can harm other groups or citizens' rights (taxi drivers' rights, decent jobs, housing scarcity, etc.). Cities are engaged in vociferous debates about the need to regulate their activities better (Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Amsterdam, London and Milan, amongst other main cities).¹⁸⁴

On another note, **culture and creativity** have also been connected to innovation in recent years as a guiding thread of prospering cities and regions in Europe. Local governments in Europe are working to boost the cultural and creative industries' potential to generate jobs, wealth and cultural engagement. Cities are creating new spaces or adapting old ones (city centres, redesigned factories, brownfield areas, etc. as through the IncrediBOL! project in Bologna), to build a supportive environment for these open-minded, adaptable and young industries that have managed to penetrate the arts, production, commerce and technology.¹⁸⁵ Cultural and creative industries are a very important sector of the economy. They employ a large number of

people (especially young creators), particularly through small and medium-sized businesses, and encourage collaboration between sectors and the digital revolution.

Strong commitment to fight climate change and strengthen resilience in cities and territories

One of the major concerns of cities and regions in today's Europe is the fight against climate change, various ecological crises and strengthening resilience. It is estimated that climate change could cause damage costing EUR 190 billion per year, mostly from heat-related deaths and losses in agriculture and coastal areas in the EU alone, by the end of the 21st century (taking a high economic growth scenario as the basis),¹⁸⁷ and a loss of 1% of GDP by 2050 mostly from damages to the tourism and energy sectors in the Mediterranean countries.¹⁸⁸

For this reason, European LRGs have strived to find the best solutions to the energy, mobility, waste management or circular economy challenges they face, amongst others, with specific emphasis on risk reduction and the achievement of resilient cities and territories. A growing number of cities such as Canterbury in the United Kingdom have declared local 'climate emergencies', committing themselves to strive for zero-carbon emissions and working with local CSOs, academia and other stakeholders to implement relevant SDG targets. The EC adopted in November 2018 its 'Strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy by 2050 — A Clean Planet for all', which sets the framework for action in the future.¹⁸⁹

The EU has repeatedly acknowledged that European cities and regions have proven to

Box 6

Creative Cities' contribution to sustainability¹⁸⁶

As the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor 2017 points out (a study that analyses 168 European cultural and creative cities of diverse demographic and economic characteristics), the ideal Cultural and Creative City in Europe would be a mix of eight cities which are mostly small and medium sized.

Thus, from the study, it would have the cultural venues and facilities of Cork, the cultural participation and attractiveness and the creative and knowledge-based jobs of Paris, the intellectual property and innovation of Eindhoven, the new jobs in creative sectors of Umeå, the human capital and education of Leuven, the openness, tolerance and trust of Glasgow, the local and international connections of Utrecht, and the quality of governance of Copenhagen.

be important delivery agents for the European transition towards a more decentralized, energy-efficient, decarbonized and resilient energy system. The European Covenant of Mayors,¹⁹⁰ now gathering over 9,600 LRGs across 38 European countries, covers all the areas mentioned above and has brought high-impact results to Europe, thanks to the Sustainable Energy (and Climate) Action Plans that new signatories committed to. This Covenant is one of the regional covenants within the Global Covenant of Mayors (gathering over 10,200 cities worldwide).

Cities play a major role in **energy transition**, both because they demand two-thirds of primary energy in the entire world and because they contribute with innovative solutions to these problems. As highlighted in Energy Cities,¹⁹¹ thermal renovation of buildings, the transition towards sustainable mobility and the development of proximity as the lynchpin of urban planning, are three actions that need to be tackled from the local level. The creation of synergies between urban and rural areas where the regions' action is essential, as well as the use of new technologies (smart grids) to make energy production and consumption more efficient, are also critical.

According to EC estimates, **buildings** are currently responsible for 40% of the EU's energy consumption and 36% of its CO₂ emissions.¹⁹² European cities are characterized by quite a rigid, pre-existing urban fabric, with 42% of all

buildings built before 1950. Often outdated building standards inhibit the use of new materials, and technological improvement is mainly done through renovation and retrofitting of existing infrastructure with a very low rate of replacement (London,¹⁹³ the region of Jadranska Hrvatska in Croatia,¹⁹⁴ Heidelberg in Germany¹⁹⁵). In this sense, several instances of best practice can be pointed out, such as the referendum for the remunicipalization of the energy distribution grids in Hamburg,¹⁹⁶ and in Barcelona¹⁹⁷ (along with other movements for the remunicipalization of basic public services such as water, energy, or currently free transport in Dunkirk¹⁹⁸ and Tallinn¹⁹⁹).

Likewise, several LRGs throughout Europe are getting at least 70% of their electricity from renewable sources such as hydro, geothermal, solar and wind, having abandoned other sources such as coal or lignite (from the Nordic countries – Reykjavik, Gladsaxe Kommune, Oslo, Bærum Kommune, Arendal – and Switzerland – Basel, Nyon – to Portugal – Porto, Fafe, Moita, Cascais –, Italy – Oristano, Bolzano – and Romania – Alba-Iulia).²⁰⁰

Additionally, with the support of the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership or E5P,²⁰¹ district heating projects have been implemented in several cities in Ukraine (Zhytomyr, Ternopil, Lviv), and Moldova (Balti), solid waste projects have been developed in Belarus (Puhovichi) and Ukraine (Lviv), and energy efficiency projects in public buildings have taken place in Ukraine (Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Zhytomyr) and in Moldova (Chisinau), amongst many others.

Cities and regions in Europe are also fostering **sustainable mobility** to reduce CO₂ emissions and improve air quality in urban areas.²⁰² Transport and mobility today count for almost one quarter of Europe's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the demand is still increasing. The EU created a Strategy for Low Emission Mobility in 2016, together with the 'Europe on the move' package.²⁰³ Several measures aimed at increasing the sustainability of European transport systems have been adopted. The strategy mainly targets the reduction of GHG emissions and incentives to drive the market towards clean mobility. At the city level, traffic-free zones have been designated in London,²⁰⁴ Lyon²⁰⁵ and Madrid;²⁰⁶ and car-free days in Paris,²⁰⁷ congestion-charging schemes in London²⁰⁸ and car, motorbike and bike-sharing systems in Milan,²⁰⁹ are all a reality. In Copenhagen the first 'bicycle highway' allows commuters to connect the central district with the periphery by bike. The region of Lombardy²¹⁰ (Italy) has also contributed through the development of electric car-charging points. The French region Auvergne Rhône-Alpes has set up a Zero Emission Valley programme.²¹¹

Box 7

Green Deals towards sustainable energy consumption in the Netherlands²¹²

In the Netherlands, the Dutch government (as a joint initiative by the Ministries of Economic Affairs, Infrastructure and the Environment, and the Interior and Kingdom Relations) has fostered Green Deals that is an innovative initiative fostered by a coalition of enterprises, CSOs and/or public administrations to design and implement innovative initiatives aimed at accelerating the transition to a sustainable economy.

To date, the results achieved with Green Deals include: 15,000 electric vehicle charging stations; 8,100 energy-efficient homes; more than 2,000 hectares of temporary nature in almost 30 areas; and construction of seven Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) stations and two LNG bunker stations. The province of Noord Holland, for example, has taken this opportunity to make its real-estate, infrastructure and 700+km of provincial roads completely circular in terms of replacement and maintenance with the support of the national government under the Green Deals Sustainable Groundwork and Waterworks of 2017. Similar initiatives exist in other countries (e.g. Flanders in Belgium, with seven Green Deals).

Waste management strategies are also crucial to improve environmental sustainability (SDG 12.5) and citizens' quality of life. Some innovative examples are the household waste selective collection as a pilot project in a neighbourhood in Barcelona,²¹³ the Blue Box programme in the Waterloo Region,²¹⁴ or the search for intelligent systems and innovative planning in the partners of the Interreg-funded WINPOL project²¹⁵ (Gijon, Brussels, Anvers, Maribor, Mehedinti County, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Crete Region and the Environment Resources Authority of Malta). These LRGs have contributed to the increase in the rates of municipal waste recycling (covering material recycling, composting and digestion of bio-waste),²¹⁶ although the 50% recycling target by 2020 have only been achieved by six countries, and disparities between Member States are still very obvious: in Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands less than 5%; in Bulgaria and Greece up to 80%.²¹⁷

The EU has placed the **circular economy** at the heart of its sustainability policies: the circular economy action plan adopted in 2015 sets out measures to change consumption and production patterns by focusing on the design of products, new rules for waste management and increasing consumer awareness.²¹⁸ It also addresses two huge challenges in Europe: food waste and plastics. Moreover, circular economy is one of the 12 priority themes of the Pact of Amsterdam to achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources of the 2030 Agenda (SDG 12.2).

The circular economy has been mainstreamed into strategic instruments: in pilot programmes such as the EIT Climate-KIC Orchestrated Innovation Ecosystem programme²¹⁹ (with Malmö, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Sofia, Utrecht etc. as participating cities); in the federal constitution in Geneva;²²⁰ in different strategies in the Basque Country;²²¹ in multi-stakeholder roadmaps in the Päijät-Häme region;²²² and the Tampere region²²³ in Finland (shortlisted for the 2016 Guangzhou Award), among others.

Finally, cities and regions are key to achieving new and sustainable modes of **production and consumption** that contribute to reducing GHG emissions, amongst others. Amongst the main challenges, food production and consumption, particularly agrifood, is increasingly important. Several city and regional networks have been established in recent years both at the national level (Sustainable Food Cities in the UK;²²⁴ *Red de ciudades por la Agroecología* in Spain;²²⁵ *Rete Città Sane* — OMS in Italy;²²⁶ the Dutch City Deal: Food on the Urban Agenda;²²⁷ the German BioStädte network)²²⁸ and at European level (*Agroecocities*;²²⁹ ICLEI-RUAF CityFood network).²³⁰ One of the most meaningful initiatives is the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact,²³¹ with 179 signatory cities since 2015 and 66 cities

Following the remunicipalization trend to achieve more affordable and efficient public services, cities such as Budapest, Paris, Montpellier or Berlin, recovered the management of water supply, complemented with social inclusion policies.

engaged in food policy city-to-city cooperation. This represents an innovative planning strategy that integrates a food cycle system fostering reuse, recycling waste and reducing food miles through the promotion of local products. Based on the Québec Declaration of 2015, Regions France, with the support of UCLG, launched an initiative to foster a progressive reterritorialization of food systems, and improve local food production processes to protect and involve local communities, and promote food security and nutrition transition.²³²

Along with waste management, the **supply of drinking water and sanitation** (usually a local competence), as well as **water management**, are also high on the European agenda, particularly thanks to the European Citizen's Right2water initiative that was endorsed by the European Parliament in 2013. This initiative called for the basic human right to access clean water and sanitation in a broad context of privatization and market competition for water supply.²³³

As a consequence, and following the remunicipalization trend to achieve more affordable and efficient public services, cities such as Budapest, Paris, Montpellier or Berlin, recovered the management of water supply,²³⁴ complemented with social inclusion policies (SDGs 1.4, 11.1), such as modification of fee structures (progressive rates in Grenoble, Hermosillo, Lisbon; special fees for persons with disabilities in Nantes); provision of economic support (social funds for residents of vulnerable areas in Grenoble and Malaga); prohibition of water supply disconnection (in Edinburgh and Glasgow); and other support measures to facilitate payment (for the poor community in Budapest).²³⁵

Resilience has been acknowledged by the 2030 Agenda in as many as eight targets related to infrastructure (9.1), agriculture (2.4), vulnerable citizens (1.5) and most particularly human settlements in the specific urban SDG 11, and resilient societies and territories are the main goal of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Many initiatives have been developed by LRG networks (e.g. ICLEI, UCLG), partners (100 Resilient Cities — 100RC) and UN agencies (UN

Habitat resilience programme, UNDRR Making Cities Resilient Campaign) to raise awareness and provide tools, technical assistance, city-to-city support networks, and learning opportunities for disaster resilience-building. Local governments promote resilience and are mainstreaming resilience into the different plans adopted (e.g. in the province of Potenza,²³⁶ through the Territorial Coordination Plan); engaging citizens and local stakeholders in a participative manner (e.g. Bristol, through the Resilience Sounding Board and the involvement of over 1,600 people from across the city);²³⁷ and in monitoring (e.g. Lisbon,²³⁸ through the web dashboard with a GIS approach to centralizing data, or Stepanavan,²³⁹ through the Local Government Self-Assessment Tool). Using a broader approach, the Swedish region Skåne addressed resilience-integrated challenges such as urbanization/depopulation, the use of new technologies, aging population and climate adaptation by involving a specific community of public and private stakeholders.²⁴⁰

Towards more inclusive cities and regions that 'leave no one behind'

In 2017, there were more than 112.8 million people or 22.4% of the EU Member States' populations at risk of poverty and social exclusion.²⁴¹ The risk of poverty or social exclusion is particularly high in the Southern and Baltic countries and it is marginally higher in rural areas than urban areas (19.8% in rural areas, 16.7% in cities and 16.0% in towns or suburbs).²⁴²

Inequalities within and between cities and territories also have a bearing on social exclusion.²⁴³ Increasing socio-economic differences between metropolitan regions, middle-sized cities, towns and rural regions contribute to aggravating disparities, eliciting migration to larger cities, and accelerating the marginalization of peoples and territories. While capital gains are concentrated in growing urban systems and economically dynamic regions, around 20% of European cities — mostly small and medium-sized, and often with aging populations — are being affected by shrinkage and decline, particularly in Eastern and South-eastern Europe, Baltic countries, and Western Spain.²⁴⁴

To face these challenges and advance policy and societal change, LRGs across Europe have sought to foster paradigm shifts in urban and territorial policies through new planning and regeneration policies, social inclusion, gender equality, alternative economic options (as mentioned above), housing, health or education, with a specific focus on the inclusion of vulnerable populations (disabled people, women, children, elderly, migrants).²⁴⁵

'Frontrunner' **cities facing shrinkage** are developing fresh approaches to build on citizen commitment, generate new approaches to urban

planning, design and management. Most EU policy instruments and state-level fiscal, regulatory and economic policies are designed not for shrinking but for growing cities. Cities promote 'smart shrinking', de-growing policies; regeneration of historic assets and landscapes; redevelopment of uninhabited spaces and brownfields in green spaces or new public cultural areas; adjustment and co-production of services; more age-friendly welfare services; and develop contra-cyclical management, social economy alternatives, including urban farming, among others, based on meaningful collaboration between public agencies, businesses and citizens. Case studies show examples in cities such as Altena and Schönebeck (Germany), Riga (Latvia), Nord-Pas de Calais (France), County Louth (Ireland), and Glasgow (Scotland).²⁴⁶

Gender equality is at the centre of many local government policies in Europe. In 2006, CEMR launched the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, which currently has 1,777 LRG signatories in 36 countries. The charter gives information on how to mainstream gender in all public policies, and the related Observatory website highlights good practices in fields such as gender-responsive budgeting, urban planning, governance, adequate provision of basic services, countering gender violence, and raising awareness about harmful gender stereotypes.²⁴⁷ The Swedish city of Umeå, highlighted as an international model town for gender equality, continues to improve its Gendered Landscape Tour, which aims to show how working with gender equality takes form in a city.²⁴⁸ In the French region Île-de-France a vast communication campaign across the entire public transport network in the region was carried out in cooperation with Ile-de-France Mobilités, the Paris urban transit agency (RATP) and train companies (SNCF Transilien): 'Never minimize sexual harassment: Victim or witness, speak up!'.²⁴⁹ A best practice publication by the Italian LRA AICCRE includes replicable examples in the fields of governance (a commission for equal opportunities in Imola), work-life balance (pilot project with 30 micro, small and medium enterprises — MSMEs in Milan and with 70 employees in Lazio region), awareness-raising (campaigns for the youth in Reggio Calabria), and gender violence (support centre in Chieri), among others.²⁵⁰ Although there are many accomplishments across Europe (higher figures for women in terms of holding a tertiary education certificate and lower rates of school drop-out), there remain many unresolved matters. These include the fact that women account for only 29% of the members of regional parliaments in the region, in some cases not being included at all (in five regional assemblies in Hungary, Italy and Romania, according to data from 2017).²⁵¹ Many of these matters need to be tackled also

at national level (i.e. the employment gap is still concerning across the EU with a difference of 11.5 percentage points in 2017).²⁵²

Lack of affordable housing and the accompanying rise in homeless people, especially among the young, has become an increasingly important challenge for cities as skyrocketing property and rental prices, speculation, housing exclusion and gentrification push neighbours towards the periphery, financing of social housing is scarce and territorial divide (to find adequate and affordable housing in places where job opportunities are) keeps growing (see Box 8).²⁵³

The EU average housing overburden rate has significantly increased among people at risk of poverty (from 35% in 2005 to 39.9% in 2014).²⁵⁶ The cooperation between LRGs and the national authorities has allowed the Irish National Asset Management Agency and local governments to identify 6,575 vacant units owned by the banks and allocate 2,526 of them for social housing purposes.²⁵⁷ Mechanisms are being developed at local level to ensure that a proportion of new affordable housing units will be dedicated for social purposes (at least 25% in London),²⁵⁸ going further than the national directives even (40% in *Plaine Commune*),²⁵⁹ and ensuring that no homeless family is left behind (Brno).²⁶⁰ After the worsening situation of the eviction crisis, many Spanish cities created specific offices aimed at mediating with banks or trying to put an end to evictions through different strategies (e.g. Mostoles, Terrassa, Barcelona or Cadiz),²⁶¹ while others such as Mataro have leveraged vacant private property to create affordable cooperative housing models. Many cities are pushing to regulate the rental urban markets to avoid rental bubbles (e.g. Berlin, Paris).

Health and care systems are central for social inclusion. The main challenges that currently affect Europe include the reduction of health and healthcare services in a number of territories (even creating medical 'desert' areas), or the significant increase of the prevalence of chronic non-contagious diseases.²⁶² Inequalities in access to health services are evident between urban and rural areas,²⁶³ but also in cities, for example, life expectancy in London can vary by almost 20 years depending on where you live.²⁶⁴ Environmental problems in cities include air pollution (severe in Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and the Southern regions of Europe); concentration of ground-level ozone (Italy, Spain, South and East of France, Southern Germany), or noise pollution (cities like Bucharest, Palermo, Athens).²⁶⁵ While LRG solutions, as underlined in the previous sub-section, contribute to a more sustainable environment, they also aim to achieve better health levels amongst the population through soft mobility, zero-emission zones (e.g. Oxford city centre),²⁶⁶ the building of

Box 8

Cities for Adequate Housing Initiative²⁵⁴

The worrying housing situation in Europe, together with the limited competences of LRGs in this field, led the city of Barcelona and others, with the support of UCLG, to bring to the 2018 High-Level Political Forum of the UN (HPFL) a firm pledge for the Right to Housing in the form of the Declaration 'Cities for Adequate Housing'. A growing number of cities have committed to promoting renewed housing strategies, and to do so according to social inclusion and human rights standards, seeking to overcome the obstacles to the realization of the right to housing, such as the lack of national funding, market deregulation and housing commodification.

Work has not stopped here, and UCLG and participating cities such as Vienna, Barcelona or the periphery of Paris, are collaborating to find more inclusive housing policies. The Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Housing in 2019 published its action plan, which provides best practice and recommendations to EU, national and local authorities on better regulation, funding and knowledge.²⁵⁵

new green areas (e.g. Vienna or Freiburg), or the construction of parks, playgrounds, sports fields and cemeteries (e.g. covering 40% of the city by 2035 in Hamburg).²⁶⁷

For 30 years, the World Health Organization (WHO) European Healthy Cities Network has brought together some 100 flagship cities and approximately 30 national networks. In February 2018, the Copenhagen Consensus of Mayors: Healthier and Happier Cities for All²⁶⁸ was adopted to mark a transformative approach towards building safe, inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies in line with the 2030 Agenda.²⁶⁹

A public health problem related to risk prevention in urban areas is road accidents (SDGs 3.6, 11.2).²⁷⁰ It has been proved that those cities with low traffic speeds and good public transportation systems have far fewer road fatalities than those where the use of private cars is still widespread (i.e. below ten per million in Stockholm and Vienna in 2015).

As stated in Section 2, LRGs play an important role in **education** in many European countries. In this sense, many local governments offer quality education from pre-school age (SDG 4.2).²⁷¹ They have also achieved a noteworthy reduction of early school leaving (SDG 4.1), although figures are still higher in rural areas (12.4%) than in towns and suburbs (11.9%) or cities (10%).²⁷² Cities are developing initiatives to face these challenges as well as tackle education segregation, particularly affecting minorities (e.g. Roma children) or children with migrant background.²⁷³

To address the needs of **children and the elderly**, particularly in territories with aging urban population,²⁷⁴ cities are redesigning public space to be age-friendly (e.g. Ljubljana),²⁷⁵ as well as to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities (e.g. Lausanne Plan on Accessibility; Middelburg and Veere local implementation of the Covenant on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Budapest plan on accessible public space and transportation for people with disabilities).²⁷⁶

LRGs also play a major role in the settlement and integration of **migrants and refugees**.²⁷⁷ Their actions are fundamental to achieve SDG 10.7 and the ambitious Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted in late 2018 by the UN.²⁷⁸ Since 2014, LRGs have been acquiring importance at the EU level as more pragmatic and results-oriented actors in the fields of migration and integration. CEMR and the European Public Services Union (EPSU),

representing respectively the employers and employees of LRGs in the European Social Dialogue, endorsed 'Joint Guidelines on Migration and Strengthening Anti-Discrimination in Local and Regional Governments', which were updated in 2016. The objective was to provide a framework for action in local and regional public authorities.²⁷⁹ The December 2016 European Council Conclusions on the integration of third country nationals legally residing in the EU,²⁸⁰ as well as the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals of the EU,²⁸¹ explicitly reinforced the strategic role of the local level. The Action Plan on integration also encouraged Member State efforts 'strengthening communication between local, regional and national levels', introducing instruments such as the European Integration Network, to which selected cities, together with Eurocities and CEMR, were invited in March 2017.²⁸²

In 2017, the Mechelen Conference 'Cities and Migration' explored the links between local government and human rights agendas with regards to migration.²⁸³ Initiatives on this topic range from local government services of attention, welcome and advice for irregular migrants, to local programmes on the right to work and capacity-building for migrants and refugees (as was implemented by Vienna).²⁸⁴ Other local governments have addressed this issue via initiatives on migrant participation in public life (Grenoble).²⁸⁵ Finally, recent years have also seen a rise in the number of cities to declare themselves 'sanctuary' or 'refugee' cities, such as Bristol, in the United Kingdom, Valencia, in Spain or Naples, in Italy (see Box 9).²⁸⁶

Anti-rumour networks in Amadora,²⁹² the Refugee Taskforce in Ghent,²⁹³ (which has been acknowledged as the URBACT Good Practice 'Refugee Solidarity'), or the Finding Places project to identify locations for accommodating around 20,000 refugees in Hamburg, have proven highly successful and brought together the public administration, the social organizations and the citizenship.²⁹⁴ Decentralized cooperation has also focused on migration issues as shown by the successful Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project (MC2CM), which since 2015 has worked with Amman, Beirut, Lisbon, Lyon, Madrid, Tangiers, Tunis, Turin and Vienna to increase the knowledge base on urban migration, and the Urban Innovative Actions of the EU, which has funded several projects in the field of integration of refugees and migrants.²⁹⁵

Indeed, the commitment of 'leaving no one behind' underlines the role cities and regions play in the achievement of **human rights**, equality, non-discrimination and dignity. Many cities and regions have come out to defend the rights of migrants, the value of local diversity, the need for better housing and basic services for all persons

Box 9

LRG initiatives for the integration of immigrants and refugees

The Eurocities Migration and Integration Working Group, as well as the CEMR Task Force on Refugees and Migrants, work to ensure local experiences are central to the drafting of the EU migration and integration policies. In 2015 and 2016, CEMR published a Call for a Common Real Asylum Policy²⁸⁷ and a Resolution for a Common European Asylum Policy at all levels of government.²⁸⁸ In 2018, the OECD, in collaboration with other partners and LRGs, launched a publication called, 'Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees', aimed at identifying the challenges of LRGs in the field of migrant and refugee integration.²⁸⁹

Solidarity Cities is an initiative on the management of the refugee crisis proposed by the Mayor of Athens.²⁹⁰ It seeks to constitute a framework under which all cities' actions and initiatives are presented in terms of the political leadership of cities addressing the crisis. Eurocities also participates in the Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum (RESOMA) project, a unique partnership of European civil society and local authority organizations, think-tanks and research networks seeking to create opportunities for consultation and provides policy expertise. The European Committee of the Regions, in coordination with the main networks of LRGs in Brussels, launched in 2019 an initiative called 'Cities and Regions for Integration', aimed at raising the political profile of this topic from an urban perspective, and scaling-up good practices.²⁹¹ Also in 2019, the EC continued to support LRG networks working on the integration of refugees and migrants by supporting the IncluCities project, a CEMR-led initiative seeking to strengthen cooperation between middle-sized cities (with varying levels of experience in the field) on integration, and in close cooperation with LGAs.

and, in essence, the human rights of each and every person in Europe and beyond (see Box 10).

Enhancing good urban and territorial governance to 'leave no territory behind'

Good governance has become a priority for most LRGs in Europe considering as noted by the EC, poor performance is an obstacle for sustainable development.³⁰⁰ More sustainable territorial governance, transparency, citizen participation, co-production, use of new technologies have been prioritized for some years by LRGs to offer better public services and policies to their constituencies (SDGs 16.6, 16.7).

As underlined in previous sections, LRGs are increasingly recognized as being key to regional and local governance. However, this is not always accompanied with the appropriate institutional and financial architecture to enable them to fulfil their role (see Section 2.2.). This is reflected in the growing inequalities between territories related to the need to strengthen territorial cohesion policies, improve integrated governance of metropolitan areas, and better support middle-sized cities (that host 42% of the urban population in Europe), particularly those suffering shrinkage, and reverse the desertification of rural areas in several countries. Nonetheless, EU regional policies and the EU Urban Agenda do emphasize the opportunities that exist in harnessing complementarities between different levels of government and territories to promote more balanced territorial and urban systems. In this regard, the Pact of Amsterdam was an important step in terms of good governance, promoting collaborative dynamics and exchanges to develop concrete initiatives related to urban development. Consequently, several multi-stakeholder partnerships launched to develop joint initiatives at the EU level have had a strong impact on cities in areas such as urban poverty, housing, mobility or energy transition.³⁰¹

Increasingly, urban and territorial management requires strong **vertical and horizontal cooperation**. Section 2.3 showed different examples of vertical cooperation and multilevel governance bodies that coordinate a wide range of policies and strategies between the national, regional and local levels to embrace the 17 SDGs, and particularly SDG 11. Concerning horizontal cooperation, inter-municipal cooperation is one of the most widespread expressions and has been significantly enhanced in recent years. This takes different forms in public service delivery, socio-economic development, planning and governance. From voluntary agreements, such as multi-purpose cooperative agreements, common committees, joint projects, etc. to mandatory entities such as supramunicipal authorities with delegated functions, including some own-source

Box 10

European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City²⁹⁶

In 1998, on the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Conference Cities for Human Rights network was created in Barcelona. Hundreds of mayors participated in the event and together called for a stronger political acknowledgement as key actors in safeguarding human rights. Twenty years later, in 2018, Barcelona, Athens, Saint Dennis, Cádiz, Naples, Tunis and Seattle, together with local stakeholders, shared experiences at the Conference Cities 4 Rights to promote human rights and global justice and fight against hate and extremism from the local level.

However, these are not the only occasions where LRGs have proved their commitment and involvement in the achievement of human rights. The European Coalition of Cities Against Racism,²⁹⁷ the Agenda 21 for Culture,²⁹⁸ or the Intercultural Cities Programme,²⁹⁹ fostered by the Council of Europe, all support cities in appraising the values underlying diversity and interculturalism by applying a human rights-based approach to their strategies and daily actions.

tax (e.g. *EPCI à fiscalité propre* in France). In some countries (France, Portugal, Spain), the majority of municipalities are engaged in different modalities of inter-municipal cooperation entities. In Italy, Iceland or Greece cooperation is compulsory for smaller municipalities.³⁰²

A key dimension of horizontal cooperation is **rural-urban partnerships** (or rural urban continuum) that cover a complex and diverse spectrum of interactions and relationships and make both areas increasingly integrated and mutually reliant. Different studies underline examples of cities and territories that are fostering initiatives to manage such linkages for improved regional development. Middle-sized cities and towns are key players in strengthening these rural-urban alliances. Many regions and cities in France, for example, are fostering local food production involving peri-urban areas and rural communities to ensure more sustainable food systems (see earlier examples in the Sub-section on climate change). Cities have achieved a medium-scale service-based economy through the provision of cheaper, more efficient services to their urban and rural communities, such as in Jyväskylä and Saarijärvi-Viitasaari (Finland), mainly down to new technologies; or in West Pomerania (Poland), through more efficient waste management. Additionally, the Barcelona Provincial Council is leading the Barcelona Smart Rural project in the non-metropolitan area which seeks to support rural municipality development by using innovation and specialization.

Successful partnerships such as these call into question the effectiveness of existing policies and governance institutions, and the need for effective mechanisms and policies to maximize impact.³⁰³

Governments have recently focused on increasing **transparency** as one of the pillars of good governance and one of the main principles of the 2030 Agenda, to counter corruption, tax competition and tax evasion. One way to increase transparency and foster greater public understanding of the government's work has been the digitalization of services to streamline red tape procedures for stakeholders and citizens. This can be seen in the Stockholm region's newly digitalized e-Government with 'real' e-services,³⁰⁴ or the region of Flanders saving EUR 100 million after a EUR 2 million investment³⁰⁵ based on its Flanders Radically Digital strategy.³⁰⁶

Open portals where local stakeholders and citizens can access all relevant public information have been developed widely in cities such as Amsterdam or Helsinki and have facilitated interaction with the local governments in Lisbon or Murcia, amongst others, thus making the local level more **responsible and accountable**.³⁰⁷

Digitalization has also helped make **public procurement** (a field that can be prone to corruption) more accessible and transparent through open platforms and the growing obligation to submit tenders online.³⁰⁸ Moreover, public procurement has become greener and more socially responsible as practices are increasingly widespread amongst European LRGs that foster environmental, social and economic benefits while driving private companies towards sustainability. This progressive shift to greener, fairer and more transparent procurement procedures has been made possible mainly by the new European legislative framework defined by the 2014 Directives on public procurement,³⁰⁹ and the Regulation on the European Single Procurement Document.³¹⁰ Barcelona has its own sustainable public procurement plan;³¹¹ Manchester made USD 85 million in efficiency savings and created 1,500 jobs;³¹² Lublin has fostered the participation of local companies in their tenders;³¹³ and Koszalin has embedded knowledge around non-price criteria into their procurement processes.³¹⁴

Fostering **public participation, engagement and commitment** is one of the most important pillars of good local governance that goes beyond responding to citizens' queries. It involves citizen and stakeholder co-creation of the territories through participative sessions (as in Rome,³¹⁵ or Hamburg³¹⁶). These can be live, online or a combination of both in a bottom-up approach. Participatory planning (Ostrava,³¹⁷ Korneuburg³¹⁸), and participatory budgeting (Tartu³¹⁹), are more and more becoming an essential tool to adapt LRG decisions to citizens' needs (including, for

example, the needs of children, as in Esplugues de Llobregat).³²⁰ Local governments even become experimental laboratories to test new strategies, approaches and services (Helsinki³²¹). Meanwhile local stakeholders, together with the public administration, co-manage the common goods (as is the case for 189 Italian local governments, e.g. Bologna or Trento, which have adopted specific regulations with the support of the NGO Labsus adapted to each territory's needs).³²²

While many examples of best practice can be seen in the EU, for the Western Balkan LRGs, reform of the public administration and the strengthening of governance is still urgently needed – in fact, the EU has said that for these countries joining the EU will be contingent on reform. To achieve fully digitalized and modernized LRGs in Europe, supplementary coordination efforts between all tiers of government will be necessary,³²³ as acknowledged by the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020.³²⁴ Nonetheless, this is just one area where multilevel coordination is pivotal to better tackling the local and regional dimension of policies and legislation.

The localization of the SDGs and strengthening the quality of local democracy via better ownership of policies by citizens requires a permanent update of the tools and mechanisms that are used to involve citizens in the decision-making process. More and more municipalities are improving their day-to-day mechanisms for citizens' participation, both online and offline, to better deliver, as well as enhance, ownership and accountability. Initiatives such as the *Barcelona decideix*, or the Consul platform,³²⁵ as well as participative budgeting initiatives, are online and offline tools that allow citizens to propose actions and initiatives to be addressed by the municipalities, as well as improve city councils' consultation of citizens.

Since good governance is an essential element of the development of the territories, LRGs need still to boost new practices that continually improve the culture of public administration and management. While much has been done to date in terms of more sustainable public procurement, corruption control, digitalization of public services and an increase in citizen participation, transparency and accountability, mainstreaming these good practices in an integral way in the organization will be essential. This will allow better services for the citizenship and local stakeholders that will result in a positive impact in all spheres of sustainability: economic, social and environmental. In this sense, LRGs need to continue to foster multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms (inter-municipal cooperation included) that allow for a more appropriate urban and territorial management, especially for those phenomena that go beyond administrative units. ☉

4. Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of the extent to which there is a national enabling environment for SDG implementation in Europe, including the degree of LRG engagement in this process and of cooperative multilevel governance partnerships at national and European level. Most countries have set up national SDG focal points and, up to 2019, 37 have submitted VNRs to the UN. However, the extent of LRG involvement in these practices is still limited and requires improvement.

LRG actions can accelerate SDG implementation. In Europe, LRGs have been particularly active in the localization of the 2030 Agenda, taking the lead in different areas such as climate action, social inclusion, inclusive and circular economy development, and urban and territorial governance. As the level of government closest to their citizens, they are taking measures to tackle increasing inequalities and environmental challenges, strengthening cooperation between and within territories (e.g. inter-municipal cooperation, urban-rural partnerships). Policies to combat social segregation or discrimination, and for the achievement of gender equality and higher educational, health and healthcare standards have been a priority for European LRGs. They are strengthening the involvement of civil society, business sector, social partners and academia to co-create sustainable alternatives. Many LRGs are also starting the reflection process on how to incorporate the SDGs into their decentralized cooperation, the 2030 Agenda being perceived as a means to transform and rethink long-lasting international partnerships around a common language found in the SDGs.

The chapter also stresses the important role of LRG networks and LGAs, at both the European and national level. They have been strong catalysts of the localization process, informing citizens, raising awareness, engaging their members in SDG implementation, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, information and experience, allowing for experimentation, and influencing major European political initiatives.

The engagement of LRGs varies considerably, however, between countries, and particularly between Northern and Western European countries on the one hand, and Central and

South-eastern countries on the other. Institutional frameworks, and the decentralization processes in particular, have had a direct impact on these trends. Since 1985, the European Charter of Local Self-Government has been ratified by all 47 Member States of the Council of Europe. Decentralization has been progressing in almost all countries. However, the policy response and reforms that followed the global crisis of 2008-2009 — and subsequent national austerity measures — have impacted decentralization trends to varying degrees. Consequently, while the concept of sustainability is widely accepted, the current state of fiscal autonomy of LRGs does limit their room for manoeuvre for the full realization of SDG localization efforts.

Despite restrictive budgetary policies, LRGs continue to be an important public investor (51.6% of total public investment in EU countries in 2017), and their actions are critical to comply with the SDG principle of 'leaving no one and no place behind'. However, their actions need to be facilitated by an adequate collaborative multilevel governance framework and better integrated policies at all levels: local, regional, national and European. In more decentralized countries, dialogue and collaboration between the different levels of government are embedded in the institutions as well as in practices (culture of collaboration). In those countries that are less decentralized, collaboration with LRGs, considered either insufficient or unsatisfactory, must improve. Likewise, financial support for decentralized development cooperation varies from one Member State to another, whereas international cooperation is recognized as a means to achieve the SDGs, i.e. in the case of SDG 17.

LRG actions need to be facilitated by an adequate collaborative multilevel governance framework and better integrated policies at local, regional, national and European levels.

LRG differ also in their approach with regard to monitoring and reporting. Frontrunning cities and regions that enjoy more autonomy and resources have either already established or are trying to establish various monitoring instruments. Reporting on SDG implementation from the sub-national level is key to capitalizing on results, strengthening coordination with the national level and European institutions, as well as fostering transparency and accountability towards citizens and local stakeholders.

European States and institutions are politically committed to implementing the objectives of sustainable development but rely as much on their national administrative structures as they do on decentralized governments. Countries that have strong decentralized structures tend to be at the forefront of SDG implementation, thanks to persisting multilevel governance approaches and strong commitment from their territories and cities.

Therefore, it is important that the territorial dimension is taken into account in the sustainable development strategies of the various actors concerned. In this regard, the Partnership Principle, introduced in the EU cohesion policy to ensure cooperation of the relevant actors, including LRGs, is an important element. The EU post-2020 cohesion policy should strengthen this approach, ensuring enhanced financing and tailored instruments for SNGs to develop and implement local and territorial strategies, share knowledge and experience and support capacity-building of local and regional administrations.³²⁶

The territorial dimension of relevant policies and their consistency with the SDGs, the compliance and complementarity of instruments and multi-source funding, include detailed measures for specific territorial challenges, provide for capacity-building, and adopt a nuanced approach to conditionality and European Territorial Cooperation. The SDGs, moreover, can also provide an overarching set of objectives to replace the current Europe 2020 goals.³²⁷

Policy alignment should not only be applied to domestic policies, but also to EU's international trade agreements and development cooperation policies. LRGs are concerned as providers of public services and purchasers of goods and services, and they are engaged in decentralized cooperation. As such, they can play a greater role in the localization processes of partnering countries. Similarly, at the national level of European countries, the process of drawing up the VNR as part of the monitoring mechanism should be able to stimulate greater local-national cooperation.

Based on these considerations, the following recommendations are inspired (extracted and adapted by the authors of this chapter) by different contributions developed by CEMR, PLATFORMA, the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European multi-stakeholder platform

on SDGs and its sub-group on 'SDGs at local and regional level', to support the mainstreaming of the SDGs and their localization.³²⁸

- As required by the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, as well as LRGs, their associations and social partners, the SDGs need to be mainstreamed in EU strategies and policies. Therefore, the European Commission should draft an EU Strategy for Sustainable Europe 2030 and an Action Plan for its implementation, 'including a territorial approach for the delivery of the SDGs'.³²⁹ The SDGs should be seen as a tool and visionary compass to do things differently and focus on sustainable development with the necessary urgency.
- The Action Plan should ensure strong EU institutional commitment, encompassing all relevant policy fields, providing ambitious policy objectives and targets with clear connections to the SDGs and other global agendas. The SDGs should be the guiding objectives for the new European Parliament and new European Commission and be reflected in the work and priorities of their five-year mandate (2019-2024). This applies in particular to the future cohesion policies, including urban and rural policies, and the allocation of budgets (e.g. energy and climate, environmental, industry, external — including development — policy, research and innovation, gender equality). The EU should apply an integrated approach and transcend sectoral silos in the European Commission services.
- The overarching Strategy and Action Plan should be developed together with LRGs and civil society organizations (CSOs). SDG 17 is a key parameter for the success of the 2030 Agenda.
- Cohesion policy is the core EU investment instrument for regions and cities to implement the SDGs and the EU Urban Agenda; to ensure territorial development and policy coherence; reduce the economic, social and territorial divide; and make sure that no one and no place are left behind. More balanced regional and urban development requires that the next period of EU cohesion policy (2021-2027) and the EU Structural and Investment Funds are better aligned with the SDGs and the EU Urban Agenda, and support regions and cities to 'localize the SDGs'.
- Many LRGs networks, regions and cities have been pioneers in the localization process. Nevertheless, their involvement needs to be boosted across all of Europe. Limited LRG interest and awareness is stressed as the most important challenge to make progress. LRG organizations need support to accelerate awareness-raising efforts, facilitate learning

and regular exchange of experiences, and stimulate municipalities, cities and regions to take action to achieve the SDGs.

- Localization of the SDGs is a political process that includes empowering LRGs to take action in all stages of the SDG implementation process — in the design, shaping, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation process. LRGs should not be seen as mere implementers, but as policy-makers. National and EU support with adequate policy and financing instruments are critical to promote sustainable territorial development, especially for LRGs with low capacity or severe financial constraints.
- SDG implementation requires adaptation of related policy strategies, legal and regulatory frameworks to support high but achievable ambitions, ensuring cross-scale integration and the design of mutually supportive and cohesive policies namely at European, national, and sub-national levels. This should include effective decentralization, adequate financial support and territorial development policies to foster mixed bottom-up and top-down approaches to accelerate pace and reach the targets set out in the sustainable goals in time.
- Multilevel dialogue and vertical and horizontal cooperation at all levels of governance is critical to ensure localization. The partnership principle should guide the relations between the different levels of governance – European institutions, national and sub-national governments. At European level, the concept of the Urban Agenda for the EU, fostering the cooperation between all levels of government, could inspire the governance of the future EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024. At national level, multilevel governance mechanisms and forums need be strengthened.
- Existing efforts of LRGs and their organizations to develop knowledge-sharing, exchange of practices and experiences, technical assistance and cooperation between municipalities and regions in Europe, as well in partner countries worldwide is a lever to promote the localization of the SDGs. This should be promoted by political dialogue, adoption of the TALD approach and mainstreaming of LRGs in geographic and thematic programmes under national and EU development cooperation policies, including the post-Cotonou partnership currently being negotiated. Decentralized cooperation by LRGs has an important role to play and a specialized EU budget line for decentralized cooperation and other LRG cooperation activities with partner countries needs to be maintained and strengthened to support the localization agenda. The EU and its Member States should work more closely with LRGs, recognized as key development cooperation

It is critical to ensure that the territorial dimension is taken into account in the formulation of sustainable development strategies.

players, in the joint programming process in partner countries.

- LRG involvement in the national reporting and coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs is one example of where improvements are needed (LRGs in 60% and 50% of the 37 countries that reported to the HLPF were involved in national reporting and coordination mechanisms, respectively). Limited support from national governments is perceived by LRGs to be one of the most serious problems. EU and national governments should pay more attention to engaging LRGs and other stakeholders when reporting about the SDGs, particularly for the VNRs.
- Monitoring the implementation of the SDGs calls for the development of localized indicators and disaggregating data at regional and local level. Pioneering regions and cities are making progress, but more joint efforts involving all levels of government and local partners are necessary to build adequate local monitoring systems compatible with national and European ones. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) contributing to national monitoring and to the global debate, and promoting knowledge-sharing and emulation between LRGs, could be an opportunity worth pursuing.
- Partnership, participation and empowerment of civil society, private sector, social partners and academia are core values of sustainable development to co-create solutions to achieve the SDGs while striking the right balances in the inevitable trade-offs. A territorial approach is one of the levers to ensure stronger involvement of civil society, social partners, business sector and public institutions.
- To ensure multi-stakeholder dialogue at the EU level, the European multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs should become a permanent advisory body to contribute to the development of an overarching EU Strategy for Sustainable Europe 2030, to monitor its implementation and the impact of EU policies and to share good practice and knowledge. ◉

05



Latin America and the Caribbean

Regional chapter



Mural art in Mendoza,
Argentina (photo: formatbrain,
bit.ly/2AWQart).

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Dominican Republic

1. Introduction

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has recently undergone major political transformations.¹ Significant progress has been made over the past decade in development and poverty reduction, among other indicators. But GDP growth has slowed considerably over the past four years (with negative growth in 2016) and is below the global average.² Several countries are affected by growing economic and social uncertainty (e.g. Argentina). Others have seen social conflict worsen to the extent that it is compromising institutional stability (e.g. Venezuela and Nicaragua).

The overall human development indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean are relatively high, behind only Europe and North America.³ But there are considerable disparities between and within countries. Seventy million people have been lifted out of poverty in the region over the past fifteen years, but an upsurge in extreme poverty occurred in 2017. Intra-regional migration is now taking place in addition to traditional migration, particularly due to the critical situation in Venezuela and Central America.⁴

Latin America has one of the highest percentages of urban population (80.7%).⁵ Urban areas have experienced significant growth in the service sector in recent decades, providing a gateway to the labour market but, at the same time, being a source of mostly low-quality employment. Urban labour in Latin America has also seen high rates of feminization, with female labour force participation in the job market rising from 50% to 66%. This level of urbanization has inevitably raised many challenges linked to access to public services, housing, social inclusion, as well as governance of large metropolises and the role of intermediary cities in often vast and under-developed territories.

Another challenge for the region is citizen's trust with their governments and institutions.⁶ A recent report indicates a 'growing disconnection between citizens and the state [...] illustrated mainly by a decline of trust in public institutions and an increase of citizen dissatisfaction with public services such as health and education'.⁷

In its Quadrennial Report presented at the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development in April 2019, UNECLAC confirms this slowdown in poverty reduction and increasing inequality in the region, and stresses concern for the increase in violence, which specifically impacts cities. It also underlines the need to improve policies to protect ecosystems, give greater priority to combatting climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainability given the decline of progress in this area. It warns against increasing debt pressure, reductions in Official Development Assistance and geopolitical tensions in the region, stressing the need to strengthen regional integration.⁸

In addition to these social, economic and political challenges are the recurrent problems of urban and territorial governance that directly involve local and regional governments (LRGs) and that are crucial to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Many UN agencies, moreover, have been very vocal about the growing threats to sustainability and the environment, and the dangers of leaving the global agendas' goals unmet.

The first part of this chapter provides a brief analysis of how national development strategies and the 2030 Agenda link to the reality of LRGs, especially the evolution of decentralization policies and the growing complexity and asymmetries in relationships among various levels of government. The second part of the chapter outlines the initiatives of LRGs in addressing these challenges and in contributing to the implementation of development agendas – in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in their territories, as well as looking at their weaknesses. The conclusion summarises both the progress and setbacks observed in this process and puts forward several hypotheses for providing greater impetus to implementing a sustainable, inclusive development agenda in the region through territorial development strategies. 🌍


2. National and local institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

2.1 National frameworks for implementing SDGs and participation of local and regional governments

The 19 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) produced between 2016 and 2018, and the strategies promoted by most countries to integrate the SDGs reflect a strong commitment in the region to the 2030 Agenda.⁹ The preparatory reports together with UNECLAC's which organizes annual regional forums in Santiago de Chile, reflect the main trends arising from the National Reviews.¹⁰ In the region, the 2030 Agenda has an important influence on medium and long-term national development strategies and plans and on the national planning and coordination systems for implementing these strategies.¹¹

Most countries have sought to integrate their pre-existing development plans with the SDGs.¹² In the case of Colombia, the process of formulating its development plan coincided with that of negotiating the 2030 Agenda, which made it easier for the country to introduce the SDGs into it (92 of the Agenda's 169 targets are included in this plan). Other countries

(Ecuador and Mexico) formulated or revised their development plans after 2016. Some countries also developed specific roadmaps or strategies for the SDGs (Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico and the Dominican Republic), as well as developing territorial plans to implement the SDGs (Colombia and Ecuador).¹³

Table 1 summarizes the strategies as well as the coordination and articulation mechanisms among the various levels of government that have been reported by each country. One group of countries has set up new institutions to coordinate the 2030 Agenda (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic). Other countries have chosen to strengthen pre-existing institutions (Argentina, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela). In most cases, responsibility for coordination has fallen to institutions in charge of planning or been assumed directly by the country's Presidency Office. 



A meeting of the Open Government Partnership, a Southern American alliance to improve government accessibility and transparency, in San José, Costa Rica (photo: Open Government Partnership, t.ly/800Gj)

Table 1 National strategies for integrating SDGs, coordination mechanisms and LRG participation

Argentina

SDGs integrated into the official eight Government Objectives (*Objetivos de Gobierno*) published in December 2016 alongside 100 National Priorities. Initial adaptation of the SDGs to national priorities conducted by six thematic commissions (education, agriculture, housing and urban development, work and employment and social protection). Coordination: National Coordination Council of Social Policies (CNCPS), linked to the presidency, ensures coordination with 20 ministries through 6 commissions. No LRG direct participation, but representatives of Provincial Governments and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) invited by the CNCPS president.

Bolivia

2025 Patriotic Agenda and Economic and Social Development Plan 2016-2020, linked to the SDGs. Coordination: undefined. Municipalities such as La Paz believe there is no consultation or participation.

Brazil

The SDGs aligned with the 2016-2019 Multi-year Plan of the Federal Government and Action Plan SDG Commission 2017-2019 (currently under review by the new government). Coordination: National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals + 8 thematic chambers. Multi-stakeholder mechanism, includes representatives from the Association of State Entities of Environment (ABEMA) and the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) in its thematic chambers. Some states have created committees at a regional level.

Chile

The new government's initiative is based on the Governmental Programme 2018-2022, a National Agreement (with 5 sectors), a Country Commitment for the more Vulnerable and is developing a new strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Coordination: National Council for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the General Secretariat of the Presidency (inter-ministerial), an Inter-sectoral Group (implementation) supported by a Technical Secretariat, an Advisory Group, a Group on Indicators and three commissions (economic, social, and environment indicators), creation of a National Network for the 2030 Agenda. Non-direct participation of the Association of Chilean Municipalities in this mechanism.

Colombia

Many of the SDGs were aligned with the National Plan of Development 2014-2018 and 2018-2022, as well as in Territorial Development Plans 2016-2019; adoption of a roadmap in March 2018 by the Council for Economic and Social Policies (CONPES), 'Strategy for the Implementation of the SDGs in Colombia'. Coordination: *Comisión Interinstitucional de Alto Nivel para el Alistamiento y la Efectiva Implementación de la Agenda de Desarrollo Post 2015 y sus Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible* (ODS), also known as SDG Committee, chaired by the National Planning Department, with representatives from the presidency and ministries (created in February 2015) and technical committee. Multi-stakeholder participation in five working groups. The territories working group includes representatives from local governments but not from the local government associations.

Costa Rica

National Development Plan 2015-2018 promoted a National Pact for the SDGs (*Pacto Nacional por el Cumplimiento de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible*), including all levels of government, private sector and civil society. Coordination: High Level Council for the SDGs, chaired by the presidency, technical secretariat (led by Ministry of Planning) and technical committee/working groups. The Union of Local Governments of Costa Rica (UNGL) participates in the technical committee.

Cuba

The SDGs aligned with the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP), approved in May 2017. Coordination: National Group for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, led by the Ministry of Economy and Planning. Provincial and local governments should align their plans with the NESDP and the SDGs.

Dominican Republic

National Development Strategy 2012-2030 (*Estrategia Nacional de Desarrollo*, or END) and National Multi-Year Plan for the Public Sector 2017-2020 (*Plan Nacional Plurianual del Sector Público*, or PNPSP). Coordination: High-Level Inter-institutional Commission for Sustainable Development (*Comisión Interinstitucional de Alto Nivel para el Desarrollo Sostenible*, or CDS), coordinated by Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, including four sub-committees aligned with 5 Ps. The Local Government Association (LGA), FEDOMU, participates in the high-level committee and committees on institutions.

Ecuador

National Development Plan 2017-2021 (*'Toda una Vida', Plan Nacional de Desarrollo*) aligned with the SDGs (149 targets), including a National Territorial Strategy. The president adopted the 2030 Agenda as a public policy (Executive Decree No. 371, April 2018). Coordination: National Secretariat of Planning and Development (SENPLADES), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility. Parliament adopted the SDGs as a benchmark for its work. Local governments are consulted for VNRs but are not associated with coordination mechanism.

El Salvador

Government's Five-Year National Development Plan 2014-2019 (PQD 2015) should be reviewed by the new government. Coordination: Office of the President of the Republic, with technical coordination ensured by Technical and Planning Secretariat Office (SETEPLAN) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There is also an Intergovernmental Panel on Implementation (with representation from state institutions) and consultative mechanisms: National Council for the SDGs. No mention of local government participation.

Guatemala

The SDGs aligned with the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo K'atun Nuestra Guatemala 2032* (PND 2032) through *Estructura de la estrategia de implementación de las prioridades de desarrollo*, in which various actions are detailed and 129 targets and 200 of the SDG indicators are prioritized. The prioritized actions were included in the budget (*Política general de gobierno 2016-2020*). Local governments should integrate the SDGs in their municipal development plans (PMD-OT). Coordination: National Council of Urban and Rural Development (CONADUR), chaired by the president; SEGEPLAN ensures implementation; technical mechanisms: Commission for Alignment, Follow-up and Evaluation of the PND 2032, a multi-stakeholder mechanism with the participation of one mayor. LGAs are not represented.

Honduras

National Agenda of the SDGs (AN-ODS) sets out the foundation for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, National Plan (2010-2022) and 2014-2018 Government Strategic Plan. Coordination: General Government Coordination Secretariat (SCGG), a High-Level Commission was established to define SDG strategies (multi-stakeholder mechanism) and a Technical Commission for thematic advice. Local governments participate in High Level Commission.

Mexico

National Strategy for the Implementation of the 2030 and National Development Plan 2018-2024. Planning Law amended in 2018 to incorporate SDGs priorities. Coordination: National Council for the 2030 Agenda, chaired by the president's office, National Strategy Committee (intergovernmental, coordination and follow up), Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation, four sectoral working groups, Specialized Technical Committee for the SDGs (governmental bodies), National Governors' Conference of Federated States (CONAGO) and National Conference of the Associations of Municipalities of Mexico (CONAMM), participating in the National Strategy Committee. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) is in charge of the information system created for the SDGs.

Nicaragua

No data.

Panama

Panamá 2030 State Vision for the national alignment and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and review of Strategic Government Plan (PEG) 2015-2019 and sectoral plans to reflect the SDGs. Coordination: Multisectoral Commission of the Social Affairs Cabinet and Inter-institutional and Civil Society Commission for the Support and Review of the SDGs (multi-stakeholder). VNR acknowledges decentralization and the role of local governments, but they are not clearly mentioned as part of national coordination mechanisms.

Paraguay

Paraguay 2030 National Development Plan (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, or PND 2030*) is the overarching strategic document. Coordination: ODS Paraguay 2030 Commission (*Comisión ODS Paraguay 2030*), inter-institutional mechanism coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and supported by the Operations Secretariat and Technical Implementation Committee (for monitoring). No local government participation, albeit local participation is one of the goals of the PND 2030.

Peru

Strategic Plan for National Development (NSDP) 2016-2021 and 2022-2030. Coordination: Intersectoral Commission for Monitoring of the 2030 Agenda (coordination), National Centre for Strategic Planning (CEPLAN) focal point, National Agreement Forum and Round Table to Fight against Poverty (MCLCP) (multi-stakeholder spaces for dialogue). Regional and local authorities participate in a high-level mechanism for dialogue (GORE for Regional Governors and Muni-Ejecutivo for municipalities). They have signed the Governance Agreement for Comprehensive Human Development 2016-2021, an agreement to uphold the goals and targets of the SDGs drafted in collaboration with civil society.

Uruguay

Alignment of the SDGs with sectoral policies. Integration of the SDGs into long-term development plan (Uruguay Vision 2050). Coordination: Office of Planning and Budget (OPP) of the Presidency of Uruguay, Uruguayan Agency for International Cooperation (AUCI) and National Statistical Institute (for indicators). Local governments are not associated with the coordination mechanism. The VNR 2019 introduces a Strategy for the Localization of the SDGs between OPP and LGRs (not through their associations).

Venezuela

National Development Plan 2013-2019 aligned with the 2030 Agenda. Coordination: Council of Vice-Presidents (cross-sectoral and cross-cutting aspect of development policies), Executive Vice-Presidency of the Republic through the National Council of Human Rights also monitors the implementation and Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs accompanies the coordination. No local government participation.

Latin America and the Caribbean



Sources: UNDESA (2018 and 2019), 'Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for the SDGs'; VNRs; UNECLAC, 'Annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean'; UCLG surveys and inputs from Local Government Associations (LGAs).

Box 1

Recognizing local progress in VNRs

The 2017 Brazil Review acknowledges the role played by the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) and the Brazilian Association of Municipalities (ABM) in implementing the Agenda, as well as several municipalities and states. It highlights the alignment of the SDGs with local planning and the adoption of new laws and decrees (Barcarena), the creation of working groups (Paraná, São Paulo and Federal District), the development of indicators (Paraíba) and the creation of awards to raise public awareness (Rio de Janeiro). In the case of Costa Rica, efforts on the part of municipalities to implement the SDGs through pilot projects are also mentioned. In Brazil, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, the inclusion of LRGs in High Level or Presidential Commissions, either at a council level or in technical committees, should be highlighted.

The 2018 Mexico Review notes the 'importance of localizing the 2030 Agenda' and the essential nature of 'having a sub-national vision', with disaggregated data and identifying areas of opportunity at federal and municipal levels.¹⁶ The National Conference of Governors and National Conference of Associations of Mexican Municipalities have a voice but not a vote on the National Council of the 2030 Agenda, and participate with full rights in the National Strategy Committee. The National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (INAFED) promotes the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at a municipal level.

Colombia deserves particular mention for the efforts it has made in its reviews to advance the process of aligning the SDGs with departmental and municipal plans. But the Federation of Colombian Municipalities and some municipalities (Medellín) have indicated a lack of consultation in the process, whilst others were consulted (Bogotá).


Uruguay has devoted a special space to local government actions in the localization of the SDGs in its VNR in 2018 and in a national report 2019 (not presented to the UN), dedicated a full section to the 'Strategy for the Localization of the SDGs'. The report presents the methodology and the evolution of the alignment between the SDGs and local plans in six local governments (departments), as well as the programmes developed by the national government to support the process.¹⁷

Guatemala has recently launched a consultation process with its municipalities to prepare its VNR 2019. A total of 152 municipalities responded out of 340. This consultation highlights the level of appropriation of the country's National Development Plan by the municipalities, and the progress made in its implementation.

Source: VNRs 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 and UCLG Surveys.

In several countries, LRGs were directly consulted and included in the VNR process. Consultation was more partial in others. In some cases, the consultation did not include LGAs.

There is still limited involvement of LRGs in the processes of preparing the VNRs and in the coordination mechanisms for implementing and follow-up of the SDGs. In several countries, they were directly consulted and included in the process of preparing the VNRs (Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras and the Dominican Republic) (see Box 1). Consultation was more partial in other countries (mainly state governments in Mexico). In these countries, consultations tended to be direct and systematic (meetings, questionnaires and workshops). In other countries, consultation was more ad hoc, partial or indirect: questionnaires (Guatemala), national multi-stakeholder workshops (Colombia) or regional workshops (Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay). In terms of VNRs, some countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay) include a specific heading on, or a reasonable number of references to, local governments, highlighting the importance of the localization of the 2030 Agenda. Finally, although the VNRs indicate that consultation with local governments has taken place, the organizations representing local governments note that in some cases the consultation did not directly include them (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador and Paraguay).¹⁴

LRGs have also been included in high-level mechanisms to coordinate the implementation of the SDGs or have been consulted by them in Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico and the Dominican Republic (see Section 2.3 below for further details). Regional governments in Peru are mentioned as part of the national strategy consultation process and are involved through territorial coordination mechanisms. Similar mechanisms are planned at a municipal level.¹⁵ Local elected officials in Colombia and Guatemala were invited to working committees (without consultation of representative associations in the case of Colombia). But their impact is generally still limited (see Box 1). 

2.2 Democracy and decentralization in Latin America: status of LRGs

Decentralization processes in Latin America began in the 1980s and 1990s as part of 'structural reform' policies. They were often part of larger democratization efforts (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic), peace processes in Central America (Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) or a strategy to regain control of territory in the face of internal conflicts (Colombia and Peru). Decentralization processes are more limited in Costa Rica and even more so in Panama; their purpose is to modernize the administration, extend the role of LRGs in providing public services and create spaces for participation.

The previous GOLD reports provide evidence that decentralization in Latin America has made significant progress.¹⁸ However, it has not been a linear or homogeneous process. One of the most significant outcomes has been that local authorities in almost all countries in the region are currently democratically elected, principally at the municipal level and, to a lesser extent, at the level of intermediary governments (departments, provinces and regions). Participation and interaction spaces for citizens have also increased, in some cases giving rise to internationally recognized processes (e.g. participatory planning and budgeting, open councils, referendums, etc.). The past decade has witnessed new experiences in the region that have progressively transformed territorial governance.

A decade of changes in territorial governance

Since the 1980s, states in the region have undergone profound changes in managing their territories.¹⁹ More than 14 countries have adopted significant reforms in local administration over the past decade, making steady progress but also experiencing some setbacks.

Brazil and **Colombia** are the two countries in the region showing the greatest progress in decentralization. Between 2000 and 2010, **Brazil** constructed a decentralization and development model that gained international recognition, thanks to innovative social policies that strengthened the role of local governments. Federated states and municipalities were recognised as autonomous governments with similar statutes in the 1988

Constitution. In 2001, the Law on the Statute of Cities consolidated the laws and mechanisms for managing urban development — in particular land use — explicitly recognizing the right to housing and to a sustainable city, as well as new spaces for citizen participation. The creation of the Ministry of Cities (2003) and national consultation mechanisms (National Conference of Cities and National Council of Cities) were accompanied by extended legislation — for example, the law of environmental sanitation and inter-municipal public consortium (2005) and new housing policies such as *Minha Casa and Minha Vida* (2009). In 2015, the Metropolis Statute (Law 13089) was adopted, which promoted the creation and management of metropolitan areas (78 areas in 2018). A process of reviewing these policies has begun over the last few years (see Section 2.3 below).

Colombia provides another important example of progress in decentralization in the region. Its decentralization process began in 1986. The 1991 Constitution integrated the principles of self-government for local governments. Mayors and governors at departmental level were elected and invested with competences in different areas — urban and territorial development, basic services, including health and education — and with relative autonomy in resource management.²⁰ The process was relaunched in 2011 with the Organic Law on Territorial Organization (LOOT) and reform of the General System of Royalties (SGR), the aim of which was to improve the redistribution of resources between territories (equalization). In 2013, the Law of Metropolitan Areas was adopted (10 areas are currently recognized). Support given to local levels can also be found in the peace agreements signed in 2017: development plans with a territorial approach were promoted as mechanisms for participation in 170 municipalities. Nonetheless, the decentralization process has some unresolved issues, including the need for improved articulation between various levels of government, financing and strengthening the capacities of local governments.

The process in **Bolivia** is worth mentioning because of its originality. Beginning with its decentralization laws of 1994, in 2009 it adopted a new Political Constitution that defined the country as a 'Unitary Social State of Plurinational,

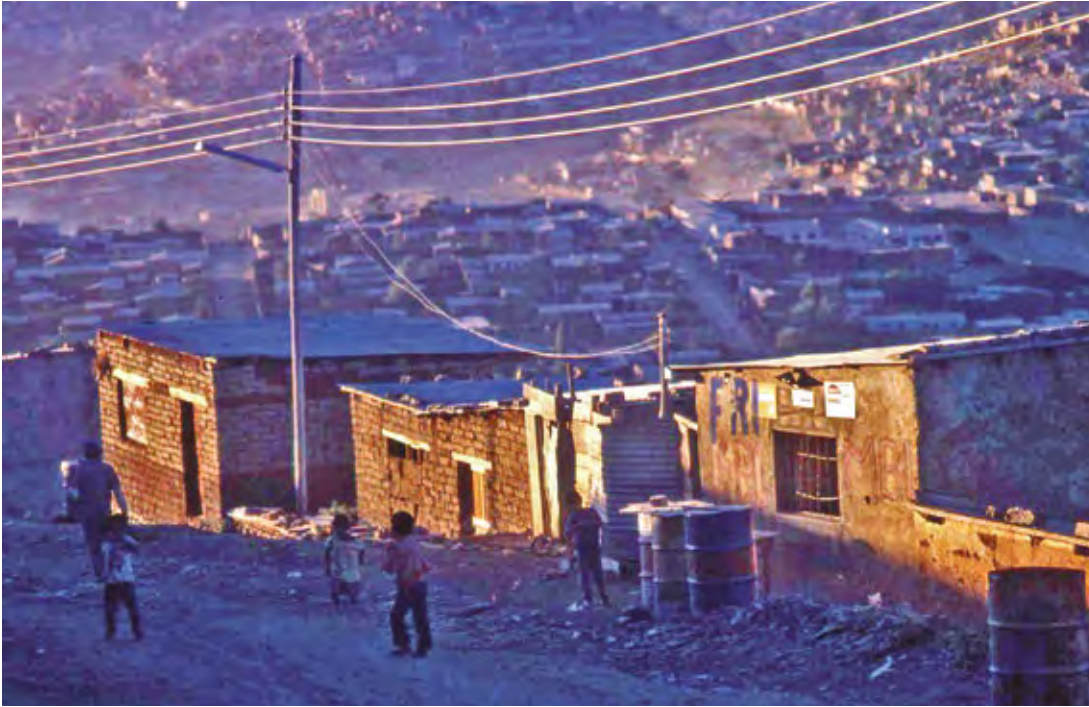
Community-Based Law: free, independent, sovereign, democratic, intercultural, decentralized and with autonomies'.²¹ In 2010, its Framework Law of Autonomies and Decentralization adapted the legal framework to this new Constitution and established four types of autonomies: Departmental, Provincial, Municipal and Indigenous Native Peasant Peoples, each with its own competence, financial regime and elected authorities. The autonomy of Indigenous Native Peasant Peoples belongs to a new type of territorial organization that connects the ancestral model of government of indigenous communities with state regulations. The Ministry of Autonomies was also created to lead the process (becoming a Vice Ministry in 2016). The Framework Law establishes the distribution of competences and the financial regime, which shifts the redistribution of resources from the natural wealth of each territory (mining, gas and oil), as regulated through a fiscal pact between the central government and decentralized entities. In 2014, Law 482 on Autonomous Municipal Governments was passed, establishing the regulatory framework for the organizational structure and functioning of local governments, as was Law 533 on the creation of the metropolitan area of Kanata (Cochabamba). But progress in gaining local autonomy has been slow since the approval of this new Constitution. The central governments' control over municipalities has increased, whilst local financing has reduced.

Since the approval of its 2008 Constitution, **Ecuador** has also been committed to extending the decentralization process. Decentralized autonomous governments are divided into provinces, municipalities, rural parishes and a special regime territory (Galapagos). The creation of metropolitan districts and inter-municipal cooperation mechanisms or consortiums is also envisaged. The government created a national consultation mechanism, the National Council of Competences, a body tasked with steering the implementation of the decentralization process. The Council ensures compliance with the Organic Code on Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (COOTAD) established by the National System of Competences, which outlines a process of progressive transfer of responsibilities based on commitments. A National Decentralization Plan 2012-2015 and Strategy for the Implementation of Decentralization 2017-2021 were subsequently adopted. The government is also promoting the creation of deconcentrated operational agencies in territories as part of a new management model, to ensure responsibilities are shared between central and LRGs. In practice, many sources of tension remain between various government levels and in particular between provinces, municipalities and parishes over the distribution of competences and resources,

against a backdrop of a decline in the availability of public financial resources.

Following a different model in 2002, **Peru** integrated the concept of decentralization into its constitutional reform law and adopted its Basic Law of Decentralization, accompanied by several packages of laws between 2002 and 2004. These created two sub-national levels of government: the regions (to replace the departments and the provinces) and the municipal districts. With some exceptions, the process of constituting the new regions did not advance as expected. The departments assumed the role of the regions and were provided with Regional and Local Coordination Councils which involved the participation of civil society. Regional and municipal governments increased their resources by 143% and 183% respectively between 2005 and 2013.²² Contrary to expectations, the transfer of competences was not conducted in an orderly, progressive manner (through an accreditation system), which led to conflicts in the distribution of responsibilities. In order to improve inter-institutional coordination between the various levels of government, a National Decentralization Council was envisaged, later replaced by a Decentralization Secretariat. In March 2017, the government created a new structure to manage dialogue and coordination with LRGs at the level of the Prime Minister's Cabinet.

The federal countries of **Mexico** and **Argentina** are generally considered to be 'decentralized'. Here, states or provinces assume broad responsibilities and have substantial resources, but progress in decentralization processes at a municipal level in both countries is limited (although municipal autonomy is recognized in the Mexican Constitution and has a long tradition in Argentina). As seen below ('LRG financing determines transformations'), while states and provinces account for almost 40% of public expenditure and revenues in relation to general government expenditure, these ratios are below 10% at the municipal level. Fiscal reforms in **Mexico** have strengthened fiscal powers, mainly at state level (2007, 2013 and finally in 2014-2015 as a result of the Mexico Pact), while the 2014 reform allowed the re-election of municipal mayors (which had previously been limited to three years without re-election) which meant they could renew their mandate. But the greatest progress in decentralization in recent years has been the transformation of the federal district into an autonomous government. In 2017, Mexico City adopted its Political Constitution and created 16 municipalities (*alcaldías*, formerly delegations with no powers of their own) and constituted the first Congress of Mexico City. These reforms, a strong reliance on sub-national levels of federal government resources remains. In **Argentina**, there is persistent debate on recentralization versus decentralization policies. Eleven provinces have



Cerro Verde, Cochabamba, Bolivia (photo: Patrick Henry, bit.ly/2LYOLHs).

implemented constitutional reforms that affect their municipalities. The Federal Solidarity Fund, known as '*Fondo Sojero*', created by the national government in 2009 with redistributive goals to improve health, education, hospitals, housing and road infrastructure in urban and rural areas, was an important mechanism to promote decentralization. But the Fund was abolished in 2018 by the National Decree of Necessity and Urgency in order to comply with the deficit reduction goal agreed with the IMF. It was replaced with a Financial Assistance Programme for Provinces and Municipalities as part of ongoing fiscal consolidation, with the condition that 50% of the transferred amount should be diverted to municipalities.

Decentralization in the remaining three Southern Cone countries, **Chile**, **Paraguay** and **Uruguay**, is more limited. **Chile** has made some progress, with the election of regional councils in its 16 regions (2013), although direct election of the executive (regional governors) will only take place in 2020 – currently they are appointed by the central government. Municipalities have limited powers and resources. The Decentralization Agenda proposed by the Presidential Advisory Commission for Decentralization and Regional Development (2014-2018) has not made any significant progress; in fact, it has actually led to recentralization in certain areas (e.g. education). The autonomy of municipalities and departments in **Paraguay** is recognized in legislation, but departmental governors act mainly as representatives of the central government in the territories. Progress towards decentralization has been slow and coordination with departments minimal, whereas the central government has

increased its control. **Uruguay** created 112 municipalities that coexist (and share financial resources) with 19 pre-existing departmental governments through two laws passed in 2009 and 2015. But not all the country's territory has been municipalized; a greater devolution of competences, financing and better coordination with departmental governments is expected.

Municipal authorities are elected in all countries of the region of Central America and the Caribbean (**Costa Rica**, **El Salvador**, **Guatemala**, **Honduras**, **Panama**, **Nicaragua** and the **Dominican Republic**), but the area is characterized by slow decentralization processes and municipal governments with limited resources (see below 'LRGs financing determines transformations'). **Guatemala** and **Nicaragua** stand out, as their municipalities have the greatest competences and resources of the sub-region. **Nicaragua's** decentralization process began in the late 1980s and its legal framework was reviewed in 2003 and 2013. The current political crisis, however, has severely affected the degree of local autonomy. The role of mayors in **Costa Rica** was strengthened in 1998 by direct elections (they had previously been appointed by municipal councils) and recent reforms have increased their powers and resources in principle (Law 8801/2010 and Law 9329/2015). Territorial development and land-use laws (2011) in **El Salvador** have promoted local planning and the creation of a National Council for Territorial Development (2017). The review of the municipal code (2015) has extended local responsibilities. In 2017, the government in **Guatemala** introduced the National Agenda for Decentralization 2032 to relaunch the

implementation of the Decentralization Law approved in 2002. **Honduras** adopted a National Policy on Decentralization and Local Development in 2012, followed by a Decentralization Law in 2016. But in practice there was a recentralization of resources between 2005 and 2015 (from 3.7% of GDP in 2005 to 2% in 2015 for local expenditures). The law on the decentralization of public administration and its reform was approved in **Panama** in 2009 and updated in 2015, but the limited capacity and resources of municipalities make it difficult for them to assume these new responsibilities. The **Dominican Republic** began a process of strengthening its municipalities in the 1990s, revising its legal framework in 2007 and it is now currently debating a law on 'local administration and territorial system'. During the first decade of the 2000s, most countries in the region made commitments to increase transfers progressively from between 8% (El Salvador), 10% (Costa Rica) and 20% (Guatemala) of the national budget, but this commitment has generally not been met. **Cuba** has also been moving towards decentralization since 2016 by adopting new economic and social policy guidelines, as well as recent constitutional reforms.

As illustrated in this summary, decentralization and the reform of territorial governance have continued to remain on the regional agenda, but progress has been uneven and in many cases slow and contradictory. The evolution of territorial organization, distribution of competences and financing of LRGs are analyzed below.

Fewer changes in territorial organization

Table 2 provides a summary of the territorial organization of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The table shows that the three federal countries in the region (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico) have two levels of sub-national governments — states and municipalities — while the differences between the unitary countries is greater. Five Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic) have only one level of sub-national government: municipal. Six South American countries (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador,

Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) have two levels of sub-national government, with two special features: in the case of Uruguay, most of the territory is not municipalized but has departments (intermediary level); while in the case of Chile, the intermediary level authorities — regions — have an elected council, but their executive (the current regional governor) is still appointed by the central government (and will be elected for the first time in 2020). Two countries (Bolivia and Nicaragua) have three levels of sub-national government, with a special feature in the case of Bolivia which has two types of autonomies at a local level, and a small part of the country with a second intermediary level (indigenous autonomies).

Most countries have slightly increased the number of sub-national governments over the past decade — especially at a municipal level (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay) and at an intermediary level in two federal countries (Argentina and Brazil) and three unitary countries (Colombia, Ecuador and Paraguay). Only Peru has reduced its number of municipalities (from 2,070 to 1,866, maintaining the distinction between provincial and district municipalities), while at the same time strengthening the role of the regions. Four countries (Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras) have seen little change over the past ten years.

In several countries, there exist intermediary subdivisions or subdivisions below municipalities, which are often in charge of territorial administration, but these do not constitute autonomous governments (e.g. provinces and districts in Costa Rica, departments in El Salvador, regions and districts in Guatemala, departments in Honduras, and districts and townships in Panama). Rural and urban parishes (totalling 1,194) are recognized in Ecuador's Constitution as local authorities, although they are dependent on municipalities. The same is true of districts in the Dominican Republic, of which there are 234. Many countries continue to debate both the structure and relevant size that municipalities need to be to assume their responsibilities, generate greater economies of scale and guarantee their financing.

As mentioned earlier, reforms have been promoted in recent years to create or strengthen metropolitan areas by providing them with a common authority or metropolitan management system (in Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and El Salvador). Despite these advances, the management of metropolitan areas (which account for 45% of the urban population in the region) remains a priority in terms of resolving issues such as institutional fragmentation, ensuring sufficient investment and responding to any externalities and spillover issues that arise.

Decentralization and the reform of territorial governance have continued to remain on the regional agenda, but progress has been uneven and in many cases slow and contradictory.

Table 2 Territorial organization and number of LRGs in Latin America and the Caribbean

2018	Government System	Sub-national Governments Levels	Total of LRGs	1 st Level	2 nd Level	3 rd Level
	Form of State			Municipalities	Department/ Provinces/ Regions	Federal States/ Provinces/ Regions
Argentina	Republic Federal State	2	2301	2277		24
Bolivia	Republic Unitary State	3	352	339+3 (Indigenous Autonomies)	9	
Brazil	Republic Federal State	2	5597	5570		27
Chile	Republic Unitary State	2	361	345	16	
Colombia	Republic Unitary State	2	1134	1101	33	
Costa Rica	Republic Unitary State	1	82	82		
Cuba	Republic Unitary State	2	176	160	16	
Dominican Republic	Republic Unitary State	1	159	159		
Ecuador	Republic Unitary State	2	245	221	24	
El Salvador	Republic Unitary State	1	262	262		
Guatemala	Republic Unitary State	1	340	340		
Honduras	Republic Unitary State	1	298	298		
Mexico	Republic Federal State	2	2511	2479		32
Nicaragua	Republic Unitary State	3	155	153	2	
Panama	Republic Unitary State	1	77	77		
Paraguay	Republic Unitary State	2	272	254	18	
Peru	Republic Unitary State	2	1893	1867	26	
Uruguay	Republic Unitary State	2	131	112	19	
Venezuela	Republic Federal State	2	358	335		24

Source: OECD-UCLG (2019), World Observatory of Sub-National Government Finance and Investment.

Changes in competences of LRGs

LRGs in the region show variations between countries and municipalities in terms of responsibility and functions. The activities of municipal governments generally include the management of basic services (water and sewerage, waste management, and participation in health and education, including school infrastructure); urban development and infrastructure management (urbanism, urban planning and construction standards, public facilities and spaces, parks, public lighting, cemeteries and, in some countries, social housing); economic promotion (local development plans, markets, road maintenance, local transport regulation, tourism); social and cultural services (culture, libraries, sports facilities); and the promotion of local democracy (citizen participation).

Regional governments also have powers and responsibilities in these areas, in addition to other fields such as planning and promotion of regional development (land-use zoning, land-use planning, environmental protection); education (at all three levels); health (from prevention to hospitals); services and infrastructure; economic development (promotion of economic activities, employment, energy, transport and roads, tourism); and social and cultural development and protection (protection of indigenous populations, citizen security). Similarly, LRGs participate in national programmes on health, environment and social protection, amongst others. The information gathered is consistent with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)'s analysis of an incremental participation of LRGs in the region in providing public goods and services that are 'crucial for development and social protection'.²³

It should be noted that the distribution and share of powers for specific functions between the various government levels is not always clear. In practice, the delivery and quality of services do not always correspond to the legal framework. Certain competences may be assumed de facto by the central government or intermediary governments, either directly or through specialized companies or agencies (e.g. Chile, Paraguay and in Brazil for certain services such as water and sanitation or road maintenance). The abundance of shared, concurrent and delegated competences within countries, especially with

respect to major sustainable development issues, reinforces the need for effective coordination.

Significant efforts are needed in most countries to clarify 'who does what' and to define appropriately what resources are required for each function in the relevant field, with the aim of building local autonomy while also fostering innovation and diversification. The latter can be viewed as both a challenge and an opportunity in the light of the 2030 Agenda — and sustainable development in general. As will be seen below, it is necessary to strengthen multilevel articulation mechanisms in the case of the SDGs to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of local policies.

Local and regional government financing determines transformations

LRGs in Latin America and the Caribbean represent 19.3% and 22.7% of general national government expenditures and revenues respectively.²⁴ According to the IDB, 'The proportion of sub-national governments in consolidated public spending in the countries of the region almost doubled between 1985 and 2010, from 13% to 25%'.²⁵ But looked at relative to GDP, it represents only 6.3% and 6.2% in terms of expenditures and incomes — less than half that in OECD countries (16.2% and 15.9% respectively). Figure 1 shows the ratio between sub-national government expenditures and revenues as a percentage of general government expenditure and GDP for 16 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As in other continents, there is a clear gap between federal countries (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico) and unitary countries. The former mobilize 16.1% and 16% of national GDP for expenditures and revenues respectively (43% and 52% of general national government expenditures and revenues), whilst the latter represent only 4.2% of GDP for both expenditures and revenues (14.2% and 16% of general national government expenditures and revenues). However, municipal expenditures and revenues in Argentina and Mexico represent only 1.9% and 2% of GDP respectively, highlighting the limits of decentralization at the municipal level in these two countries (while federated states concentrate 16% and 13% of GDP in Argentina, for expenditures and revenues respectively, and 10% of GDP for both revenues and expenditures in Mexico). Only in Brazil is participation in total government expenditures and revenues at both levels more balanced, because the constitution accords similar status to states and municipalities. States ensure 10% and 12% of GDP for expenditures and revenues, while municipalities participate with 8.2% and 8.7% of GDP respectively, demonstrating a more advanced process of fiscal decentralization.

The four unitary countries identified in the previous section as more advanced in the

The abundance of shared, concurrent and delegated competences within countries reinforces the need for effective coordination.

process of decentralization (Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador) show higher percentages of local government revenues and expenditures compared to the Latin American average. Local expenditures and revenues represent between 12.9% and 12.8% of national GDP respectively in Colombia, and up to 5.6% and 3.8% in Ecuador respectively. Nicaragua is very close to the regional average (4.3% and 4.4% of GDP for expenditures and revenues respectively).²⁶

All other countries are below the Latin American average. Overall, local expenditures and revenues in Central American and Caribbean countries, where fiscal decentralization is particularly limited, represent 2.1% and 2.2% of GDP respectively (9.3% and 10.9% of the total public budget). In South America, the two countries at the bottom of the list are Paraguay (1.3% and 1.1% respectively) and Uruguay (3.1% and 3.2% respectively).

Figure 1

Sub-national government expenditures and revenues, as a % of general government expenditures and revenues, and as a % of GDP, by country, in Latin America and the Caribbean



Although the participation of LRGs in general government expenditure has increased in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent decades, the autonomy of sub-national governments to manage their resources may be limited in practice by continued central government controls, limitations in local capacities and the predominance of transfers over own revenue, especially when transfers are conditional — as is the case in many countries.

Own revenue of LRGs in the region represents on average 48% of their budgets, while the OECD average is 63%. In Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, El

Salvador and Nicaragua the own revenue of LRGs represents between 49% and 60% of budgets, derived mostly from taxes (except in El Salvador). Own revenue in Argentina represents almost all revenues (97%); however, most of these are de facto shared taxes transferred by the national government (e.g. value added taxes) but these are classified as own revenue. In Brazil, the percentage falls to 35% if just municipalities are taken into account, but the figure is 79% for states (the majority coming from local taxes).²⁷

The fiscal powers of LRGs in the region are limited, except for states or provinces in federal countries. Municipalities in unitary countries have greater fiscal bases and powers (e.g. Colombia and Peru) than municipalities in federal countries, although in some countries they are also very restricted (e.g. Chile and Honduras).

As noted earlier, transfers play an important role in the region. The average transfer received by LRGs is 52% of their budget (the OECD average being 37.2%). In most countries, transfers represent between 45% and 58% of the budgets of intermediary and local governments (e.g. Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Nicaragua, Chile and Bolivia). Transfers in Brazil represent 40% of sub-national budgets, but 65% for municipalities and 21% for states. Transfers in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru represent almost the entire municipal budget (between 80% and 94%). The importance of transfers has increased in most countries over the past decade.

Transfer systems are generally managed with transparency and regularity using formulas. But transfers are heavily conditional in many countries, for example in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. Compulsory expenditure on education, health and basic services in Colombia, for example, accounts for 83% of current transfers. Other countries define the percentage that should be dedicated to investments, for example in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru. This obviously limits the ability of local authorities to plan their development autonomously.

One persistent problem in the region is rising inequalities between territories, the most striking being the growing concentration of economic activity in the main urban agglomerations. Many countries use specific funds for co-participation or equalization (e.g. Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Colombia), or transfer formulas including variables to reduce inequalities (e.g. in Central American countries). But the results have been unsatisfactory. In some cases, transfers even increase the gap, for example in Peru. The IDB has noted that existing redistributive income sharing schemes are not enough to compensate for the major differences in resources of LRGs (see Box 2).²⁸

Box 2

Fiscal decentralization and regional disparities in Latin America

Decentralization tends to lead to horizontal fiscal imbalances by granting revenue powers and assigning spending responsibilities to LRGs which differ in their fiscal capacities and spending needs. The marked variation in the size and profile of their populations and economic bases, as well as in their fiscal efforts, revenue management capacity and service delivery capacity, explains this heterogeneity. Territorial fiscal disparities mean that only a few local governments can provide adequate services. The findings are as follows:

- There are large economic and fiscal disparities among LRGs in the region, and existing intergovernmental fiscal transfer systems do not adequately address this problem.
- Latin American countries need to reform their fiscal transfer systems to make them more compensatory to the spending needs and fiscal capacity of their LRGs. Exclusive, large-scale equalization transfer schemes should be introduced to promote horizontal fiscal equity and efficiency in the use and allocation of sub-national resources, the distribution of which is based on fiscal disparity (difference between spending needs and fiscal capacity).
- Reform of the intergovernmental transfer system must occur as part of a comprehensive review of its main components.
- Any reform that integrates fiscal equalization in transfer systems must re-evaluate the allocation of own resources because of the comprehensiveness of the decentralization process. The effectiveness of fiscal equalization depends on granting greater and varied taxing powers to LRGs and a greater degree of management autonomy.
- Introducing fiscal equalization schemes should be accompanied by actions aimed at strengthening technical, institutional and administrative capacities at all government levels.
- Designing equalization schemes should consider political economy factors and dynamics that underline such a reform within the context of each country. The most viable political strategy involves proposing gradual reforms over time.


Source: The potential of equalizing transfers (IDB, 2017).

Finally, LRGs in Latin America and the Caribbean play an essential role in public investment in the region, representing 40% of public investment (below the OECD average of 57%). Local investment in federal countries and Peru represents between 67% and 77% of public investment. Local governments in five other countries are above average – Nicaragua, Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador and Colombia – at between 44% and 67%. Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua dedicate around 60% of their budgets to legally binding investments. Municipalities in Brazil contribute 41% of public investment and federal states 32%, although local investment has fallen in recent years. Finally, four countries are below the average — Uruguay, Honduras, Paraguay and Chile (between 12% and 21% of public investment) — and in three countries the contribution of local governments to public investment is lower than 10% (El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica).

LRGs' access to financing is allowed in most countries (except in Chile), but it is strongly regulated and usually only allowed for investments (the so-called 'Golden Rule'). Strict controls were imposed in Argentina and Brazil after the debt crisis at the end of the last century. Colombia adopted its 'Traffic Light Law' in 1997, which lays out the rules of indebtedness, reinforced by subsequent laws. The 2016 Fiscal Discipline Law in Mexico increased control over indebtedness and created a warning system. Strict thresholds of government indebtedness, authorization and guarantees are also applied in other countries, generally restricting access to international financing (except for some cities such as Quito in Ecuador and Lima in Peru), or limiting the issuance of bonds (Ecuador and Peru). It is public banking

or specialized institutions (municipal development institutes) that have assumed a central role in local credit in some countries, for example in Central America.

Latin American countries remain more centralized than most OECD countries with respect to financing, with examples of stagnation and setbacks (Mexico at the municipal level, Chile and Paraguay) or very slow progress (Central American and Caribbean countries), while budget restrictions are on the increase in several Southern Cone countries as a result of crisis or changes in the political regime (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador).

Political and fiscal decentralization in most Latin American countries faces considerable challenges. LRGs' budgets have increased, but vertical budgetary imbalances have worsened. LRGs have therefore become increasingly dependent on transfers from central governments, which has often weakened local autonomy and local development planning capacities. Inequalities among territories persist or have worsened between peripheral or border regions and central regions with greater economic dynamism and better connections. The disparity between the capacities and responsibilities of local institutions undermines decentralization through its effect on the implementation and integration of public policies, which weakens the momentum of territorial development policies and social and territorial cohesion. Decentralization leads to greater administrative, financial and socio-economic interdependence between central and sub-national governments, but if multilevel governance mechanisms do not evolve to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of public policies, transparency and accountability, the process may come to a halt.²⁹ 



Street seller weaving traditional textiles in Cusco, Peru (photo: © Julien Cavadini, bit.ly/2lBB3YN).

2.3 Relationships between different government spheres and SDGs – changes in multilevel governance mechanisms

As noted in the introduction to this report, the 2030 Agenda has a direct impact on the relationship between different government levels. Dialogue and cooperation, as well as the participation of citizen actors, are essential to achieving greater integration and political cohesion. They help improve national and local planning and territorial development strategies for the achievement of the SDGs.

An activist from the Articulation of the Indigenous Population of Brazil's movement gives the inaugural speech at the University of Brasilia in 2018 (photo: Raquel Aviani/Secom UnB, bit.ly/2B8ACkR)



The progress seen in the region over the past few decades, in particular the decentralization processes, have led to a more complex political institutional landscape. However, be it in the form of integrating the 2030 Agenda into national and local strategies, or in many other ways and designs that support inclusive and sustainable territorial development, more progress will be needed. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda undoubtedly represents an opportunity to extend the processes of change and tackle many of the existing challenges in strengthening institutional collaboration.

The following section illustrates with examples the different routes taken by four countries in constructing an MLG framework, including its inherent contradictions and tensions. These are Brazil and Mexico, two countries that have created high-level national mechanisms to follow up the 2030 Agenda, including the participation of LRGs; and Colombia and Ecuador, who have opted for coordination mechanisms at the ministerial level, but who have had experience in identifying MLG mechanisms.

Over the past decade, **Brazil** has been regarded in the region as a role model of social and inter-institutional dialogue. With respect to the SDGs, in 2017 the government established a National Commission on the SDGs and aligned its Multi-Year Plan 2016-2019 with the 2030 Agenda. The composition of the Commission was promising, with equal representation from governments, including LRGs, and civil society. The National Commission included two representatives from the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) and two representatives from the Brazilian Association of States Entities of Environment (ABEMA). Several strategic principles were established, one of which was to develop a territorialized plan for the 2030 Agenda that would include the creation of commissions for the SDGs at state and municipal levels to coordinate their implementation, taking into account the need to move towards a 'new federative pact' that fully involved LRGs.³⁰

Historically, Brazil has faced major problems as regards effective policy coherence between

different levels of government and sectors, including overlapping responsibilities, financial mismatch, major gaps between capacity and resources at various levels of government, dramatic differences between regions (e.g. between the north-east and the south) and between metropolitan areas and small to medium-sized municipalities, as well as within cities. As mentioned above, Brazil has been advancing its legal frameworks and structuring policies to strengthen sub-national governance since the 1980s. The Brazilian government has developed several initiatives to create an enabling environment for local governments and states in what has been dubbed a 'new federalism' over the past decade, in order to strengthen the involvement of LRGs in national development, foster territorial development strategies, and improve multilevel and multistakeholder dialogue. With the adoption of the Statute of Cities (2001), the municipality acquires a strategic role in urban planning. The master plan, a guiding instrument of local urban policy, becomes mandatory to define the social function of urban property. On the other hand, there is still a lack of technical and financial assistance to municipalities in the development of urban policy. The Ministry of Cities and Council of Cities is one salient example, acknowledged at international level as a national participatory mechanism comprising national and local governments and civil society institutions and organizations (all elected through the Conference of Cities). The Council has the legal power to monitor and evaluate the implementation of national urban development policies, particularly housing and public services, to advise on the necessary measures and to promote cooperation among governments at national, federal state and municipal levels, as well as involving civil society in formulating and implementing national urban policy. However, over the past few years (under President Temer), the national government abolished the competences of the Council of Cities in organizing and implementing the National Conference of Cities (Decree 9076/2017) and postponed the National Conference (in principle to 2019), disregarding the participatory processes that had been developed over almost 15 years.³¹

Progress in defining an SDG action plan has also been limited and is currently on hold.³² It is still not clear if the new Brazilian government under President Jair Bolsonaro will continue with the SDG Commission and the SDGs in general, although the first initiatives regarding environmental protection (e.g. renewing the expansion of exploitation of resources of the Amazonian region as well as threatening to disengage from the Paris Climate Agreement), social policies (e.g. severe cuts in health and education expenditure) and respect for human rights (e.g. increasing violence against peasant

organizations, indigenous and LGBTQIA+ communities) have not been encouraging. Brazil also decided to withdraw from the list of countries that reported to the HLPF in 2019. The example of Brazil is symptomatic of the break from, and discontinuance of, public policies which have resulted in a weakening of the process of building mechanisms for participation and dialogue. Brazil's withdrawal from certain global commitments is likely to have an important impact, not just in the Mercosur area.

In the case of **Mexico**, the former federal government also proposed coordinating the 2030 Agenda at the highest level, creating a National Council of the 2030 Agenda (April 2017) as a bridge between the federal government and LRGs, the private sector, civil society and academia, which participate as observers.³³ Representatives of state and municipal governments were invited to participate in the National Council, the National Strategy Committee and their technical committees.³⁴ The 'National Strategy for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda', including a system of indicators, required two years of consultations (through a Citizen Forum and several workshops involving municipalities). This information system is managed by the National Institute of Geography and Statistics, which provides guidance for public policy decision-making. The SDGs were linked to the 2018 budget of the federation and the national planning law was reviewed to integrate the principles of sustainable development in order to plan for the long term (20 years). The new government, which took office in January 2019, confirmed its commitment to the SDGs and approved the National Council, but it has not ruled out submitting the strategy for review and introducing it in the National Development Plan 2019-2024. Efforts to construct mechanisms for dialogue and agreement at a national level were also transferred to sub-national levels. With the support of the government, the National Conference of Governors (CONAGO) set up a Commission for the Fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda and promoted the creation of Offices to Follow Up and Implement the 2030 Agenda (*Organismos de Seguimiento e Implementación* – OSIs) in 32 states. These OSIs were established to ensure follow-up (or planning) and liaison bodies between the government, municipalities, the private sector, academia and civil society in each state. However 'more than a year after their launch, most of the OSIs have not advanced in this (operationalization) process'.³⁵ Some states have introduced initiatives to integrate the 2030 Agenda into their development plans (see Section 3.2 below for further details).³⁶ Difficulties noted include: 1) the creation of OSIs as ad hoc mechanisms disconnected from state planning committees, thereby weakening their management; 2) the multiplicity of competing

commissions which hinders integration of the 2030 Agenda in a cross-cutting manner; and 3) the lack of clear mechanisms for the participation of actors such as municipalities, the private sector and civil society, which puts their coordination role at risk. The implementation of OSIs at a municipal level is even more nascent, compounded by the limited involvement of national municipal associations.

The case of Mexico highlights some of the difficulties experienced at sub-national level that can impede the process of constructing more articulated policies. As will be seen in the following section, the level and quality of involvement of LRGs in this process is essential for constructing mechanisms that can respond to the principles of coherence and integration of the 2030 Agenda.

The third example, **Colombia**, illustrates the evolution of MLG processes in one of the countries showing the greatest progress in the decentralization process and in constructing territorial development strategies for the SDGs in Latin America. Historically (and even more so in the context of the peace process signed in 2016), the debate on decentralization and territorial development strategies occupies a prominent place within Colombia's agenda.³⁷ The national government believes it is necessary to clarify the distribution of competences between municipalities and departments and to develop territorial mechanisms and policies that are better adapted to new forms of MLG. Currently, most competences are shared among all government levels (e.g. education, health, water and sewerage, and housing). Departments are responsible for planning and promoting the economic and social development of their territories and must coordinate with municipalities, which should also develop their own local development and land-use plans. The national government recently introduced the concept of regions (for planning and investment purposes) in order to overcome 'low coordination' between different government levels and to promote policies and mechanisms that can foster regional integration and competitiveness.³⁸

It is in this context that the SDG implementation strategy is being articulated with national and territorial development strategies. To coordinate implementation, the High-Level Inter-Institutional Commission for the Preparation and Effective Implementation of the 2030 Agenda was created in 2016, bringing together the presidency, ministries and government agencies. At the outset, the Colombian government included the need to formulate a strategy for SDG localization. Taking advantage of the 2016 election of new local governments, the national government promoted the integration of the SDGs into the territorial development plans (2016-2019) that the new local authorities would have to establish.³⁹ The alignment process showed that LRGs prioritized

the SDGs with national funding.⁴⁰ In order to encourage the implementation of the SDGs, the government proposed to strengthen the use of various mechanisms such as plan contracts (to encourage co-financing from central and local governments and private sector) and projects financed through the general system of royalties.⁴¹

However LRGs believe that these initiatives failed to adequately address their interests and vision (especially when it came to distributing resources through the general system of participation and royalties).⁴² Both local governments and civil society are calling for greater efforts to support sub-national governments.⁴³ The reduction in funds (11% between 2015 and 2017) to finance sub-national projects, and in particular to support municipalities with fewer resources and capacities, has added to tensions.⁴⁴

Although outlined only briefly here, the Colombian process is probably one of the most interesting examples in the region of the difficulties in constructing MLG to enhance the coordination and coherence of public policies to support territorial development policies within a framework of respect for subsidiarity and local autonomy. A number of problems are evident, ranging from information, training and technical assistance for sub-national institutions, to strengthening mechanisms for dialogue and consensus-building among the different government levels but with financing at its core. More recently, several territories have experienced growing social tensions as part of a complicated peace process, with complaints of persecution and murder, which has hindered the fledgling consensus-building processes at the local level.

The SDGs in **Ecuador** have been integrated into the '*Toda una vida*' National Development Plan 2017-2021 (NDP), one of whose principles is territorial development. The NDP was approved by the National Planning Council, chaired by the President of the Republic, which is the senior organization of the National Decentralized Participatory Planning System (NDPPS). It includes representatives of LRGs and civil society (pluri-national and intercultural citizens' assembly). But coordination of the Plan's implementation and the SDGs is the responsibility of the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (SENPLADES). It should be noted that the NDPPS was the main intra-governmental mechanism used to implement, monitor and evaluate the MDGs and, in principle, it will also be used for the SDGs. The NDPPS has a complicated structure with three levels of public policy coordination: national, intersectoral/sectoral and local.⁴⁵

Under the Constitution (art. 280), the NDP is a mandatory benchmark for all public institutions, including those that are decentralized. According to the law governing sub-national governments —

COOTAD 2010 — all public entities must report their NDP compliance progress to SENPLADES as a prerequisite for approving their annual operating budgets and plans.

In the case of Ecuador, the institutional coordination process faces several obstacles. First, the apparent complexity of the NDPPS due to the multiplicity of levels (NDP, sectoral agendas, zonal agendas, local plans). There is also a gap between the time taken to formulate the guidelines of the national territorial strategy and the development and land-use planning plans that each local government must formulate at the beginning of its mandate, which hinders alignment.⁴⁶ Added to this is the lack of clarity resulting from the strategy of *deconcentration* defined by the national government in the NDP, which has led to an increased number of deconcentrated agencies at a local level, thereby 'leading to a wearing down and scattering of the coordination and articulation of public management in the territories'.⁴⁷ Financing the SDGs represents a further challenge. The dependence of LRGs on national transfers is particularly high (85% of local budgets) and in recent years the country has faced falling oil prices and limited availability of international funds which has resulted in less local financing. A third obstacle is the availability of data and indicators for coordination, given that statistics are still generated centrally at a national level — although the National Statistics Institute is working on the process of strengthening territorial information systems. The Association of Municipalities of Ecuador (AME) and some municipalities (e.g. Quito) collaborate in the collection of local data. However, this process will be affected by the significant changes in leadership at the municipal level as a result of the most recent local elections in March 2019.

Civil society reports state that while the NDPPS represents an opportunity, it also presents challenges, mainly due to weaknesses and coordination problems between public institutions and, in particular, LRGs.⁴⁸ As regards local governments — AME and the Municipality of Quito — insufficient consultation and information on the processes is noted.⁴⁹ The complexity of the process in Ecuador, compounded by its national political context, demonstrates the difficult positioning of the SDGs in constructing new modalities of MLG despite government efforts to promote a 'decentralized and participatory national planning system'.

Examples from other countries in the region are also worth noting. Several governments have created national commissions at a senior level with broad participation, including LRGs (e.g. Costa Rica, Honduras and the Dominican Republic); other countries have privileged inter-institutional or inter-ministerial commissions

There is growing concern to develop coordinated territorial strategies and involve LRGs which represent 41% of public investment in the region.

(Colombia, Chile) or rely on pre-existing sectoral coordination mechanisms (Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Uruguay) or delegated coordination in a ministry or national agency (Peru). The procedures for involving LRGs can be varied: regional consultation mechanisms (Peru), signing of agreements (Argentina), increasing training and assistance actions, and use of programme funds (Guatemala).

There is growing concern in the region to develop territorial strategies and involve LRGs. It is worth noting that LRGs represent 41% of public investment in the region, putting public investments coordination at the centre of national and local development strategies. But this concern is not of equal importance in all countries in the region in terms of the national agenda or territorial implementation strategies of the SDGs. In some instances, it does not appear to be a priority (El Salvador and Panama). No doubt contrasts in the decentralization processes in the region partly explain these differences. However, strong development territorial strategies and improved MLG mechanisms are critical for SDG localization and, more globally, for SDGs achievement. As highlighted in the UNECLAC Quadrennial Report: 'the 2030 Agenda is facing difficulties in terms of capacities, coordination with the national estate, budget allocation and autonomy in decision-making in order to be adapted at sub-national level'.⁵⁰

As can be seen in the previous examples, the institutionalization of the mechanisms for planning and policy coordination, between national and local development strategies (bottom-up and top-down) has seen progress, but this has often been partial or precarious. Successive crises resulting from the fragility of Latin American economies, social conflicts and institutional arrangements may soon undermine efforts that have taken years to build up.

The progress of these processes in the territories and cities of all countries depends on the will of national governments and the participation and appropriation of the SDGs by LRGs and communities to lead territorial initiatives. As will be seen in the next section, many cities and regions are leading innovative processes and contributing substantially to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, despite difficulties and setbacks. 🌍

3. The contribution of local and regional governments to the localization of the SDGs

As in other regions, the mobilization of LRGs to the localization of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America is making progress. There is greater involvement on the part of regional networks and national associations of municipalities, as well as large cities, a process that in federal countries has been extended to regional governments (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico). In other countries, such as Costa Rica and Colombia and to a lesser extent in Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Peru and Bolivia, mobilization is gradually expanding towards medium-sized cities and smaller municipalities and departments. As noted earlier, some national governments are making efforts to involve and support their LRGs in integrating the SDGs into their development plans and to strengthen territorial strategies. But these efforts are highly variable, as can be seen from the space dedicated to LRGs in the VNRs submitted by countries to the UN (see Box 1 above).

3.1 Actions by networks and associations of LRGs for increased ownership of the agenda

The main cities and local government organizations are seeking to strengthen commitments to the global sustainable development agendas, while advocating for institutional reforms and increased resources to meet these objectives.

Regional initiatives to disseminate SDGs and development agendas

The main associations and networks of local governments in the region — the Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations of Latin America (FLACMA), Mercociudades, AL-LAs (Euro-Latin-American Alliance for the Cooperation between Cities), and the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI), all four having now regrouped in the platform CORDIAL, and the Confederation of Associations of Municipalities of Central America and the Caribbean (CAMCAYCA) — have integrated the 2030 Agenda as a key topic both in their own agendas and in their national and regional forums.

In this context, the Habitat III Conference held in Quito in October 2016 — where the New Urban Agenda was approved — as well as several regional events such as the Sustainable Development Forums and the Cities Conferences organized by UNECLAC (see Box 3), have increased the visibility of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda in the Latin American debate.⁵¹

In the preparatory process to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), a representation of LRGs participated in the last two Forum of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, organized by UNECLAC (in Santiago de Chile, April 2018 and 2019).⁵³

At the same time, there has also been an increase in the number of forums and conferences organized by the regional networks and associations of local governments to promote the 2030 Agenda, such as the Hemispheric Summit of Mayors and Local Governments organized annually by FLACMA,⁵⁴ annual Mercociudades summits,⁵⁵ Ibero-American Congresses of Municipalists,⁵⁶ Ibero-American Forums of Local Governments⁵⁷ and the Inter-American Conference of Mayors and Local Authorities.⁵⁸ The work of several regional networks such as Regions4 and ORU-FOGAR should also be noted.⁵⁹

Latin American associations of local governments increased their regional training actions on the localization of the SDGs and the alignment processes of local and regional sustainable development plans.⁶⁰ It is also worth mentioning other regional cooperation initiatives in collaboration with various international organizations on specific issues such as gender equality and the economic empowerment of women in territories.⁶¹

However, three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, LRGs and their associations are still discussing how to address these agendas. In a workshop in Brasilia in December 2018, the main national and regional networks discussed how to accelerate the dissemination of the SDGs by simplifying the language and using new methodologies. There was a call to improve multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance and to calculate the cost of the implementation of the SDGs at local levels.⁶²

Box 3

Latin American and Caribbean Urban and Cities Platform⁵²

UNECLAC, in cooperation with the Forum of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI) and UN-Habitat, has proposed the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Urban and Cities Platform to facilitate the follow-up and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda in the region, and to promote capacity-building and the exchange of experiences and practices among peers. The Platform will host an Urban Observatory and a Virtual Forum to foster capacity building and to promote the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (RAP), as well as the degree of compliance with the urban dimension of the SDGs at national and sub-national levels.

Source: <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/44158-propuesta-plataforma-urbana-ciudades-america-latina-caribe>.

National association initiatives

National municipality associations are also stepping up their actions. In Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and the Dominican Republic, the advocacy and awareness-raising strategies of national associations of LRGs, together with national governments, universities, the private sector and civil society, have promoted the importance of the localization of the SDGs. Some examples of actions taken are discussed below.

In **Brazil** the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) has placed the 2030 Agenda at the centre of its advocacy strategy in collaboration with the Brazilian government to disseminate and promote localization.⁶³ It has developed awareness campaigns, meetings (*Diálogos municipalistas*), published guides and organized training sessions (*CNM Qualifica*) on public management and the SDGs together with the National School of Public Administration (ENAP).⁶⁴ It has also supported projects in the municipalities (to strengthen the SDG strategy network) and developed a monitoring tool, the Mandala (see 'Commitment to transparency, accountability and reporting' below). A second association, the National Front of Mayors (FNP) participate with the CNM in the project to strengthen the SDGs Strategy Network supported by the European Commission. The FNP has incorporated the 2030 Agenda into his work and in their annual National Meetings for Sustainable Development that gather the mayors of the main cities. For its part, the Brazilian Association of Municipalities (ABM) has

organized a large number of SDG workshops in the five regions of Brazil for its more than 300 members, with the support of the European Union (EU).⁶⁵

The Union of Local Governments of **Costa Rica** (UNGL) signed the National Pact for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in 2016, launched by the national government.⁶⁶ Internally, UNGL developed a work plan for the SDGs (see Box 4); published a methodological manual for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the municipalities of Costa Rica — in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and DEMUCA Foundation; held regional SDG workshops; and produced a guideline — the SDG Compass (*Brújula de ODS*) — to support pilot projects in ten municipalities.

In the **Dominican Republic**, in November 2017 the Federation of Municipalities (FEDOMU) approved a resolution on 'FEDOMU's Commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals'. FEDOMU collaborated with the national government to elaborate a 'Roadmap to Implement SDG 11' and define the 'ODS2 Zero Hunger Roadmap'. The Federation also developed a methodological guide to integrate the SDGs into local plans, helped apply the MAP methodology promoted by UNDP, and adapted the SISMAP Municipal tool for monitoring. Other associations (*Asociación Dominicana de Regidores* and the Union of Local Elected Women '*Un Mundo*') have also made policy commitments and developed awareness raising activities and training.⁶⁸

Several national associations of local governments are already integrating the 2030 Agenda into the initiatives they have promoted internally. In **Mexico**, FENAMM has been particularly active in this regard.⁶⁹ In **Ecuador**, both the Association of Municipalities of Ecuador (AME) and CONGOPE (see below) have promoted virtual and face-to-face courses on the 'territorialization' of the SDGs, in collaboration with UNDP.⁷⁰ In **Colombia**, the Colombian Federation of Municipalities also promotes various projects which, although not specifically focused on the SDGs, contribute to different goals (e.g. strengthening public accountability '*Gobernanza ConSentido Público*', gender equality, peace, justice and stable institutions to contribute to SDG 16), as well as promoting meetings to disseminate the SDGs (on local data, with the Sustainable Development Solution Network — SDSN — and universities). The Colombian Association of Capital Cities (Asocapitals) has organized SDG dissemination workshops (e.g. in Medellín in March 2019). Examples also include those of the Federation of Associations of Municipalities of **Bolivia** (FMB), the National Association of Municipalities of Bolivia (AMB) and Association of Female Councillors of Bolivia (ACOBOL).⁷¹

Box 4

UNGL work plan for the SDGs⁶⁷

The UNGL work plan on the SDGs was approved by the UNGL Board of Directors on 20 July 2017 (agreement 91-2017).

It includes activities in six areas:

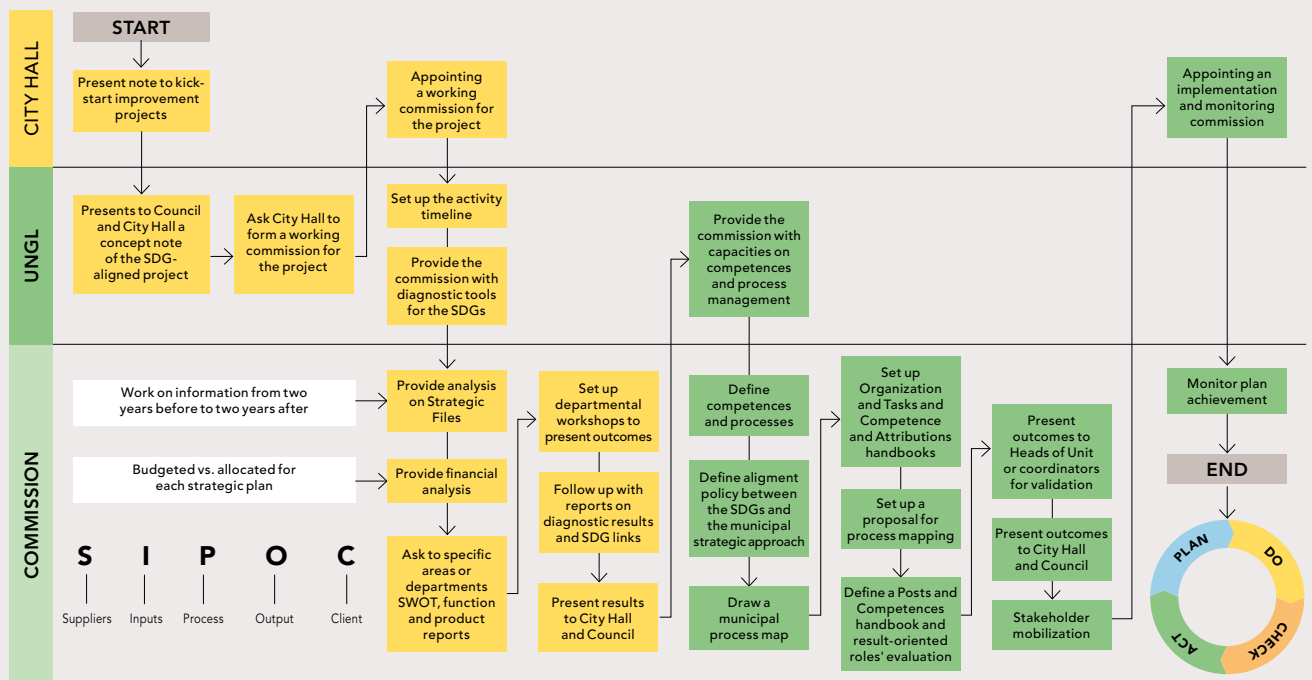
1. Awareness and diagnosis;
2. Alignment of strategies and plans;
3. Capacity building;
4. Monitoring and evaluation;
5. Accountability;
6. Alliances.

The work plan promotes the alignment of the SDGs and local development plans in 15 municipalities during 2018.

Source: UNGL-CAM, 'Programme for the Improvement of Local Governments' (PowerPoint); and response to the UCLG Survey 2019, on the role and involvement of Local and Regional Governments' Associations completed by UNGL.

Figure 2

SDG implementation process in UNGL municipalities (Costa Rica)




Source: UNGL-CAM, 'Programme for the Improvement of Local Governments' (PowerPoint); and response to the UCLG Survey 2019, on the role and involvement of Local and Regional Governments' Associations completed by UNGL.

In January 2018, the Association of **Chilean** Municipalities (AChM) held the first national workshop on SDGs for Chilean municipal authorities as part of the FLACMA Executive Bureau, including representatives from other associations in the region (Brazil, Bolivia and Costa Rica).⁷² In January 2019, AChM again organized a Municipal Training School on 'Municipalities, Citizenship and Local Development' in Santiago, focusing on the implementation of the SDGs in municipalities.⁷³ As recently as March 2019, FLACMA organized, alongside the Chilean Association of Municipalities, a Programmatic Congress in Santiago de Chile whose objectives were based on the integration of the 2030 Agenda and other global agreements. Several associations, such as the National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of **Guatemala** and the Association of Municipalities of **Honduras**, have integrated the SDGs into their work plans.⁷⁴

In other countries, the process remains relatively incipient. In **Peru**, two associations — the National Assembly of Regional Governments (ANGR) and the Association of Municipalities of Peru (AMPE) — have offered support and training to create participatory local and regional development plans. In **Venezuela**, the UN agencies, in collaboration with other stakeholders,

have launched the 'Caravan of the SDGs' to facilitate local-level dialogue about the SDGs between local governments, political parties, companies, social organizations and academia. In total 12 local dialogues have already taken place, involving 1300 participants.⁷⁵

Despite the efforts of various networks and associations, the degree of involvement of LRGs is still limited, with little outreach towards citizens. Greater support is needed, particularly from national governments and international organizations, to promote awareness-raising campaigns that go beyond large cities or a few more innovative intermediary cities. Associations face the challenge of moving from declarations to action, relying on the tools that many have developed and expanding support mechanisms to reach a majority of territories. These challenges notwithstanding, across the whole region several social movements are mobilizing civil society against the somewhat lukewarm (even non-existent in some cases) commitment of national governments and parliaments to fight the environmental crisis and current models of development. Several local governments and authorities have been leading such movements and initiatives. 

3.2 Progress made by LRGs in incorporating the 2030 Agenda into local policies

There has been gradual progress on the part of LRGs in aligning their development plans with the 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda, fostering territorial strategies that contribute to sustainable development. Several regional governments and large cities are advancing most rapidly. The experiences of large cities are discussed in detail in the Metropolitan Cities chapter of this report. Examples of alignment at the level of regional governments and at the level of cities and municipalities are presented below.

Examples of progress among regional governments

Regional or intermediary governments in the region have the potential to play a prominent role in implementing the SDGs. In federal countries (Brazil, Mexico and Argentina) or in decentralized unitary countries (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) these governments often have major competences and resources. Alignment at this level is therefore essential to promote territorial development strategies, and to support intermediary and small local governments who have fewer resources to align their own development strategies and implement the SDGs at local level.

In Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, for example, states account for between 67% and 77% of public investment; and major responsibilities in a number of areas are strongly linked to the 2030 Agenda, for example land-use planning, economic development, environmental sustainability and social inclusion. In **Brazil**, various states are aligning their development plans with the SDGs. The state of Minas Gerais, for example, is doing so through the Secretariat of Planning with the support of the Rio + Centre (World Centre for Sustainable Development), a UNDP initiative. Notable aspects of this include the process of rapprochement with the territory through 17 regional forums held in various parts of the state, as well as a willingness to involve various sectors of society that have come together to discuss the future of local planning.

In **Argentina**, the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies (CNCPS), which coordinates the 2030 Agenda with the support of the UNDP, has signed 18 agreements with the provinces to implement the SDGs in their territories over the last two years. The most active provinces are Corrientes, Jujuy, Neuquén, Salta, San Juan, Santa Fé, Tierra del Fuego and Tucumán (see Box 5). All have designated focal points and made progress in various areas (alignment of the SDGs with their strategic plans or provincial government agendas, prioritization of targets, identification of programmes and indicators).⁷⁶ For example, the province of Córdoba, which signed the agreement with the CNCPS and the OECD, has prioritized social inclusion and well-being and used the SDGs to develop its Vision 2030 by encouraging the participation of civil society and the private

Box 5

North Plan for province of Santa Fé⁷⁸

The North Plan for the province of Santa Fe aims to develop the northern part of the province to reduce existing social, economic and territorial differences. The plan aligns each of the development goals to the various SDGs it is linked to. Thus, for example, the goal of 'Guaranteeing the provision of quality public services: water, energy, gas, sewage' is aligned with SDGs 1, 6 and 7. The plan is accompanied by a participatory monitoring and evaluation strategy, with local indicators based on official SDG indicators. Monitoring the plan has revealed some data and management challenges. The following is required to improve the data:

- Indicators to measure the direct effects of the actions carried out;
- Coverage indicators for the beneficiary population;
- Sorting the information by locality (municipalities, communes and zones) and by equivalent sub-jurisdictions (departments, nodes, educational regions, health regions, EPE [Provincial Energy Company] technical areas);
- Regular measurement to facilitate effective monitoring.

As regards data management, it was also noted that:

- The production and use of information primarily focused on inputs and outputs, making it difficult to measure results and impacts;
- The establishment of measurable targets at a local level is indispensable for effective monitoring and evaluation;
- The flow of information between agencies needs to be strengthened and boosted;
- Internal and external communication is crucial for ensuring transparency and openness.

Source: <https://www.santafe.gov.ar/index.php/web/content/view/full/205735>.

sector. The province is working with the OECD to design an information system on the SDGs.⁷⁷

In **Mexico** in 2016, the National Conference of Governors created the Executive Commission for Compliance with the 2030 Agenda, which, as noted above, is working to establish OSIs in the country's 32 states (although they have been set up in 31 states, their operation is still only partial).⁷⁹ By early 2019, only 9 states had reached an advanced level of alignment, 7 had aligned with the guiding principles and 19 had not yet aligned. The state of Mexico has opted to formally align its 2017-2023 State Development Plan with the SDGs, an inclusive process that has involved the main national actors. The plan defines an integrated approach to territorial development based on four pillars (social, economic, territorial and security), as well as a series of cross-cutting principles that include gender equality, improved governance and connectivity and technology. Another example is the government of the state of Colima, which requested university collaboration to develop an information technology mechanism. A total of 958 related programmes and sub-programmes were identified and a database created to determine the degree of programmatic alignment, budget and operations to implement the SDGs. According to the National Review, the state of Hidalgo has generated a normative framework that integrates long-term planning in line with the SDGs, alongside the alignment of its strategic programmes. The states of Morelos and Campeche included a proposal of goals and indicators to monitor the SDGs in their 2018 government report.⁸⁰ The state of Oaxaca has also made progress. After Mexico City, it is the first sub-national government in the country to publish its own Voluntary Local Review (see Box 6).

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) have become increasingly successful amongst local governments willing (and able) to collect information and data on the localization and implementation of the SDGs in their territories and communities. In an attempt to improve on, and complement, the information provided by national governments on local government initiatives and actions, many cities and regions around the world have used VLRs to raise awareness, gain visibility, and participate as peers in the global conversation on the achievement of the SDGs. Besides Mexico City and the state of Oaxaca, other notable examples in Latin America include Barcarena and the state of Paraná in Brazil, Buenos Aires in Argentina (with respect to SDG 16), and La Paz in Bolivia.

Colombia is an example of one of the best documented cases of alignment. According to an analysis carried out in 2017 (mentioned in the previous section), of 32 departmental plans (intermediary level) and 31 plans of the municipalities of capitals of each department,

Box 6

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in Mexico: Mexico City and Oaxaca

A growing number of Latin American LRGs are stepping forward and producing Voluntary Local Reviews, reflecting their commitment and engagement in achieving the Global Goals. In Mexico, the **States of Oaxaca** and **Mexico City** launched their own VLRs in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Both reports provide an overview of the comprehensive strategies implemented for advancing the SDGs in their territories. The two LRGs detail the creation of multilevel coordination, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms (*Consejos para el Seguimiento de la 2030 Agenda* and Technical Committees) and the capacity-building activities implemented to promote ownership of the Goals amongst all members of society. In both Mexico City and Oaxaca, local indicators were developed to bring the Global Goals closer to the local reality. In Mexico City, 69% of the 2030 Agenda's goals were identified as being aligned with the 2013–2018 municipal development plan, while the 690 indicators identified within *Monitoreo CDMX*, a mapping tool freely accessible online, have been aligned with 16 of the 17 SDGs. Mexico City's VLR indicates that, building on the mapping efforts, work is now underway to integrate the outputs of the Technical Committees into the new local government development plan.

In Oaxaca, the 240 indicators of the 2030 Agenda were mapped against the 97 indicators in the state budgets, and in 2019 the revision of the 2016 — 2022 State Development Plan (PED) started to align the PED with the SDGs. Actions have also been directed at the local level, with a strong focus on promoting civil participation through the establishment of 547 Municipal Social Development Councils. A guide to Municipal Sustainable Development Plans has been elaborated in cooperation with the GIZ, who have also collaborated with the Technical Committees in the implementation of a participatory local planning pilot project in ten municipalities.

Source: Mexico City Resilience Office. 'CDMX Resilience Strategy'. Mexico City, 2016; Oaxaca 2030, 'Revisión Estatal Voluntaria', 2019.

linkage with the SDGs is high in 24% of the plans, average in 38% of them, and general or limited in 38% of them.⁸¹ It should be pointed out, however, that although all departments are included, this is only a sample of 5% of the country's municipalities. At both levels — departmental and municipal — one third of the SDGs have been prioritized, mainly those relating to education (SDG 4), health (SDG 3), peace and justice (SDG 16), water and sanitation (SDG 6), economic development and job creation (SDG 8). SDG 11 is still important for cities, while infrastructure (SDG 9) and food (SDG 2) is likewise important for departments. SDGs 12, 14, 15 and 17 are the least prioritized. According to another source that analyzed the extent to which the SDGs were either 'fully integrated' or

only 'partially' (i.e. maintaining sectoral actions by silos), the conclusion was that they were only partially integrated in 15 departments and more integrated in 6 departments.⁸²

In **Ecuador**, the Consortium of Provincial Autonomous Governments of Ecuador (CONGOPE) has promoted a plan aligned with the SDGs for equality among territories and poverty reduction 2017-2022 in the province of Cañar.⁸³ This association is also contributing to the SDG Territory Ecuador project, conducted by the Latin American Future Foundation (FFLA) and FARO Group (with support from the EU) to support the implementation and follow up of the SDGs in Ecuador's provinces. Progress has so far been made in the provinces of Manabí, Nayo, Santo Domingo, Galápagos and Azuay.⁸⁴ The experience of the Metropolitan District of Quito has involved the economic-promotion agency CONQUITO; the Secretariat of Planning; and the Metropolitan Directorate of International Relations in concrete initiatives, and has incorporated several SDG indicators in the 2030 City Plan (currently in development). The municipality convened the capital city's neighbourhoods to 'co-build' a communication strategy on the 17 SDGs.

In **Paraguay**, the VNR 2018 reflects the adoption of 17 departmental development plans and 244 district development plans 'elaborated in light' of the National Development Plan 2030. The creation of follow-up bodies was also planned, but precise information on the degree of implementation is lacking, and the Paraguayan Organization for Municipal Cooperation (OPACI) which regroups the country's municipalities notes little information on the process.⁸⁵

Progress of cities and municipalities

In conjunction with the actions of regions and large cities, the process of alignment with SDGs is extending to intermediary cities, albeit more slowly. This is crucial in a region where urbanization dynamics are increasingly oriented towards intermediary city systems to the detriment of large mega-cities (which are beginning to witness slower growth and even lose population). Extending the involvement of intermediary cities is both a priority and challenge that will require the support of national governments and, in federal

countries, regional governments. Encouraging intermediary cities to sign up to the concept of localization can, on the one hand, improve the quality of public policies promoted at a local level and, on the other, capitalize and highlight the many innovations in the territories.

In **Brazil**, more than 70 municipalities are aligning and undertaking projects related to the SDGs in at least eight states: Goiás, Paraná (54 municipalities), Minas Gerais (8 municipalities), Amazonas, Piauí, Santa Catarina, São Paulo and the Association of Municipalities of Pernambuco.⁸⁶ One frequently mentioned example is that of Barcarena, which has aligned the SDGs with the new Government Plan 2017-2020 and Multi-year Participatory Plan 2018-2021 through a participatory process that has helped identify seven major issues: poverty and hunger, gender, health, education, economic growth and partnerships, environment and peace. In June 2018, the city co-organized the 3rd National Meeting of Rede ODS Brasil: 'What are the opportunities and challenges for the implementation of the SDGs in Brasil?'.⁸⁷

In **Argentina**, intermediary cities such as Godoy Cruz and 18 other municipalities in the province of Mendoza, the cities of Córdoba and Villa María in the province of Córdoba, San Justo in the province of Santa Fé, and the municipalities of Lanús, Moreno, San Antonio de Areco, General Alvarado and Vicente López in the province of Buenos Aires, have promoted new land-use planning plans as part of the SDGs.⁸⁸ The city of Buenos Aires has been at the forefront of the localization process, with alignment of local plans, awareness-rising (e.g. the Youth Olympic Games 2018), and prioritization of SDGs.⁸⁹ In August 2018, it launched the first report on implementation of SDG 16 and localized indicators: open government, accountable institutions, participation and inclusion (for more information, see chapter on Metropolitan Areas). In Uruguay, it is worth highlighting the case of the Canario Strategic Plan 2030 of Canelones.

In **Mexico**, nearly 100 municipalities in Chiapas, Cohauila, Colima, state of Mexico and Tlaxcala have taken steps to create SDG OSIs. At a national level, the National Institute for Federalism and Development (INAFED) is promoting a programme to 'Strengthen the Capacities of Local Governments for the Operationalization of the SDGs'.⁹⁰

In **Colombia**, alongside the municipalities of Bogotá and Medellín (whose actions are dealt with in the chapter on Metropolitan Areas), several municipalities are promoting local projects in areas that, although not always labelled SDG, are contributing directly to them, especially on non-polluting affordable energy for transport and public lighting (Bucaramanga and San Jeronimo), sanitation (Armenia), environment (terrestrial ecosystems, Barranquilla; reforestation, Ibagué,

Urbanization dynamics in Latin America are increasingly oriented towards intermediary city systems to the detriment of large mega-cities, which are beginning to witness slower growth.



San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala (photo: Bradford Duplisea, bit.ly/2M3EWVY).

and protection of underwater life, Cartagena), waste management and climate change (Bucaramanga, Cartagena, Cali and Villavicencio) and open data and disaster prevention (Cartago and Chinchina).

In **Ecuador**, the main examples are in Cuenca and Ibarra, as well as in Lago Agrio, Durán, Guamote, Quinde, Rumiñahui and Francisco de Orellana (protection of Amazonian protected areas) and Ambato (productive processes).⁹¹ Cuenca and Ibarra have both aligned their new development plans with the SDGs: the Annual Operational Plan in Cuenca and the Ibarra Vision 2030.⁹²

In **Bolivia**, apart from La Paz, coordination with the national government has enabled municipal governments of departmental capitals, as well as El Alto and two intermediary cities, to participate in a project to territorialize the SDGs. This project also aims to improve levels of efficiency and quality in managing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating territorial public policies.⁹³ The municipality of Sucre has defined its 'SDG localization strategy' with the support of the UNDP and the extensive participation of the business sector, academia and civil society.

In Central America and the Caribbean, the experiences of ten pilot municipalities in **Costa Rica** (Desamparados, Barva, Mora, Osa, Golfito, Aserri, Pococi, Carrillo, Naranjo and Zacero) has already been mentioned. In the **Dominican Republic**, efforts are being made by various municipalities to combat climate change (Neyba), integrate waste management (Santo Domingo,

Terrena, Monte Plata, San Pedro de Macoris, Bayaguana and Punta Cana) and promote reforestation (Sabana Grande). In **Guatemala**, the Planning Secretariat (SEGEPLAN) designed a new methodology to allow the integration of the SDGs into local development plans. By 2018, 91 municipalities had already made progress in this direction, but due to elections in 2019 at all levels in the country, progress has since slowed. Guatemala plans to adopt municipal management rankings as a criterion for the distribution of resources to local authorities. One example of successful integration stands out to date: that of the municipality of Salcajá (in the Quetzaltenango province) and its localization of the SDGs in the local Territorial Planning Regulation.⁹⁴ Finally, according to the **Honduras** VNR 2017, the Secretariat of General Government Coordination, as part of a pilot project supported by UNDESA, has supported the municipalities of Colinas, Santa Barbara, San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa to begin a rapid diagnosis at institutional and local level. In addition, in the latter two, as well as in Santa Rosa de Copán, a pilot project was initiated to support results-based management at a municipal level and to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda for technicians in the planning, budget, monitoring and evaluation units.

Notably, across the whole region many smaller municipalities — especially in rural or isolated contexts — have also been carrying out effective initiatives to develop new approaches to sustainable territorial development, as demanded by many of the global agendas (see Box 7).

Examples of good practice in sustainable territorial development in rural municipalities

San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala: Sustainable municipality driven by local demand. San Pedro La Laguna is a small rural town and touristic destination in Guatemala, characterized by its mixed Ladino and Maya population (about 10,000 inhabitants) and a common cause: preserving the planet as well as their town. The mayor promoted a sustainable participative plan to abolish the use of plastics in the locality of the town, which is on the shores of Lake Atitlán. The municipal ordinance was met with opposition from the national association of plastic producers, which deemed it unconstitutional. Following a favourable ruling by the country's constitutional court, the initiative led to an 80% reduction in the use of plastics in the municipality. Thanks to the commitment of residents and participants, waste is now separated before collection, improving recycling rates and the sale of by-products. The initiative has improved the image and quality of life in San Pedro, while water quality, fish stocks and tourism have improved throughout the lake area. The municipality was awarded an environmental prize by the President of the Republic, and eight more municipalities have joined the initiative.⁹⁵

Valle del Itata, Chile: 'Lagging Areas Programme' (2016-2019). Since 2016, the National Ministry for Public Works, the Sub-Secretariat for Regional Development (SUBDERE), the Association of nine Itata Valley municipalities together with public and private stakeholders, have integrated the resources available at national level with local sustainability plans and territorial demands through a process of participative development. The process has centred on the revival of the area's traditional wine, fishing and tourism activities, while also reducing investment in extractive and resource-intensive alternatives (e.g. salmon farming in Cobquecura). This framework, based on dialogue, collaboration and MLG has revived the area's social capital and traditional knowledge. The programme is facing a new challenge however, since climate change and environmental depletion are threatening existing sources of potable water for the whole region. The consortium is now looking for new, reliable water sources before the population is more severely affected.⁹⁶

Toribío, Colombia: '2016-2019 Plan: Walking together for territorial peace'. The 30,000 indigenous Nasa residents of this small municipality in the Cauca department in the country's mountainous region, have for decades preserved their culture and autonomy even when faced with armed conflict from several groups in their territory. Their struggle is consistent with the Nasa people's values, based on the protection of the environment, wellbeing and the preservation of their identity in line with the community's 'life plan', traditionally defined as the time one generation takes to take the previous one's place. The community's 2016-2019 plan is an ambitious attempt to merge this ancestral need with a long-term strategy to seek peace in the country and align this with the requirements of the SDGs.⁹⁷

Commitment to transparency, accountability and reporting

The establishment of robust monitoring systems and realistic, measurable indicators is essential in order to measure progress in the realization of SDGs, both at national and local levels. This is a complex issue, given that the indicators defined by the UN are far removed from the reality and capacities of local governments in general, and Latin America in particular. However, it is possible to summarize the experiences of some cities that are strongly aware of the need to account for their progress to citizens.

In **Brazil**, the CNM developed a follow-up system with indicators adapted to various categories of municipalities — the Mandala — which included 24 indicators aligned with the SDGs in economic, social, environmental and institutional areas⁹⁸ (see Figure 3).

At a regional level, the state of Parana in **Brazil** has undertaken major efforts to monitor the progress of the SDGs at both regional and local levels — in particular environmental sustainability

— in collaboration with a public company (*Itaipu Binacional*) and the UNDP.⁹⁹ A platform has been developed that gathers together 67 environmental and social indicators at municipal, state and federal level; these are then used in 110 municipalities of 14 states, as well as other cities in the Piauí region.

Another example at city level is Medellín (**Colombia**) and its 2016-2019 Development Plan, which contains innovative elements for monitoring, evaluation and accountability. This Colombian city has in effect created its own system of indicators to demonstrate how the city is fulfilling the various goals linked to the SDGs. Moreover, the private inter-institutional alliance 'Medellin: How are we doing?'¹⁰⁰ has been operating in the city for many years. Its main objective is to evaluate the quality of life in the city and oversee its ongoing development plan. A similar mechanism exists in 36 Colombian municipalities, including Bogotá.¹⁰¹ Other cities (Cali, Florencia and Montería) and some departments (Cauqueta, Nariño and Quindío) have also made progress in measuring

goals. For its part, the Colombian government has developed several tools to help territorial authorities in their monitoring and evaluation processes: The Performance Evaluation Information System (SINERGIA) and Terridata.¹⁰²

Mexico has the Sustainable Development Goal Information System (SIODS), jointly developed by the National Digital Strategy Coordination of the Office of the President of the Republic and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). This system provides geo-referenced information on the progress made in following up the 2030 Agenda. Similarly, the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) in **Peru** has made progress in establishing the 'Monitoring and Follow-up System for the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators', with a website providing data on the indicators by department. As mentioned above, this is an ongoing effort in Ecuador.

Despite these initiatives, the localization of indicators and follow-up systems is still at an early stage. If suitable monitoring and evaluation methodologies, as well as robust information

systems, are not defined on a territorial scale, it will be very difficult to present reliable results on the implementation processes of the SDGs. Without these, it will not be possible to advance accountability processes or learn lessons and capitalize on the innovations promoted by territories. This is a challenge that goes beyond local governments and their networks and associations to national governments and multilateral organizations.


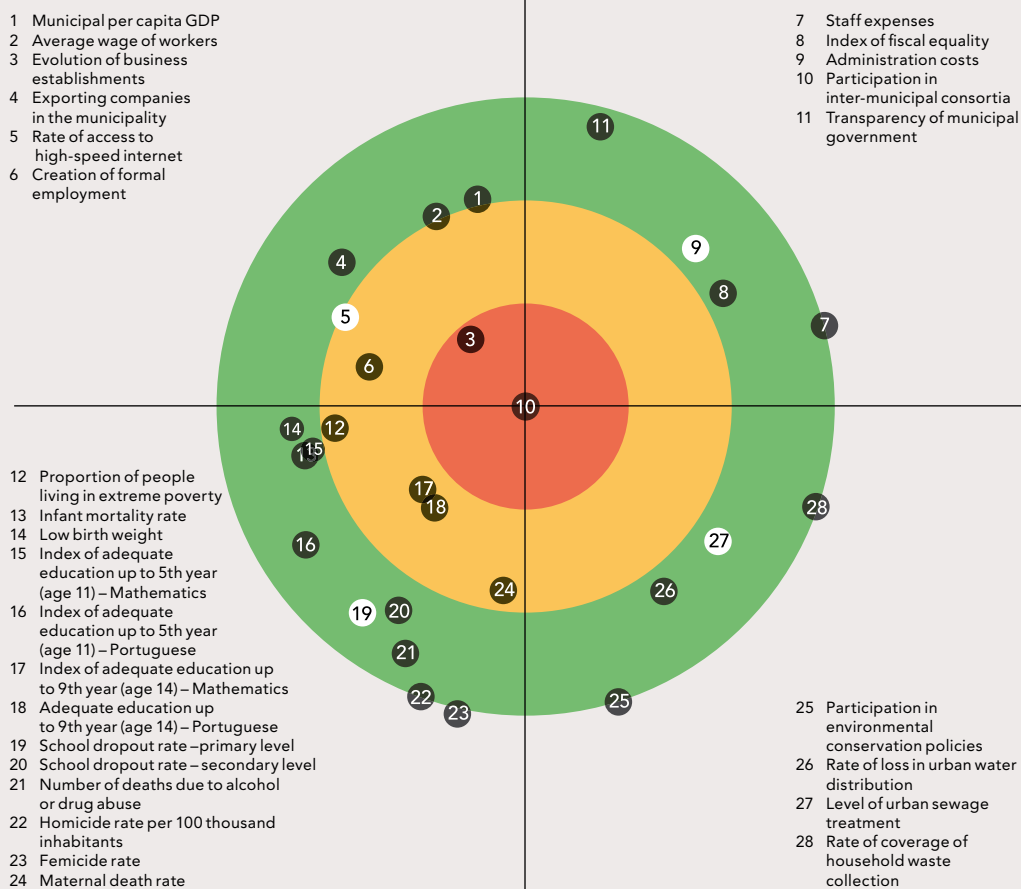
As discussed previously, the localization process in the region is progressing, but many of the examples described here are still either at a preliminary stage, alignment phase or commencing implementation. Major efforts are required on the part of cities, regions and national governments to capitalize on good practices and extend their dissemination through direct exchange and policies that give greater impetus to localization, in line with the principles of comprehensiveness and multi-dimensionality of the 2030 Agenda, as well as transparency, accountability and reporting. 

Figure 3

Applying the Mandala in the city of São Paulo



Source: Measuring the global agenda in municipalities: 'SDG Mandala'.

3.3 Local and regional policies in Latin America in line with the 2030 Agenda

As highlighted in previous sections, LRGs in Latin America are making progress in the territorialization of the 2030 Agenda. These efforts are supported by initiatives to adopt territorial strategies that address the problems arising from existing development models, contribute to environmental sustainability, reduce social exclusion, promote more inclusive economic development and more transparent and participatory governance, and restore the confidence of citizens in their institutions.

Many of the objectives embodied in the SDGs were already the subject of policies that preceded their adoption. Some of the practices reflecting the diversity and challenges faced by LRGs in the region, as well as their ability to provide innovative responses, are discussed below.

Combatting climate change and resilience in an increasingly vulnerable region

As in other continents, many cities and regions have adopted a decisive role in combatting climate change and promoting and preserving biodiversity. There are many examples of cities — such as Quito, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro (see Metropolitan Areas chapter for details) — that have developed urban policies as part of their strategic plans to combat climate change. Below are some examples of actions taken in some of these areas: transport, renewable energies, waste management, local food systems, resilience and biodiversity protection.

Transport accounts for 74.6% of CO₂ emissions in the region. Vehicle fleets grew at a faster rate than economies in the region during the period 2005-2015, but it is falling in cities where the use of public transport is significant (Montevideo, Bogota, Santiago and São Paulo).¹⁰³

Access to transport is one of the indicators set out in the SDGs (11.2). Over the past decade, Latin American cities have promoted the modernization of public transport with the construction and expansion of metros and trams (Buenos Aires, Mexico, Panama and São Paulo) and the modernization of suburban trains (in Brazilian cities, Buenos Aires and Santiago). The most high-profile initiative has been the provision of preferential lanes for buses (Bus Rapid Transit), a measure that has been extended to most major cities including Bogota, Quito, Lima, Santiago, Curitiba and Monterrey. At the same time, progress is being made towards more integrated urban transport systems, such as in Belo Horizonte,¹⁰⁴ Medellin¹⁰⁵ and Mexico City,¹⁰⁶ as well as combined tickets for multi-modal transport in Fortaleza.¹⁰⁷ Buenos Aires, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are all promoting the use of bicycles through dedicated lanes or loan or car-sharing initiatives.¹⁰⁸ The city of Campina (Brazil) has installed the first electric bus assembly plant and has guaranteed that 10% of its bus fleet will be electric by 2022.¹⁰⁹

Despite the modernization of collective transport systems, innovations address only part of the demand and are not always articulated within traditional (or informal) systems; thus

The view from a bus in Sao Paulo's traffic (photo: Gabriel Cabral, t.ly/NYY9x).



congestion problems, air pollution and high levels of traffic accidents still remain (16 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants per year).¹¹⁰ Alongside improving access to transport, 'greener' transport (e.g. electrification, use of renewable energies and diffusion of alternative transport, cycling, etc.) and more integrated planning are also required.

Energy policies are also essential in combatting climate change. Latin America and the Caribbean have great potential when it comes to promoting the use of **renewable energy** and thus contributing to SDG 7.2. The proportion of renewable sources in electricity production in Latin America and the Caribbean is 55% (world average 21%), with a high potential for hydroelectric, wind and geothermal energy.¹¹¹ Several regions are developing gas emission management plans to improve the efficiency of the energy consumption of public administrations. One such case is the Mexican state of Jalisco, which has implemented 27 projects in government buildings and managed to reduce the government's energy consumption in the state by 20%¹¹² (SDG 7.3).

Waste management is usually a municipal responsibility (directly or through concessions) and directly impacts the fight against climate change and the SDGs (11.6 and 12). UNEP's 'GEO 6' report, published in 2019, affirms that the most effective way to reduce or avoid water source and ocean contamination is by processing solid and water waste – a municipal competence. Municipalities such as La Pintana (Chile) have been doing this for a while, as have programmes designed by national associations of municipalities such as AMUNIC in Nicaragua, which has been targeting rural and small towns in particular. Rural municipalities in the region (e.g. San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala — mentioned in Box 7 above) have been especially active in this field. Thanks to the progress made in the last decade, almost 94% of the urban population has household waste collection services (although there are major differences between cities), but only 54.4% of collected waste is deposited in landfills, 18.5% in controlled landfills and 23.3% in open-pit landfills, according to UNECLAC studies. This represents a major environmental problem and is a far cry from the goals of the 2030 Agenda.¹¹³ The fraction of waste that is recycled or reused is even lower, but informal recycling is widespread.

There are well-known examples in various countries of the organization of informal waste-picker workers (also called recyclers or *catadores*). In Bogota, for example, former informal waste-pickers were integrated as actors in the new municipal waste management model under its Zero Waste Programme,¹¹⁴ which was also introduced in Belo Horizonte through its integrated solid waste management strategy.¹¹⁵

The region's growing vulnerability to climate change can be seen in natural disasters of varying types and intensity.

Both cities have improved waste management while seeking the social and economic inclusion of vulnerable people. Similar initiatives exist in Lima. As regards innovative projects, Cuautla (which received a special mention at the 2018 Guangzhou Awards) uses waste to generate electricity and has also increased public awareness of the need to separate and reuse waste.¹¹⁶ The province of Santa Fe (Argentina) has combined the Production + Energy Programme¹¹⁷ (aimed at encouraging producers to implement technology for energy use of organic waste by anaerobic digestion, with more than 30 meat producers already involved) and Energy Education Programme.¹¹⁸

LRGs are promoting new production and consumption models that encourage improved articulation among territories. Projects for the development of **local food systems** and **urban agriculture** have emerged in recent years to promote food security and create alternatives to vulnerable people in line with SDG 12, SDGs 2, 3 and 1 and even SDG 8 (on decent jobs). Examples of this include: the AGRUPAR programme in Quito;¹¹⁹ the creation of the public-private company AgroAzuay, which works with rural communities;¹²⁰ Carchi Seguridad Alimentaria¹²¹ in the province of Carchi along with other projects implemented in Ecuador under the pilot project 'Responsible and Sustainable Food Initiatives in Ecuador'¹²² (promoted by Regions de France and the NGO Resolis); the Sustainable Peri-urban Food Production programme in the Argentine province of Santa Fe;¹²³ the creation of Agrifam in the province of Misiones, which supports small producers with technology and innovation;¹²⁴ the social inclusion of vulnerable young people in the urban garden programme in Rosario;¹²⁵ and the promotion of 19 ecological agriculture markets in Rio de Janeiro, amongst many others.¹²⁶

The region's growing vulnerability to climate change can be seen in the phenomena that generate natural disasters of varying types and intensity. Within this context, many LRGs in the region are promoting resilience strategies to deal with various risks, whether natural (an increase in the number of hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, heatwaves, etc.) or human-induced. It has been estimated that risks, especially those arising from climate change, will cost the region between 1.5% and 5% of GDP by 2050, with Central American and Caribbean cities particularly affected.¹²⁷

Sixteen cities in the region are working with 100 Resilient Cities to outline comprehensive

Asset Planning for Climate Change Adaptation in poor neighbourhoods in Tegucigalpa, Honduras

The Asset Planning for Climate Change Adaptation (APCA) in poor neighbourhoods project is an example of how bottom-up community asset adaptation planning can help address the data gap in resilience policymaking.¹²⁸ Honduras' capital, Tegucigalpa, is one of the country's most vulnerable areas. The city, growing at an annual rate of 2.2%, has the highest concentration of urban poverty in the country, with a growing number of poor families and communities increasingly exposed to extreme weather events. The APCA project was introduced in the neighbourhoods of Los Pinos and Villa Nueva between 2014 and 2018.¹²⁹ Supported by the Nordic Development Fund and the IDB, the APCA project aims to integrate climate change adaptation actions into neighbourhood upgrading plans in greater Tegucigalpa. With local communities and other relevant stakeholders, the APCA co-produced data on how to increase the capacity of poor urban communities to respond to extreme weather. It also identified which local institutions can support local community initiatives to reduce vulnerability and increase long-term resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Source: Stein, Moser et al. (2018). 'Planificación de Adaptación de Activos al Cambio Climático (PACC) en barrios populares de Tegucigalpa, Honduras'.

resilience strategies.¹³⁰ The city of Santa Fe (Argentina), for example, has promoted a risk reduction policy that focuses on hydro-climatic risks;¹³¹ in the Aburra Valley (Colombia), in the centre of which is Medellín, the SIATA early warning system works to predict catastrophes and allow timely action to be taken, while at the same time promoting public awareness amongst 40,000 citizens.¹³² The city of Cali has developed an educational strand as part of its integration strategy, to improve the educational levels of its citizens, especially those most vulnerable.¹³³ The state of Parana (Brazil) has developed a strategy that coordinates more than 340 regional and municipal units,¹³⁴ while Lima,¹³⁵ Rio de Janeiro¹³⁶ and Tegucigalpa¹³⁷ have promoted participatory diagnostics to elaborate their disaster risk reduction plans, where citizens also play an active role in identifying and managing disasters.¹³⁸ All of them approach resilience from an integrated perspective that includes not only alleviating and adapting to atmospheric phenomena (SDGs 11, 12, 13), but also vulnerable citizens (SDG 1.5), agriculture (2.4) and infrastructure (9.1) amongst others.

Alongside defining strategies to alleviate the impacts of climate change, LRGs in the region are also promoting measures to protect **biodiversity** in their territories and thus contribute to the Aichi Targets, halting deforestation and promoting

the control and eradication of invasive species in response to the 2030 Agenda (in particular SDG 15). For example, the Mexican state of Campeche is working to reduce deforestation by 80% by 2020, restore 0.75 million hectares by 2030 and strategically prevent and combat fires.¹³⁹ Similarly, in Ecuador (where 40% of the active population works on biodiversity related projects), the province of Pastaza has declared the protection of more than two million hectares of forest.¹⁴⁰ The illegal trade of wild flora and fauna and transport of all types of fish from water basins, especially during tourist seasons, are a priority for the Brazilian state of Goias.¹⁴¹ In Brazil, several states are trying to make progress in controlling Amazonian deforestation, but a reversal of this trend has unfortunately recently been observed. In Mexico, the Jalisco state government has linked indigenous and rural communities with biodiversity planning and natural resource management¹⁴² and is working with local women on extracting substances to obtain a red dye in order to improve their inclusion in agricultural activities.¹⁴³

Finally, it is important to highlight the role of LRGs in **raising awareness and educating citizens**. The Brazilian city of Salvador is promoting the *Caravana da Mata Atlântica* project to raise awareness amongst young people about environmental protection and in particular about its impact on marginalized communities and those at risk from the deforestation taking place in the country.¹⁴⁴ Another strategy to promote sustainable use of the environment can be seen in Tlajomulco (Mexico), which has appointed the country's first environmental prosecutor. His/her functions are to supervise government action in the area of environmental protection, investigate environmental crimes by citizens and businesses and raise public awareness.¹⁴⁵

These examples show how LRGs in Latin America are gradually assuming a more active role in combatting climate change and preserving biodiversity. But they also highlight the need to extend and disseminate these experiences in order to generate new production and consumption patterns that reduce the economic, social and environmental costs of existing development models.

Main challenges of social inclusion in a region with major inequalities

Although recent years have seen a reduction in social inequality, Latin America continues to be characterized by enormous contrasts and imbalances both between and within countries.¹⁴⁶ Since 2015, there has been a further increase in the overall levels of poverty and extreme poverty (in 2017, more than 187 million people lived in poverty and 62 million lived in extreme poverty)

which contradicts the commitments established in SDG 1.¹⁴⁷ Rural areas, where 20% of the population live, are falling behind, especially in north-eastern Brazil, south-western Mexico, and in the Andean and Amazonian areas of Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador.¹⁴⁸ Cities are also a growing source of inequality:¹⁴⁹ in 2016, the extreme urban poverty rate stood at 7.2%.¹⁵⁰

The fight against **social exclusion and marginalization** (SDGs 1 and 10.1) remains one of the main challenges for LRGs in Latin America.¹⁵¹ Several countries have benefited in recent years from urban programmes with social inclusion goals that seek to improve the **planning and management of urban services** in line with SDG 11.3, such as the IDB's Emerging and Sustainable Cities Programme. Comprehensive urban planning has been addressed in depressed areas of some central and peripheral municipalities. It was only in 2017 that these programmes identified cities such as Bariloche, in Argentina; Chetumal, in Mexico; Barcelona, in Venezuela, or that the Master Plan of the Historic Centre of Asuncion was reactivated.¹⁵² The **renovation of public spaces** in the informal neighbourhoods of São Paulo,¹⁵³ Heredia¹⁵⁴ and Buenos Aires¹⁵⁵ has also contributed to some of the SDGs, such as protecting the environment, reducing environmental risks, introducing more sustainable transport and helping to create a feeling of community and security for the entire population, especially women, children and youth. Some of these initiatives deserve to be highlighted for their innovative value and integrated nature (see Box 9). Consistent with the requirements of SDG 10.3, in 2016 the cities of Montevideo, Medellin, Quito and Mexico City put forward an integrated action plan for social inclusion, aimed at **tackling the discrimination of African descendants, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and immigrants**. The initiative received technical and financial support from the IDB and was framed within UNESCO's wider Coalition of Cities against Racism, Discrimination, and Xenophobia — and, since 2006, it has brought together 67 municipalities from 23 countries.¹⁵⁶ In 2018, the four cities submitted local reports on the demographic and socio-economic profiles of the groups that were to be targeted by the policy, as well as an analysis of the existing regulatory and policy frameworks. In September, the cities launched their local action plans, which included specific policy measures based on disaggregated local data and with a focus on ensuring access to the programme for indigenous peoples and African descendants in schools located in low-income neighbourhoods. In 2019, the mayors from the four cities committed to consolidating a regional cooperation network for social inclusion by sharing best practices and lessons learned from the policy experiences in their territories.

Despite the progress that has been made, access to **basic services** (SDG 1.4) remains uneven between urban and rural regions and within urban areas. Nearly a third of the countries studied have **water supply and sanitation systems** managed by municipal companies and another third by regional or provincial public companies, while national companies predominate in smaller countries (in Central America, Paraguay and Uruguay). More than 90% of the region's population has access to piped water in their homes (98% in urban areas, although of unequal quality and regularity), but only 60% have access to sanitary sewerage (72% in urban areas), with sewage treatment still deficient. Although supply quality has improved, the rate of incorporation of water supply into services has slowed in recent years¹⁵⁷ whilst improvements in sanitation coverage is growing at a rate of 0.6% per year and water at 1% per year.¹⁵⁸ Territories are making great efforts to have integrated water cycle management systems and to implement improvements, for example in monitoring (district of Arraijan, Panamá),¹⁵⁹ linking these to actions for watershed protection (Metropolitan Water Company of Quito),¹⁶⁰ health and environmental education of the population (Abaetetuba, Brazil,¹⁶¹ and Asuncion),¹⁶² as well as taking into account the needs of each community, such as the

Box 9

Plan Abre of Santa Fe province and Rosario (Argentina)

The *Plan Abre* represents the strategic social policy of the Provincial Government of Santa Fe to improve the neighbourhoods of Santa Fe, Rosario, Villa Gobernador Gálvez, Santo Tomé and Pérez (work was conducted with 66 neighbourhoods in these localities in 2018). The Plan aims to improve the quality of life of citizens by improving access to basic services (transport, equipment, sanitation, water and electricity); strengthening social networks and citizen safety; ensuring the social, cultural and educational inclusion of children, teenagers and young people; and creating Neighbourhood Management Boards as spaces for citizen participation and dialogue, as well as with local and provincial authorities.

The *Plan Abre* is based on the principle of selective universality — including all the inhabitants of the territory as beneficiaries and indirectly all those living in the city, but prioritizing work with young people and children who lack institutional links and demonstrate significant economic, educational and/or social vulnerability. Population, housing, health, educational and economic indicators are therefore used. The *Plan Abre* is an unprecedented example of joint and integrated work between provincial and municipal cabinets, as well as territorial teams at both levels of the state, and social organizations.

Source: <https://www.santafe.gov.ar/index.php/web/content/view/full/193144>.

Cities, such as Bogota, have had to take measures to strengthen health services, schools and kindergartens to integrate newcomers, and set up dedicated employment mechanisms.

inhabitants of deprived areas (Valle de la Sabana, Mexico)¹⁶³ or rural areas (Caninde, Brazil),¹⁶⁴ women (district of Ngäbe-Buglé, Panama)¹⁶⁵ and indigenous peoples (Mapuche communities in Chile,¹⁶⁶ Loreto, Amazonas and Ucayali regions in the Peruvian Amazon).¹⁶⁷

But progress has been insufficient. In several countries, urban policy reforms — regulations, land planning and management tools, and the capture of urban land-use surplus to finance more inclusive urban investments — are viewed as ‘fickle’ by regional institutions,¹⁶⁸ underscoring the need to strengthen local initiatives and promote coordination and cohesion between local and national policies.

Housing, in fact, remains a very current issue in Latin America, where the level of informal settlements in all countries ranges from 30% to 60%,¹⁶⁹ and where, according to the IDB, there are 105 million people suffering as a result of the housing deficit in the region.¹⁷⁰ In this context, the Guadalajara metropolitan land-use plan¹⁷¹ (2016) includes aspects of urban re-densification and a pioneering use of empty housing in the region; the São Paulo Strategic Master Plan¹⁷² (approved in 2014) presents an innovative approach in relation to social housing, while in Cordoba (Argentina) the Seed Housing programme helps to complete and improve the housing of citizens with technical and financial assistance.¹⁷³

Migrants represent one of the most vulnerable groups and therefore the most likely to settle in informal settlements. Migration patterns are changing in the region. Many large cities that historically represented the main pole of attraction for young people in terms of opportunities and innovation are today forcing people out because of violence or lack of prospects.¹⁷⁴ In contrast, intermediary cities now seem to have become increasingly attractive, given that they welcome people who leave the countryside (where numbers are falling), small cities (where numbers are on the rise) and other intermediary cities (in this sense, migration from city to city facilitates integration).¹⁷⁵ LRGs must therefore deal with the phenomenon of both incoming and outgoing migration.¹⁷⁶

Recently, as a result of events in Venezuela,¹⁷⁷ border cities such as Cúcuta in Colombia and the Brazilian city of Boa Vista (whose population

has risen by 10%)¹⁷⁸ have been faced with new demands. Education and health systems are becoming overwhelmed, while at the same time movements against welcoming Venezuelan migrants are on the rise within the population.¹⁷⁹ The Federal Government of Brazil with the support of UN agencies launched the Internalization + Human campaign (*Interiorização + Humana* in Portuguese), with the objective of responding to the demands of migrants, and facilitate their integration into Brazilian municipalities. The Brazilian Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) helps to analyze the local situation, disseminate the plan among mayors, and contribute to preserve the social rights of migrants and refugees. Other cities in Latin America have had to take measures to integrate newcomers, for example Bogota, where health services have been strengthened, additional quotas have been established in schools and kindergartens and a programme has been set up to integrate them into employment mechanisms.¹⁸⁰

The social exclusion and inequality that prevail in the region lie behind the serious phenomenon of **urban violence**.¹⁸¹ According to the 2018 edition of the ranking of the 50 most dangerous cities in the world prepared by the Citizen Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice,¹⁸² this region is home to 41 of the 50 most violent cities in the world: 15 in Mexico, 14 in Brazil, 6 in Venezuela, 2 in both Colombia and Honduras and 1 in both Guatemala and El Salvador.¹⁸³ In order to confront this challenge and gradually move towards compliance with SDGs 16 and 11.7, several cities are introducing innovative peace projects such as ‘Paraíba United for Peace’, developed by the municipality of Paraíba in Brazil,¹⁸⁴ or the work carried out in Medellín with its youngest citizens within the framework of its resilience strategy that has managed to transform this city from one of the most violent to a city of peace over the past few decades.¹⁸⁵

Gender equality policies (SDG 5) are attracting increasing attention from LRGs in the region. The poverty rate among women is 1.2 times higher than that among men, a phenomenon that is compounded in the capital cities.¹⁸⁶ Among women of working age (from 15 to 59 years), the unemployment rate is more than twice that of men.¹⁸⁷ Women have a greater presence in informal employment and are the main victims of unpaid work.¹⁸⁸ Efforts have been made in Mexico City to address this challenge through improved paternity and maternity leave, and promoting a new work culture in Montevideo (alongside other government levels) to territorialize the national childcare policy.¹⁸⁹ Bogotá is encouraging the breaking down of physical and cultural barriers preventing women from freely enjoying their city through a mobile application called Safetipin,

and the city's 19 localities have been obliged to develop a local plan for women's safety.¹⁹⁰ The *Mulher Cidadã* travelling programme also offers basic and intersectoral public services for women (health, security, justice, citizenship, etc.) in the municipalities of the state of Acre (Brazil).¹⁹¹

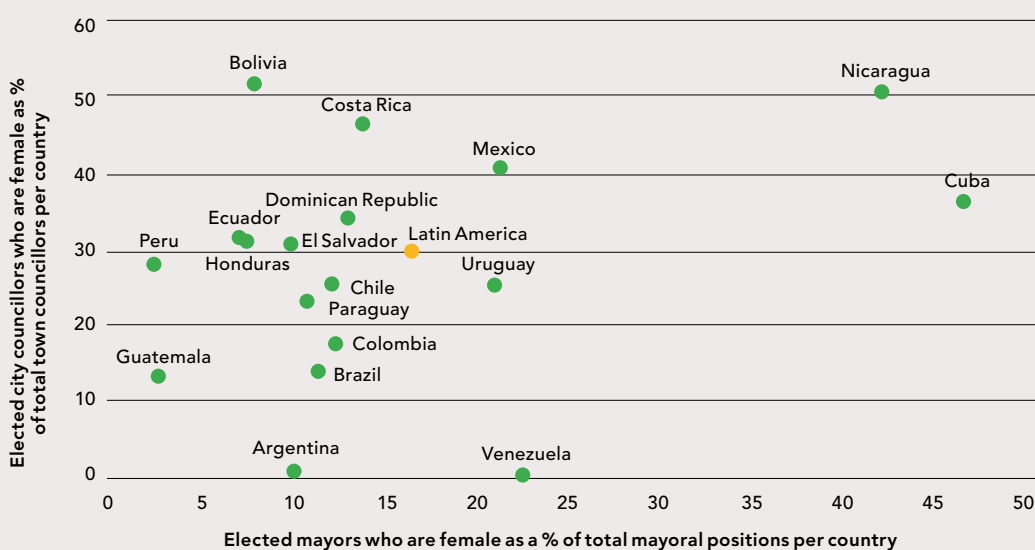
Also, worth mentioning are initiatives to promote the **inclusion of young people** (SDGs 4 and 5) based on human development, recognition of cultural diversity and community feeling. The Childhood Triptych in Rosario is a social action and transformation project for young people and children, aimed at reaching out to citizens through play, imagination, multiple languages and the creation of public spaces.¹⁹² The city of Tamaulipas (Mexico) is training its young people to be promoters of cultural diversity, to participate co-responsibly as actors and links between governments and citizens in building peaceful environments, to coexist, to transform and revitalize communities and ultimately to contribute to exercising cultural rights and local development through culture and creativity.¹⁹³ Urban education in the city of La Paz involves young people from deprived neighbourhoods being involved in improving road safety in the city by making them protagonists of change, dressed as zebras and attracting attention through dialogue

and communication. The project received a prize at the 2016 Guangzhou Awards and has been successful in other cities in Germany, Spain, Costa Rica and China.¹⁹⁴

In the same vein, **culture** provides the driving force for many cities to encourage citizen participation, acting as a lever for promoting a culture of peace within an inclusive and open society although its value and potential have not been sufficiently recognized in the 2030 Agenda. All of the following promote the rights of citizenship, social equality, the formation of partnerships and shared management, the recovery of public spaces, access to cultural goods for all citizens and, ultimately, an improvement in the quality of life as required by SDG 11.4: the political-cultural project of Medellín (Colombia),¹⁹⁵ the Government Plan 2013-2016 of Curitiba¹⁹⁶ and the programme of Belo Horizonte's (Brazil) Arena of Culture, the Community Living Culture Programme of Lima (Peru),¹⁹⁷ the Municipal Culture Agendas of 54 Uruguayan municipalities and the creation and management of the SACUDE complex on culture in the department of Montevideo (Uruguay),¹⁹⁸ the participatory process '*Trabajando Concepción: Una nueva ciudad al 2030*' (Chile) with culture at its heart,¹⁹⁹ the use of public spaces to implement the Strategic Cultural Plan of Canoas (Brazil),²⁰⁰ the *Habitando: Cultura en comunidad*²⁰¹ and

Figure 4

Female representation in local decision-making, latest data available 2018, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, CEPAL



There has been a slow increase in the number of female mayors since 1991, national average remains below 20% in most Latin American countries. In Latin America, women hold 28.8% of municipal council seats, an increase of 6.5% in ten years. At the national level, progress has neither been continuous nor homogeneous.

Source: <https://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies/autonomy-decision-making>.

Bibloed²⁰² programmes in Bogota (Colombia), and the artistic-cultural development promoted in the canton of Belen²⁰³ (Costa Rica).

These examples of local initiatives for inclusion, some of which have been internationally recognized, are nevertheless conditioned by macro-social contexts in terms of education, health, employment, housing and culture, amongst others. In order to ensure their impact, greater convergence among the country's various territories is essential (curbing the negative externalities of large cities, valuing the potential of small and medium-sized cities and improving the still important rural environment), without which existing inequalities cannot be reduced. As has already been pointed out, the efforts of LRGs to achieve a more equal and socially sustainable region require greater coherence and collaboration between national and local policies.

Towards more innovative, sustainable development models

In economic terms, Latin America faces an increase in the unemployment rate (9.4% in urban areas), which especially affects women, youth, indigenous people, people of African descent,²⁰⁴ and migrants.

For this reason, several municipalities and regions have designed **job placement and entrepreneurship** programmes, such as Rafaela (Argentina), whose internationally recognized Rafaela Emprende programme has helped to create new businesses and projects for local young people;²⁰⁵ São Paulo, which gives support to micro-entrepreneurs (access to credit, tax breaks, technical support, etc.)²⁰⁶ as part of the Decent Work Agenda; and Guayaquil and Quito, which have created the platforms Emprende Guayaquil and ConQuito to act as catalysts for entrepreneurship

Workers are fetched from the fields and retrieved to their towns in Cuba, near Cienfuegos (photo: © Rebeca Varela Figueroa).



in the country.²⁰⁷ These projects have also been important in bridging the gap between the training offered by the education system and the skills demanded by the productive sector, given that Latin America has one of the largest gaps in the world according to the World Bank.²⁰⁸

Although the most knowledge-intensive services are concentrated in developed regions and large cities, several programmes promote the **innovation and modernization of industry** (SDG 8.2) in order to increase competitiveness in territories, such as those introduced in the state of Jalisco,²⁰⁹ as well as the ADELCO Network (Local Economic Development Agencies) of Colombia, which is working to help integrate the interests of territories into regional agendas of competitiveness.²¹⁰ The programmes to encourage **creativity and innovation** (SDG 8.3) promoted by the regional government of Valparaíso through its Regional Innovation Strategy²¹¹ have helped to position Chile as the most innovative country in Latin America.

The Regional Forums of Local Economic Development launched at a local level, together with international organizations (UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO)) and held in Quito (2015), Cochabamba (2017) and Barranquilla (2019), are an opportunity to promote spaces for exchange and debate on the subject.²¹² Also important are the efforts at various government levels to coordinate economic development in the territory, as in the case of the PADIT (Articulated Platform for the Integrated Development of Territories) programme in Cuba, which aims to strengthen capacities in municipalities for defining, planning and implementing territorial strategies that encourage the entrepreneurship of women and young people and complement decentralization processes.²¹³ UNECLAC underlines the **potential of intermediary and small cities** if they are provided with educational and employment opportunities for the local population.²¹⁴ It has therefore called for greater public investment and incentives to relocate industrial plants and research and development centres to foster a knowledge-based economy and innovation.²¹⁵

Other **smaller municipalities and those in rural areas** are attempting to support themselves using their 'added value' or 'local culture and products', which aligns with SDG 8.9. The municipality of Viñales and others nearby promote tourism by working with various territorial actors,²¹⁶ as do the municipalities of the Jiboa Valley Intermunicipal Association in El Salvador, who have created the country's first territorial master plan for tourism.²¹⁷ The mayor's office of El Peñol (Colombia) worked with 30 families experiencing displacement, vulnerability and extreme poverty to improve rural sector productivity as part of the project

'*Mi Finca, Mi Empresa*'.²¹⁸ In Bolivia, the Rural Markets project facilitates access to agricultural production markets for producer families and micro and small enterprises (mostly women) in 26 municipalities of four governorates, at the same time revaluing their heritage and territory.²¹⁹ In the department of Caquetá (Colombia), the project 'Sustainable Caquetá Territories for Peace' aims to consolidate a stable and lasting peace in Colombia by enhancing production dynamics with competitive potential, at the same time incorporating environmental sustainability and social inclusion into the process.²²⁰

The **social and solidarity-based economy** is expanding in metropolitan areas as well as in small municipalities and rural areas. The role of cooperatives in developing affordable housing was mentioned earlier and the '*Arranjos Produtivos Locais*' in Brazil is worth noting in this respect (see Box 10).

Finally, 55% of the active population in Latin America works in the **informal sector**, in the areas of waste collection, street trading, etc.²²¹ In some countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru), this figure even reaches 70%.²²² Moreover, a rise in the number of self-employed workers indicates a lack of opportunities in the labour market and generally translates into increased precariousness for workers.²²³ Amongst others, the Decent Work Agenda of Santa Fe 2017-2020 (Argentina) has helped the province to increase the number of workers registered in working conditions that follow acceptable work guidelines.²²⁴

SDG 9 calls for countries to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. The region now needs to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technological advances to promote an economy based on knowledge and innovation that accommodates a growing number of workers, in order to increase the region's productivity and its resilience to change and, consequently, income at both macro and household levels.²²⁵

Box 10

'Arranjos Produtivos Locais' in Brazil

The '*Arranjos Produtivos Locais*' (Local Productive Arrangements) project in Brazil is based on the concept of company clusters, bringing together companies in the same territory with product specialization and maintaining links of articulation, interaction, cooperation and learning amongst them and other local actors. For example, in the state of Santa Catarina alone, sustainable development of the tourism, handicrafts and wine sectors (amongst others) has been achieved.

Source: <http://desis.ufsc.br/files/2017/11/CADERNO-APLs-AMURES.pdf>.

Restoring confidence in local institutions

Protecting the environment, social inclusion and local economic development all require accessible, reliable and stable institutions that promote high levels of transparency, citizen participation and accountability and know-how in order to adapt to new situations by opting for smart territories that promote the use of new technologies in various fields such as education, health, public services or citizen security.

In Latin America, there is a recognized tradition of **citizen participation** in designing public policies which has served as a benchmark for many countries, with a strong presence of community organizations working in the areas of health, culture, education, basic services, environmental protection and access to land. The experience of participatory budgeting, for example, began in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 1988 and later spread worldwide. Other municipalities in the region have more recently been promoting various innovative practices: Canoas (Brazil) and its 13 participation tools recognized by the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy,²²⁶ Buenos Aires,²²⁷ Curitiba²²⁸ and more recently San Salvador,²²⁹ which uses CONSUL software provided by Madrid City Council. All these practices contribute to SDGs 16.6 and 16.7. Citizen participation is particularly critical when the trust of citizens in public institutions

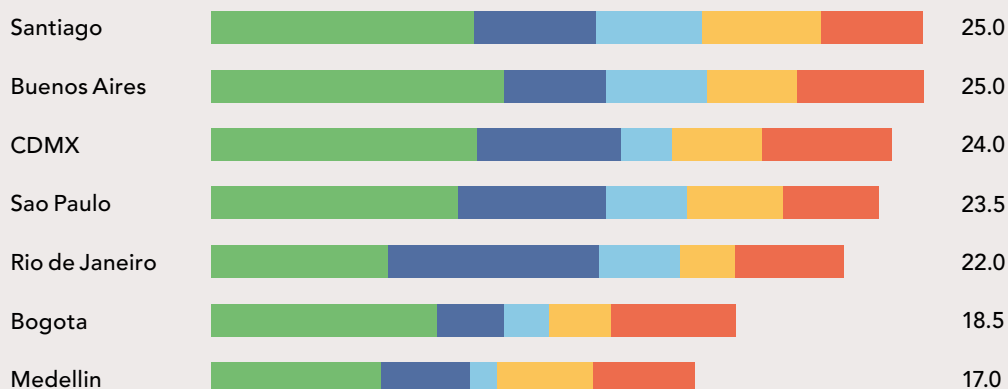
is decreasing and problems such as economic problems, violence and corruption are among the main concerns of Latin American citizens.²³⁰

National and sub-national governments have also adopted open government initiatives to help **disseminate information through electronic channels**, as well as listening to the demands of citizens. One notable example of good practice is the development of online platforms to manage procedures and the exchange of information with the citizens of La Paz, whose i-gob (innovative e-government) platform provides a large number of services to citizens, as well as an integrated early warning programme for risk management.²³¹ Bogotá, with its follow-up tool for local public management and citizen observatories, allows citizens to contribute to and evaluate the effectiveness of the management of their municipalities as regards good governance, sustainable economic development, inclusive social development and environmental sustainability.²³² Other municipalities are creating pilot platforms as part of open government agendas: *Barrio Digital* in La Paz,²³³ *Mi Quito*,²³⁴ *Mi Medellín*,²³⁵ *Bogotá Abierta*²³⁶ and *Ágora Río*.²³⁷

These platforms also help to **strengthen transparency and accountability** and restore the confidence of citizens in their institutions (in 2017, 75% of people in the region were dissatisfied with their institutions).²³⁸ The perception of corruption

Figure 5

Latin American cities and services delivered through online applications



■ Mobility
 ■ Security
 ■ Public services
 ■ Salud
 ■ Economic development, housing and community

Source: Smart cities: Digital solutions for a more liveable future, 2018.

is widespread in society and has been steadily rising since 2010, with a score of 55 points out of 100 — a much higher figure than the OECD average of 31 points.²³⁹ A UNDP programme in Mexico integrates two main components: strengthening open government practices in the states and an integrity programme to strengthen transparency at federal and state levels.²⁴⁰

The dissemination of information and communication technology (ICT)²⁴¹ also requires greater adaptation of services, as well as the need to improve the digital capabilities of the population (internet users amounted to 56.4% of the Latin American population in 2016).²⁴² An increasing number of governments are opting to digitalize their services through online applications (see Figure 5).²⁴³

The IDB's **Smart Cities** programme has collaborated with several Latin American cities in the areas of security, environment, mobility and the creation of integrated centres (in Valdivia, Nassau, Guadalajara, Montego Bay, Goiania, Barranquilla, and Montevideo), and to a lesser extent on issues of connectivity (Villavicencio and Valledupar), citizen participation (Joao Pessoa and Guadalajara), energy (Florianopolis), e-government (Valdivia), health (Vitoria) and education (Palmas).²⁴⁴ Cities have in some cases developed strategic plans (Monteria) and created specific council departments (Montevideo) to provide support for projects such as the revitalization of historical and cultural centres (Guadalajara), and greater security, with a reduction of 15% in vehicle theft and domestic violence through the use of a panic button (Vitoria).²⁴⁵

Many municipalities and intermediary governments are also innovating their approach to public management to facilitate administrative processes and devise solutions in collaboration with other government spheres. Examples of this include the platforms *Colombia Compra Eficiente* and *ChileCompra* (launched by national governments), which centralize public procurement processes at various government levels in the country by ensuring greater efficiency in management and a suitable critical mass to obtain more competitive prices and higher quality services.²⁴⁶

Finally, improved governance can also be pursued through partnerships with the private sector (Public-Private Partnerships, or PPPs) and local communities (Public-Private-People Partnerships, or PPPPs). In this sense, the *Infrascope 2017* report indicates that all Latin American countries have together improved in all aspects (regulatory framework, institutional framework, operational maturity and slightly less so in financial facilities and investment climate), but they require greater regulatory clarity and more developed institutional capacity, since projects tend to be inefficient, leading to increases in their total cost.²⁴⁷

Promoting new modalities of citizen participation can contribute gradually to creating more efficient, accessible, transparent and accountable local governments.

In conclusion, LRGs in Latin America are developing or participating in initiatives to improve their governance through new modalities of citizen participation, the introduction of ICT and the pooling of efforts with other national or local governments, private entities, civil society and other social and local stakeholders more generally. Promoting these lines of work can contribute gradually to creating more efficient, accessible, transparent and accountable local governments.

This brief summary shows that LRGs in Latin America are capable of promoting initiatives aligned with the SDGs in a variety of fields of competence; that they are capable of leading innovation processes and developing more integrated, multisectoral strategies to involve local actors — communities, the private sector and academia — as well as different government areas at various levels; and that they can therefore promote more sustainable, inclusive development in their territories and cities. In fact, they are supporting territorial development strategies that could be catalysts for the achievement of the SDGs in the Latin American region as a whole. 

4. Conclusions

2030 Agenda: progress and limitations

As this chapter shows, LRGs in Latin America and the Caribbean are increasingly committed to the 2030 Agenda. Their actions are dictated by the institutional frameworks that have been developed by the states in the region. As in other continents, national governments have sought to align their national development strategies with the SDGs. They have also created institutional mechanisms to coordinate implementation, monitor progress and report to the UN. However, as the UNECLAC report to the Regional Sustainable Forum stressed, there are still pending issues to enhance the ownership of global agendas by Latin American society (see the introduction of this chapter). It is necessary to improve stakeholders' participation, ensure adequate financing and revise the current unsustainable development models that are still dominant in the region.

Indeed, the current situation in Latin America and the Caribbean hinders the achievement of the ambitious objectives of the global agendas. Economic growth has slowed in recent years. In several states, recent changes in the political regime are steering development in a direction that may diverge from some of the objectives of global agendas (e.g. Brazil). At the institutional level, the disaffection of citizens with their governments and public institutions has grown. There are many questions as to whether the region will be able to achieve all the goals outlined in the Sustainable Development Objectives.

LRGs are key in the implementation of global agendas

Given that Latin America is an increasingly urbanized region that has implemented decentralization processes in recent decades, the chapter outlines how the region's urban and territorial agenda is central to achieving the SDGs. Many of the most important challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda need to be tackled in urban areas and specific territories: the need to eradicate extreme poverty, improve social and economic inclusion, increase access to public

services and housing, promote opportunities and reduce inequalities, enhance resilience to disasters, reduce the impact on climate change and protect the environment, strengthen urban-rural linkages and preserve biodiversity. LRGs have increasing responsibilities within cities' and territories' governance systems and, consequently, a greater responsibility to realize the global agendas. This often comes without adequate technical and financial capabilities, an issue which, in turn, has often led to innovation in public policy and the search for new forms of partnerships and multi-stakeholder alliances.

This chapter showcases the efforts of Latin American LRGs to link up with 2030 Agenda and contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. Local government associations and networks, both regional and national, as well as large cities and regions in federal countries and, progressively, intermediary cities and small towns, have moved forward with greater determination and are leading effective 2030 Agenda localization processes. Many have taken advantage of the 2030 Agenda to review their strategies and public policies, adopt a more integrative approach to development in their territories, engage territorial actors and broaden their alliances with citizens.

The chapter offers hundreds of examples of contributions to the achievement of the SDGs from the territories in the region. Some of these experiences are particularly significant because of their potential for change. Many cities and regions, for example, have begun to act decisively against climate change and for the protection of the environment and biodiversity, even without clear policy guidelines from national governments. It highlights actions that have contributed to redesigning cities, fighting social segregation, improving living conditions in poor neighbourhoods and promoting peace and inclusion. Some visionary local governments are promoting local economic development, entrepreneurship and innovation, creating opportunities for women and youth, responding to the needs of informal workers, including the know-how of First Peoples (*Pueblos originarios*).

Others are promoting the circular economy, the sharing economy, social housing initiatives, local food production systems and urban agriculture, as well as agroecology (such as the Network of Agroecological Municipalities of Argentina, the Mexican *chinampas* or productive forms that avoid the use of chemicals and preserve soil biodiversity). They are embracing and leading new territorial sustainable development approaches.

Many of the solutions provided by Latin American local governments are the result of citizen participation through initiatives such as participatory planning and budgeting, which gained international recognition and were disseminated throughout the countries of the region and beyond. These experiences can help to build more transparent governance systems, based on institutions that are open and accessible to the most vulnerable populations.

However, given the magnitude of the challenges, the mobilization of LRGs is still insufficient. **A joint effort by national governments, LRG organizations and international institutions is required to upscale local mobilization and, above all, to generate the necessary support to sustain and amplify change**, upscaling bottom-up initiatives and strengthening cooperation with national strategies.

Structural challenges to localization: uneven decentralization and limited access to adequate funding

Although progress has been made, this chapter examines the institutional contexts within which LRGs operate in order to highlight the constraints of these processes. It emphasises two dimensions: **1) the evolution of the institutional and financial framework**, and **2) the need for greater inter-institutional and citizen cooperation**. In relation to the first, the institutional framework, the chapter highlights the advances of the democratization and decentralization agendas, which in the last few decades have progressed almost in parallel. The election of local authorities is now a widespread phenomenon across the continent. In other respects, progress has been uneven, with clear regional and country differences (between countries of the Southern Cone, Andean, Central America and the Caribbean) and advances stagnations and setbacks. In addition, the increase in the responsibilities of LRGs with respect to communities has left many unresolved problems, both in terms of the clarity of the distribution of competences and the capacity to assume them. In many countries, there is a lack of clarity about 'who does what' and, above all, 'with what means'. This is a burden that increases the challenges implementing the 2030 Agenda, hindering the role of LRGs, the coordination of policies between different levels of government, as well as the mobilization of local actors.

Globally, in the majority of countries LRG funding doubled between 1985 and 2010, following the growth of their economies, yet its level in this region (at 6.2% of GDP) remains relatively low (below Europe's 16% or Asia-Pacific's 8%) and varies significantly between states (particularly between federal and unitary countries). This limits LRGs' ability to fully assume their responsibilities with respect to local development. In most nations (with a few exceptions), local budgets are highly dependent on transfers of funds from the national government, and this is usually accompanied by a high degree of control and conditionality, thus limiting local autonomy. Inadequate local taxation frameworks, on the other hand, curb the possibility of diversifying and optimizing the mobilization of local resources and, especially, the recovery of wealth and added value generated by cities (e.g. through increases in the value of properties). Restrictions on local budgets also affect local borrowing and access to funding. With the exception of large regions and cities, whose investment capacities are significant, most local governments and cities (and intermediary cities in particular) have limited access to resources to invest in services and infrastructure.

The implementation of the SDGs is an opportunity to advance decentralization processes and strengthen LRGs and their financing in order to promote the localization of agendas and move towards new models of development that are more inclusive and sustainable.

The need to enhance cooperation between institutions and civil society

Dissemination, dialogue and cooperation are vital for ensuring the ownership and implementation of the SDGs among both governments and local actors (civil society, business, and academia). The 2030 Agenda places particular emphasis on these two aspects (under the title 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approaches, or MLG).

To improve the participation of local institutions, LRGs in the region need to be properly represented and active in the national coordination frameworks for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This is an important lever for LRGs to feel involved, rather than seeing these agendas as alien.

The progress of LRGs in implementing these agendas depends to a large extent on the willingness and incentives promoted by national governments. One drawback highlighted in the report is the limited participation of local governments in the process of preparing VNRs and in the mechanisms for coordinating the implementation of the SDGs. LRGs' access to the national governance of the 2030 Agenda is limited. In some countries they have been included in the institutional framework for action (as in Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, the Dominican Republic), but in others their participation is occasional, indirect or non-existent. To improve the participation of local institutions, LRGs in the region need to be properly represented and active in the national coordination frameworks for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This is an important lever for LRGs to feel involved, rather than seeing these agendas as alien to the national and local context.

The strengthening of MLG mechanisms to coordinate the implementation of SDGs is an essential lever to strengthen the coherence and impact of public policies. It will take time and a greater willingness to adjust to, and consolidate, new practices, and create a new culture of governance that fosters dialogue and collaboration aligned with the SDGs. Nevertheless, time is pressing to achieve the SDGs and develop a more sustainable future for the region.

Review national and local planning systems and promote access to local data and indicators

Another essential element of collaboration between central and local governments is the planning of development policies and their alignment with the 2030 Agenda. In countries with advanced decentralization processes, this collaboration makes it possible to create synergies, reduce overlaps, avoid duplication and promote the coordinated mobilization of local and national resources. This is particularly relevant when one considers that LRGs represent almost 40% of public investment in the region. To this end, it is necessary to have instruments of MLG in the territories that respect the competences and capacities of each level of government (following the principle of subsidiarity), supported by participatory planning in cities and territories and better coordination between national and local investment plans.

The report presents several examples of progress in institutionalizing coordination mechanisms between different levels of government. It details the efforts made to articulate the SDGs with the national development

planning systems (as in Colombia and Ecuador), as well as the difficulties of vertical and horizontal cooperation between various levels of government (as is the case in states and municipalities in Mexico, and provinces in Ecuador). Although there are positive examples to be highlighted, for some countries these coordination efforts do not seem to be a priority. Admittedly, there are still great difficulties in locating and disaggregating data and constructing joint indicators between national and local governments (e.g. in Brazil and Colombia), without which it is difficult to improve the articulation of national and local planning systems and ensure the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda.

There is greater concern in the region to promote better coordination of national and territorial development strategies with the SDGs. To enhance the effectiveness of such efforts, **it is necessary to reinforce LRGs' planning capacities and the articulation between local and national plans, as well as to define or reinforce financing mechanisms that encourage this coordination. The collection and availability of localized data and indicators is also crucial.**

Strengthen urban and territorial governance to realize the SDGs

Urban policy must also be part of coordination efforts, both in large cities and in intermediate and small cities, as well between urban and rural areas. Despite recent advances in urban governance, many large cities do not yet have a metropolitan government with the necessary powers and resources to adequately plan the development of the metropolitan area as a whole, overcome jurisdictional fragmentation, and respond to the problems of externalities and spillover effects with adequate institutional and financing mechanisms. Given the importance of the metropolitan phenomenon in the region, the establishment of metropolitan governance systems that respond to these challenges would represent an important step forward in the realization of the global agendas, given the significant potential they have to trigger social, economic and environmental change. On the other hand, the persistent territorial inequality between rural and urban territories requires territorial governance frameworks and more collaboration between rural municipalities, mid-sized and intermediate cities and towns, fostering effective and integrated territorial sustainable development approaches.

Despite the growth of intermediate cities in the region, their involvement in the implementation of the SDGs is still limited. Territorial development policies (or their absence) and imbalances in public investment tend to aggravate inequalities between metropolises and intermediate cities, and between better-connected central regions with greater economic dynamism and peripheral

cities and more remote territories. This disparity in investment reduces the equity and integration of the territory, and consequently slows the reduction in inequalities — the objective of the 2030 Agenda.

The ambition to develop interlinkages and more integrated approaches proposed in the 2030 Agenda should support the coordination of urban and sectoral policies with a stronger involvement of LRGs, for example, **by involving them in the design, implementation and evaluation of National Urban Policies promoted by many governments with the support of UN-Habitat. The New Urban Agenda should serve as a catalyst to complement and achieve the SDGs.**

All this notwithstanding, the reinforcement of urban agglomerations, intermediate and small cities and their governance should not be attained at the expense of the surrounding rural areas. The subsistence of urban areas depends on rural ones. If these lose their population, it creates a vacuum that extensive agriculture and monocultures are ready to fill, with irreversible environmental damage and an even more accelerated exodus of the rural population. This is a serious threat that today looms over the Amazon forest in Brazil and other incommensurable natural resources, native forests and biodiversity reserves in other countries. In this regard, **integrated territorial development strategies will be central to the achievement of the SDGs.**

Localize the SDGs to transform Latin American society

The localization of the 2030 Agenda and other global agendas allows for the emergence of an approach and a solution to the sustainable development challenges that Latin American cities and territories face today, and which is hindering their capacities. It is in cities and territories where some of the major problems characterising the region's development models are concentrated — namely high indices of inequality and exclusion, growing violence, and problems of environmental sustainability that affect both the health and wellbeing of the population and negative impacts on the traditional modes of production and consumption of the most vulnerable groups.

In the context of rethinking the regions' current development models, the most innovative local initiatives are those best placed to effect change. They have a key role to play in supporting citizen participation and a move towards more effective forms of cooperative governance. However, many cities and territories face structural problems which they cannot respond to alone. For these initiatives to flourish and multiply, and for their impact to become more significant, it is necessary to create favourable conditions, strengthen the institutional environment and improve resource mobilization. Their participation in building national strategies

to implement the SDGs and develop urban policies that address the demands of the New Urban Agenda is essential, not only in terms of adapting national policies to their territories, but also contributing their experiences to the national debate. Their role will become increasingly important for national development. But in order for this to happen, it is necessary to further strengthen their capacities and initiatives and to advance dialogue, cooperation and collaboration at different government levels, thereby extending spaces for participation and consensus. Given the critical situation that many countries in the region face, local and regional governments can become part of the solution in advancing the realization of sustainability agendas and mobilizing the capacities and resources of citizens and local stakeholders. 🌍

The Amazon River in the Iquitos-Leticia route (photos: M M, bit.ly/2pZhd3m).



06



Middle East and West Asia

Regional chapter



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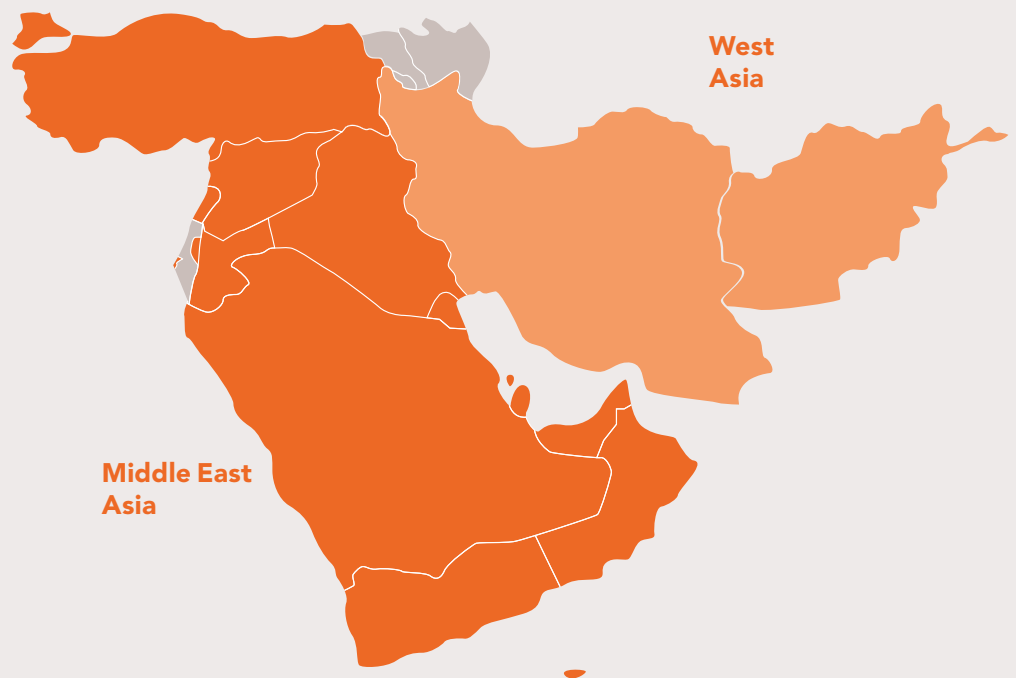
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1. Introduction

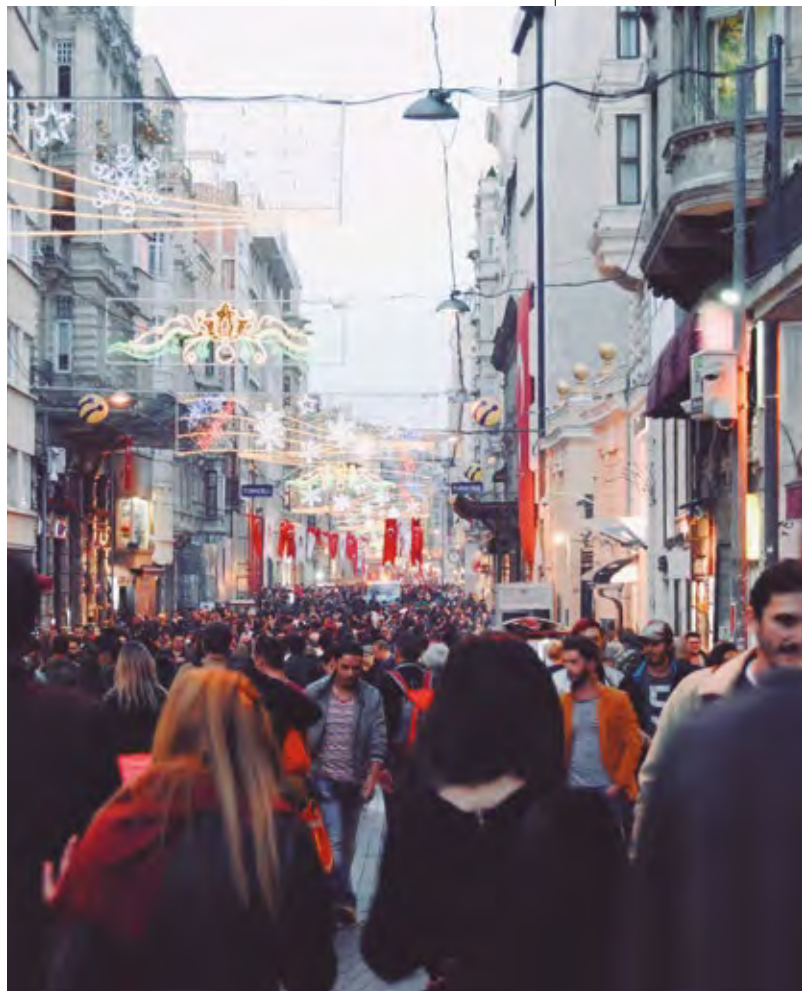
The Middle East and West Asia (MEWA) region presents distinct and significant challenges with regard to the involvement of local and regional governments (LRGs) in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With a historical record of strong centralization and authoritarian regimes, the region has in recent years felt the impact of extensive conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen, and experienced high population growth and rapid urbanization.

With around 364 million inhabitants, the MEWA region is one of extreme heterogeneity.¹ Thanks to their oil wealth, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) monarchies — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — are among the wealthiest countries of the world with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, purchasing power parity, ranging from USD 50,526 to USD 154,008. The State of Palestine, Yemen and Afghanistan, meanwhile, are among the poorest (USD 4,885, USD 2,150 and USD 1,981 respectively). With the exception of Afghanistan and Yemen, the region is highly urbanized: 67% of its population live in cities. Jordan and the GCC countries are the most urbanized with nearly 84% of their populations living in urban settlements; Afghanistan and Yemen are the least urbanized with 27% and 35% respectively of their populations living in cities. Israel is not included in this analysis.

Large-scale migration from rural areas and the massive influx of refugees has accelerated urban growth, with a current annual growth rate of 2.6%.² This has led to overcrowding of existing built areas and the growth of informal settlements. Climate change, in the context of fragile natural systems, has exacerbated access to basic services problems, particularly with regard to access to water, and thus the ability to provide an essential service. Over 50% of the population are under 25 and young workers aged 15-25 account for 20% of the labour force.³

While the discovery of oil in the 20th century gave Iraq and Iran substantial wealth that allowed them to develop an industrial base, the economic base of Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen has been unable to keep up with population growth, and urban unemployment has generally risen. In some countries, Jordan and Palestine in particular, the remittances of expatriate workers in Gulf states and Western

Crowd in stiklal Caddesi, Istanbul, Turkey (photo: © Jaume Puigpinós Serra).



Despite recurring conflicts, political turmoil and civil unrest, most countries had made significant economic progress.

Europe have financed a rapid urbanization. Oil wealth has allowed the GCC countries to embark on ambitious development programmes and urban megaprojects that rival western models.

Since the beginning of the century, a succession of wars and sectarian conflict have afflicted large parts of the MEWA region. The **State of Palestine** (West Bank and Gaza) is still under Israeli occupation and/or blockade. The civil war in **Afghanistan** caused massive destruction and

displacements of vulnerable populations. Even though most of the 4.3 million people that fled to Iran and Pakistan have since returned, their need for shelter, services and economic integration is placing huge pressures on the local economy.⁴ In **Iraq**, the 2003 war caused widespread destruction in most cities, including Baghdad, Basrah and Mosul, and severe damage to the civilian infrastructure. The 2014 invasion of the Western part of the country by *Da'esh* fighters resulted in chaotic conditions, and cities as well as smaller towns and villages suffered extensive physical damage and devastation.

While **Syria's** civil war shows signs of winding down, the destruction of national infrastructure and of urban areas has been massive. Refugees fleeing the conflict have moved to neighbouring countries with approximately 3.6 million refugees



in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon, 630,000 in Jordan, 245,000 in Iraq, and 118,000 in Egypt.⁵ In **Jordan** and **Lebanon**, most refugees are living in densely settled urban areas, driving up housing costs and placing stress on available public services. One of the two poorest countries in the region, **Yemen** has been in the throes of a civil war since 2014, and over 22 million people — three-quarters of the population — forcibly displaced in multiple waves are in desperate need of aid and protection. An estimated 13.5 million people (including six million children) have been in need of one form or another of humanitarian aid: food, potable water, sanitation and waste disposal.

Despite recurring conflicts, political turmoil and civil unrest, most countries had made significant economic progress before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in early 2011. The conflict not only

devastated Syria but also affected Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as displaced populations sought refuge and traditional regional economic ties were severed.

Jordan has borne much of the brunt of the crises at its borders. Wars and conflicts in neighbouring countries have resulted in waves of refugees and displaced persons, imposing serious economic challenges and fuelling an increase in poverty, unemployment rates and stresses on infrastructure and services. Jordan's population in 2015 was 9.5 million, nearly 40% of whom were refugees, displaced by the four Arab-Israeli wars and granted Jordanian citizenship. In spite of the negative effect of regional conflicts, Jordan made remarkable progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The absolute poverty rate dropped from approximately 21% in 1990 to 14.4% in 2010.

It is a similar story in Lebanon. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, **Lebanon** was second only to Jordan as a country of destination for Palestinian refugees, 504,000 of whom are currently registered by the United National Relief and Works Agency for **Palestine** (UNRWA).⁶ As a result of the Syrian civil war, more than a million people displaced by the conflict have found refuge in Lebanon. The government estimates that the country now hosts 1.1 million refugees; this includes nearly one million Syrians registered with UNHCR, 31,000 Palestinians displaced from Syria, and 35,000 Lebanese returnees from Syria.

Based on this framework, this chapter provides a broad description and analysis of the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the SDGs by LRGs in the MEWA region. The first part of the chapter describes the engagement with the SDG agenda at the national level, the participation of LRGs and the institutional context for SDG implementation, including recent trends regarding (de)centralization and the governance frameworks of LRGs, particularly as regards decision-making. The second part of the chapter focuses on the specific efforts of LRGs across the region to contribute to the SDGs, as well as those of local civil society and those supported by external actors. The analysis takes a comprehensive view of these initiatives, considering not only those explicitly identified with the SDGs, but also efforts whose outcomes are directly related to the SDGs, even if no explicit linkage to the framework is established in their formulation. The last section presents the main conclusions and potential next steps. ○



Kids playing and resting in in UNRWA Training Center in Sibling, Lebanon (photo: Silvio Arcangeli, bit.ly/2Mn9luo).

2. National and local institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

2.1 National frameworks

The MEWA region countries share a tradition of centralized systems of governance that inevitably influences the SDG implementation process. All countries in the region have similar multi-tiered governance structures: governorates, districts and municipalities in urbanized areas, and governorates and villages in rural areas.⁷ This multi-tiered system of governance is reflected in the institutional structures that are being created in each country for the implementation of the SDGs. With the exception of Syria and Yemen, SDG principles have been incorporated in current national development strategies (NDSs), with some modifications that reflect the Islamic values that prevail in many countries.

Twelve MEWA countries submitted their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in the 2016-2019 period.⁸ Almost all countries share the same mechanisms of follow-up and implementation of the SDGs: a high-level council of ministries; a national coordination committee; or a national commission for sustainable development, formed by various ministry-level representatives and usually led by one ministry in particular, often the one in charge of territorial or urban planning. Consultation processes and partnership methods are not always well-defined, even when a consultation process has been explicitly mentioned in the VNR. The participation of local governments is often determined by their legal position in the country's political system, but mostly it is limited or even non-existent.

In **Afghanistan**, the primary SDG implementing agency is the Ministry of Economy, through its SDG Secretariat (SD). While the SD's mission is to ensure a broad national participation and promote a sense of ownership among national stakeholders, all sub-national administrative entities are institutionally and financially dependent on the central government.⁹ Accurate data for setting baselines and annual targets

for indicators are lacking and, since over half of government expenditure is dedicated to security, the country's capacity to implement SDG policies remains limited. The 2017 VNR mentions the importance of SDG localization, while also highlighting that this can only be achieved *after* adoption at the national level.

In **Iraq**, the government has divided the 17 SDGs into eight socio-economic sectors: security, education, health, governance, infrastructure, social protection, agriculture and rural development, and economy. It has identified 169 specific national targets and 217 indicators. A Social Fund for Development has been established to support the implementation of the SDGs at the local level.¹⁰ Moreover, the central level has created an SDG National Coordination Commission, SDG Secretariat, Technical Coordination Committees, Technical Working Groups, and an SDG High-Level Board to ensure smoother implementation. The Global Initiative Towards a Sustainable Iraq (GITSI) is a further acknowledgement of the importance of including LRGs in the process.

The government of **Iran** has not yet declared when it will report to the HLPF. SDG stakeholders include the Sustainable Development Steering Council, the national legislature, local governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector.¹¹

In the GCC countries, the implementation of the SDGs is primarily the responsibility of

In the MEWA region, the participation of local governments is often determined by their legal position in the country's political system, but mostly it is limited or even non-existent.

Table 1 National strategies for integrating SDGs, coordination mechanisms and LRG participation

Afghanistan

National Peace and Development Framework (2016-2021) and integrated in 22 National Priority Programmes (NPPs). Coordination: High Council of Minister (policy guidance), Executive Committee on the SDGs (in the Office of the Chief Executive – the President's Office, and co-chaired by the Ministry of Economy), National Coordination Committee (inter-ministerial, include multi-stakeholder engagement) Technical Coordination Committee.

Bahrain

Government Plan of Action 2015-2018. Coordination: National Information Committee (chaired by the Minister of Cabinet Affairs).

Iran

Iran has still not presented its VNR. It prepared the 6th National Five-Year Development Plan 2017-2022, and other sectoral plans (e.g. Climate Change Plan, Health Transformation Plan), and will prepare a national sustainable development strategy. Coordination: National Committee for Sustainable Development (but a new mechanism will be created).

Iraq

Iraq Vision 2030, National Development Plan 2018-2022 and Poverty Reduction Strategy. Coordination: National Commission for Sustainable Development (chaired by the Ministry of Planning), SDG Secretariat, Technical Coordination Committees, Technical Working Groups, and an SDG High-Level Board, Monitoring Committee headed by the Ministry of Planning (multi-stakeholder, consultative body), Governorate Committees for SD.

Jordan

Jordan 2025, Executive Development Programmes (EDPs, 2016-2019), Roadmap for SDG Implementation, thematic strategies (e.g. Economic Growth Plan 2018-2022). Coordination: Higher Steering Committee (headed by the Prime Minister's

Office), National Higher National Committee for Sustainable Development (created in 2002, headed by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation), Coordination Committee (oversees EDPs).

Kuwait

Kuwait Vision 2035 and Kuwait National Development Plan (2015-2020). Coordination: National Sustainable Development Committee, co-led by the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), National Observatory on Sustainable Development and Anticipation of the Future (multi-stakeholder).

Lebanon

National Physical Master Plan of the Lebanese Territory (2009) but does not yet have a national integrated sustainable development framework. Coordination: National Committee for the SDGs, headed by the Prime Minister (multi-stakeholder).

Oman

'Oman 2040' and the 9th Development Plan 2016-2020. Coordination: National Committee for the SDGs, created under the High-Level Council on Planning.

Palestine (State of)

National Policy Agenda 2017-2022. Coordination: National SDG Team (headed by the Prime Minister), supported by 12 SDG working groups (multi-stakeholder).

Qatar

Qatar National Vision 2030 and National Development Strategy 2018-2022. Coordination: Council of Ministers (oversight), Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics (coordination entity).

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Vision 2030, National Transformation Programme 2020 and sector-specific strategies (e.g. National Environmental Strategy, etc). Coordination: Council of Ministers (high-level political direction); Minister of Economy and Planning (coordination entity); Council of Economic and Development Affairs (tasked with the implementation of Vision 2030), Strategy Committee (proposes strategies for achieving Vision 2030).

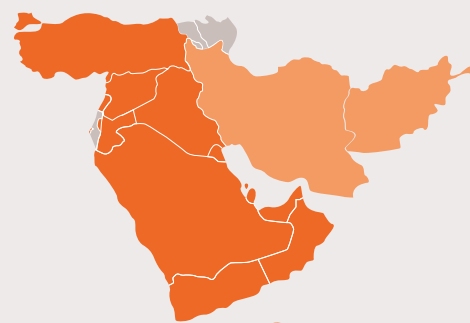
Turkey

10th and 11th National Development Plans (2014-2018 and 2019-2023) and Annual Programmes. Coordination: Presidency of Strategy and Budget (PSB), under the Turkish Presidency; Department of Environment and Sustainable Development (DESD) under PSB coordinates follow-up, monitoring and reporting. Turkstat produces the required data.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Vision 2021 (adopted in 2005), Vision 2071 (UAE Centennial Strategy), launched in 2017, Emirates' own national development plans (for five out of seven emirates), National Key Performance Indicators aligned with the SDGs. Coordination: National Committee on SDGs (chaired by the Minister of State for International Cooperation and by the chairwoman of the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority).

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Sources: UNDESA, 'Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for the SDGs 2016-2017 and 2018'; VNRs; UCLG surveys.

national ministries. **Qatar** has aligned the SDGs with its own Qatar National Vision 2030. The Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics (MDPS) is in charge of implementing both the National Vision 2030 and the SDGs, and has incorporated the 2030 Agenda in different sectors and established various dedicated task teams. At least eight municipalities have drafted spatial development plans.¹²

In **Bahrain**, SDG implementation is based on a government Plan of Action, under the responsibility of the National Information Committee, chaired by the Minister of Cabinet Affairs and designed to bring together all units of the central government involved in SDG implementation, reporting through the National Statistical Office.¹³ The consultation process has involved community groups, civil society organizations (CSOs), and private sector, although there is no reference to the engagement of the country's five governorates. While governorate councillors are in fact elected, governors are appointed by the monarchy: the Bahraini VNR, consequently, considered governorates as an extension of the national government.

Saudi Arabia reported in 2018 by adapting its Saudi Vision 2030 to the SDG framework. Implementation efforts are led by the Ministry of Economy and Planning, which is also the body in charge of reporting and data collection from other ministries and relevant stakeholders. The Saudi VNR puts emphasis on the private sector's engagement in the SDG process as part of a trend of economic diversification. The role of LRGs in the process, however, is not clear: the consultation process was given no visibility, except for the Future Saudi Cities Programme, linked to the Saudi Vision 2030.

Kuwait's approach to the SDGs has been guided by the 'Kuwait Vision 2030' and mainstreamed through the Kuwait National Development Plan (2015-2020). The National Sustainable Development Committee provides overall strategic leadership, with the collaboration of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Central Statistical Bureau. A National Observatory on Sustainable Development and Anticipation of the Future also plays a coordination role in follow-up, and was involved in the preparation of the VNR. It is expected to ensure the involvement of government entities, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.¹⁴ In **Oman**, a National Committee for the SDGs was created under the High-Level Council on Planning, and the SDGs were integrated in the long-term 'Oman 2040' plan and the 9th Development Plan 2016-2020.

Jordan's Higher National Steering Committee provides overall strategic guidance for the

In MEWA countries, with the exception of Syria and Yemen, SDG principles have been incorporated in current national development strategies with modifications that reflect the Islamic values that prevail in many of them.

implementation of the SDGs (with the broad aim of reducing poverty to 8% by 2015 and 7% by 2030), including consultations with stakeholders. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation is in charge of reporting progress. In **Lebanon**, a national committee to implement the SDGs was formed in 2017, with members including ministerial officials, and representatives from CSOs and the private sector. This is chaired by the Prime Minister. Sub-committees monitor the implementation of each thematic component. While workshops were held for central government agencies, the private sector and CSOs, none was held for LRGs.¹⁵ Although **Palestine** has incorporated the SDGs in its national strategy and submitted a VNR in 2018, little progress has been achieved because of limited resources and the continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza. No specific SDG-based consultative process with local governments has yet been established.¹⁶

Turkey was the first MEWA country to submit a VNR in 2016 and again in 2019. Turkey's national development plan (NDP) was prepared by the Ministry of Development (MoD). The government, however, has since been restructured in the framework of the amendment of the Turkish Constitution (2017). The Presidency of Strategy and Budget (PSB) under the President's Office is now the focal point for sustainable development. The Department of Environment and Sustainable Development (DESD) under PSB coordinates follow-up, monitoring and reporting, supported by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat). Different ministries ensure coordination for each SDG.¹⁷ The 2016 VNR granted little space to local governments. For the preparatory process of the 2019 VNR, however, the national local government association (LGA), the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT), was nominated to coordinate and collect information from LRGs. ◉

2.2 Local and regional government institutional frameworks

As mentioned throughout this chapter, the countries of the MEWA region are characterized by a high degree of centralization, with only very few exceptions. This also applies to the various tiers of local government: provincial governors tend to have substantial powers over municipal governments, either through the direct appointment of local authorities or the delivery of local services, or even both in many cases.

Afghanistan is still a primarily rural country: only 27% of its population were classified as urban in 2015. Its structure is organized into 34 provinces, 399 districts, 150 municipalities and about 40,000 villages (see Table 2). Tribal councils (*jirgas*), moreover, play a governance role across various levels. Provincial governors are still appointed by the central government almost *in spite of* existing laws that already establish their electability.¹⁸ Local elections have generally not been held since the end of the Afghan wars: one in five municipal posts is currently vacant.¹⁹ Municipalities implement national plans and policies. The Independent Directorate of Local Governance (established in 2007 as a governmental entity) works as a 'compulsory' LGA and theoretically provides opportunities for citizen participation through the establishment of Provincial Councils, Community Development Councils (CDCs) and District Development Assemblies. The latter two entities, both of which are part of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) structure, assess community needs at the local level and design development projects accordingly.²⁰

Iran is organized into 31 provinces (*ostan*) and 324 municipalities (*shahrdariyah*) — which include cities (10,000 inhabitants or more), towns, districts and villages. Provinces, cities, towns and villages have directly elected councils (*shora*). At the national level, a Higher Council of Provincial Councils was established in 2003. Provinces are headed by a governor appointed by the Ministry of Interior, and municipalities by a mayor elected by the local councils. The appointment of mayors is subject to the Minister of Interior's approval.²¹ From a legal point of view, municipalities and town councils are defined as 'non-governmental, public organizations'. They are considered part of

the political system but not of the governmental structure. In spite of the calls for more decentralization in the country's third NDP (2001-2005), decision-making for local infrastructure planning and public services has generally been top-down:²² many basic services are managed directly by their respective ministries, and the authority of local governments is easily overridden by the Ministry of Interior. Villages are in general not granted sufficient resources or competences to fulfil service-related tasks, and are thus reduced to consultative bodies.²³

Iraq's 2005 Constitution established a federal state system, followed by a dedicated law on local authorities (2008), which gave formal autonomy to the country's 18 governorates, three of which (Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah) subsequently associated to form the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), based on article 199 of the Constitution. The KRG in fact is the only regional government that benefits from a high degree of autonomy. Elections to the governorate councils were held in 2009 and 2013, but responsibilities have yet to be fully transferred to them, with central ministries still managing water, electricity, and sanitation. Governorate budgets rely on redistributed oil revenue through budget allocations from the central government and, in some cases, on their own petroleum revenues or fees. The priorities determining the allocation of resources are still set at the ministerial level.²⁴ Governorate councils, 69 cities (*baladiyah*) with more than 10,000 inhabitants and 120 districts (*qadaa*) have elected local councils, which in turn choose their own executives.²⁵ The governorate councils have extensive power over the lower local councils within the same governorate in the execution of local projects. The capital Baghdad itself is a discrete territory. At the same time, municipalities locally represent the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works. Inevitably, the resettlement of internally displaced persons and the improvement of security are two key issues facing local authorities.

In a very different context, all six countries in the GCC are centralized monarchies and essentially, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, city-states. Their local councils, composed of

both elected and appointed members, are primarily advisory bodies. Ministries set national, regional and local urban policies, while the power of municipal authorities is generally restricted. **Kuwait** has endowed sub-national authorities with some executive powers: the Kuwait Municipality now enjoys decision-making powers related to licensing, health and safety in workplaces, and the planning and approval of infrastructural projects. **Bahrain** is divided into five governorates, each headed by a governor, in charge of development-related economic and social regional policies.²⁶ In 2002, moreover, Bahrain held its first local elections since 1957. Governorate councils are elected but governors are still appointed by the central government. In October 2011, the Sultanate of **Oman** announced the establishment of municipal councils (*wilayah*) in all of its 11 governorates. Until then, only the capital city of Muscat had had a council — whose members were however all appointed. Local elections were eventually held in December 2012, although via the expression of nominal preferences, since national law forbids the establishment of political parties.²⁷ At the regional level, governorates are led by appointed *walis* (governors), who report directly to the Ministry of the Interior. As the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Environment maintains control over municipal budget and administration, Omani municipalities enjoy very limited autonomy.²⁸ **Qatar's** elected Central Municipal council, created in 1999, is purely advisory. In the **UAE**, a number of federal and local regulations have been implemented in recent years. The membership of the Federal National Council, on the other hand, is half-elected and half-appointed. The first council elections were held in 2006. Local administrations each have an executive council, which reports to the Ruler's Court of each specific Emirate. The capital Abu Dhabi has its own executive council, currently chaired by the Crown Prince.

The largest country in this group, **Saudi Arabia**, has a more conventional territorial organization: it includes 13 provinces, led by governors; municipalities report to governors for the delivery of local services.²⁹ Over the last ten years, there has been evidence of the role of local authorities expanding somewhat.³⁰ The country's shift towards more administrative de-concentration includes the establishment of regional authorities (*amanat*) and the enhancement of the institutional capacity of local agencies. Elections — limited to half the membership of local councils — were held in 2005, 2011 and 2015. The local councils have been given nominal planning and development responsibilities and are specifically responsible for public health, the management of public space, and the issuance of building permits. However, they do not enjoy comparable financial autonomy: the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs has dominated the formulation and implementation of

urban policy. Although local councils prepare local master plans and monitor their implementation, ministries still have the power to overrule local decisions. Similarly, central government transfers still account for 70% of local expenditures.

In **Yemen**, conversely, most local councils — perceived as a continuation of the previous regime — have been inactive since the outbreak of conflict in 2015. In the country's northern territories, however, local tribes are *de facto* local bodies, and tribal councils have remained active. As of 2000, Yemen had three levels of government: the national government, governorates at the regional level, and districts at the municipal level. Their organization is mandated by the Local Authority Law, which came into force in 2000. However, even though the text of the law imposes the direct election of district and governorate councillors, these posts have always been appointed by national governments. Ultimately, studies show that the current regulation of local government is now either in conflict or redundant with at least 80 other pieces of legislation covering a range of different issues.³¹

Similarly, since 2011, **Syria** has experienced one of the worst and most heavily documented conflicts in the world. Traditionally, and formally at least since 1963, the country adopted a strictly centralized form of state. Nonetheless, and with the support of the European Union in particular, the country was able to begin the slow yet major modernization of its municipal administrative system. With the start of the civil war, the ensuing collapse of an effective political system has engendered a multiplicity of administrative systems in the areas not controlled by governmental forces. Military or civilian leaders in different zones are retaining control over territorial organization, thus fostering — to a certain extent — the emergence of more localized initiatives, also with the support of tribal, religious and family-clan leadership in certain areas.³²

The situation with territorial organization and (re-)centralizing trends is quite different in the other countries of the Levant. **Jordan** is divided into 12 governorates, each headed by a *muhafez* (governor) reporting directly to the Ministry of Interior.³³ Since the 2007 Municipal Act, 93 local

The countries of the MEWA region are characterized (with only very few exceptions) by a high degree of centralization, including direct appointment of local authorities and delivery of local services.

municipal councils are elected for a mandate of four years, with the exception of the Greater Amman Municipality, whose mayor and half the municipal council are appointed by the Cabinet. Municipalities are ruled by elected officials but still placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Since August 2015, members of the governorate councils have also been elected, but governors remain appointed.³⁴ Jordan's 2015 Decentralization Law, on the other hand, sought to mobilize more inclusive participation. Women, for example, are guaranteed 20% of the seats on municipal councils.³⁵ Citizen participation in local governance, however, is still limited even though the government has started to engage civil society and solicited input on national policy through formal dialogues, in an attempt to strengthen civil society's role as a policy-making partner.

In **Lebanon**, the Taif Agreement — which the Lebanese parliament approved in 1989 and marked the end of the Lebanese civil war — resulted in an extensive decentralization process. The country today is divided into eight administrative governorates, 26 sub-regions (*Qadaa*) and 1,018 municipalities. These can associate in Municipal Unions (currently 51 of them exist). New legislation enacted in 2014 has decentralized urban governance even further: accordingly, municipalities are now financially independent, although their activities must be coordinated with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Central transfers, on the other hand, still account for 40% of municipal revenues. An additional 14% is received as a loan from the Cities and Villages Development Bank. Citizen participation in local governance is still minimal, even in spite of the recent governmental efforts to engage more with civil society. Beirut, the capital city, has a unique system, in which the (elected) mayor retains certain policy-making powers while sharing the executive power with an (appointed) governor.³⁶

The unique geographic and administrative structure of **Palestine** is the consequence of its particular history and status. It is divided into two main geographical units: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This spatial configuration has led to a relative autonomy in terms of municipal authority, also considering the impact of territorial fragmentation as caused by the Israeli occupation. Today urban governance is largely decentralized and elected local authorities are responsible for the provision of basic services and planning, managing growth within their boundaries, providing basic services (e.g. water, power) and granting of building permits. In 2005 and 2006, there was a rise of agglomeration into joint councils for shared service provision and development planning. At the national level, the Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF), established in 2005, provides municipalities with grants and loan guarantees

and programmes to strengthen their financial management capabilities. It has channelled significant funding from international donors for municipal infrastructure, capacity development, and other municipal activities.

Turkey, a founding member of the Council of Europe and an active member of its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, is the most decentralized country in the region. In 2004, the Turkish parliament adopted a comprehensive decentralization reform as part of its process of integration with the European Union. Local authorities enjoy both financial and administrative autonomy. There are three types of local government: villages, municipalities and special provincial administrations (SPAs). Following the 2014 Metropolitan Reform, the number of local governments with greater powers fell from 2,930 to 1,398, especially in the case of metropolitan municipalities.³⁷ As of December 2014, Turkey also comprises 18,362 villages as the lowest tier of local administration. The new presidential form of government (following the referendum of April 2017) has not affected the local government system. Central oversight issues remain, which can affect the clarity of the relationship between the local and central levels of governance.

Evolution of key functions and responsibilities of LRGs

Actual capacity to implement the SDGs locally is inevitably linked to the distribution of responsibilities, power and resources between national and local governance levels. Many countries of the MEWA region are disadvantaged by a legal and administrative framework that fails to address the lack of transparency and clarity in the allocation and way in which tasks and labour are distributed among central, local and private actors and sectors.

This lack of clarity about responsibilities and relationships between the central government, municipalities and other related local departments, has generally resulted in institutional competition and duplication. In **Lebanon**, for example, the Municipal Law devolves planning competences to municipalities, while at the same time the Urban Planning Code gives them only a consultative role in the implementation of plans and the national Directorate-General for Urban Planning prepares or reviews all urban master plans.³⁸ Moreover, while the 1977 municipal reform (Law 118) gives municipalities a broad range of tasks, nearly 70% of the country's 1,108 municipalities are small towns with structurally limited capacity to ensure basic service provision.³⁹ Thus, most functions related to urban development and infrastructure project implementation are supervised by a district commissioner (*qa'im maqam*). Pooling resources and enhancing decisional and implementation capacity are incentives for many small Lebanese

Table 2 Local and regional governments (LRGs) by tier

Country	System	Number of LRGs
Afghanistan	Presidential Islamic Republic	34 Provinces (<i>wilayat</i>) 399 Districts 153 Municipalities Roughly 40,020 Villages
Bahrain	Constitutional Hereditary Monarchy	5 Governorates (<i>muhafazat</i>)
Iran	Islamic Republic	31 Provinces (<i>ostan</i>) 324 Cities (<i>shehristan</i>)
Iraq	Parliamentary Republic	18 Governorates (<i>muhafazat</i>)
Jordan	Constitutional Monarchy with Representative Government	12 Governorates 100 Municipalities
Kuwait	Constitutional Emirate	6 Governorates
Lebanon	Parliamentary Democratic Republic	8 Governorates (<i>muhafazat</i>) 25 Districts (<i>qadaa, qaza</i>) 1,108 Municipalities (<i>baladiyya</i>)
Oman	Absolute Monarchy	11 Governorates
Qatar	Emirate	8 Municipalities (<i>baladiyya</i>)
Saudi Arabia	Unitary Absolute Monarchy	13 Provinces 60 Centres (<i>markaz</i>) for each province 43 Secondary Governorates (<i>muhafazat</i>) for each province
State of Palestine		187 Municipalities
Syrian Arab Republic	Unitary	14 Provinces
Turkey	Presidential Parliamentarian System	1,398 Municipalities 51 Provincial Administrations 18,362 Village Administrations
UAE	Federation of 7 Emirates	7 Emirates
Yemen	Multi-party Parliamentary System	22 Governorates 333 Districts 2,210 Municipalities 38,234 Villages

Source: UCLG MEWA Report on Country Sheets, 2018.

municipalities to establish municipal unions, as mentioned above.

Recentralizing trends have hindered competence devolution in **Jordan** over the past few years. Even though the current regulations of the Municipal Act do assign a diverse range of competences to the local level, the central government has tended to either centralize or even privatize some municipal competences such as water and electricity provision, school and health systems. Joint Service Councils have been established from the top down by the Ministry of Interior to coordinate service provision in clusters of municipalities and villages — with the aim of achieving economy of scale and making certain services (and waste management in particular) more efficient — such as in the Petra region or special economic zones such as Aqaba. The gubernatorial level maintains coordination among local governments, and has the power to intervene in municipal affairs and decisions.

The territorial and administrative fragmentation of the **State of Palestine** described above is seen in the inconsistent distribution of competences and powers to local authorities across the state's territory. Following the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995, the Palestinian territory in the West Bank was ultimately divided into three Areas: A, B, and C. Area C territory is *de facto* under Israeli control, not only in terms of its political administration and security, but even as far as urban and territorial zoning and planning are concerned. It accounts for about 60% of the whole of the West Bank. All this considered, the Local Authorities Law of the State of Palestine identifies a wide range of tasks that are the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities' (APLA) responsibility. Some municipalities have even taken on additional tasks, such as providing emergency services and the construction and maintenance of schools. Between 2005 and 2006, several joint councils were created to guarantee more effective service provision and development planning. However, due to the limited capacities of most local governments in the area, CSOs have played an important role in supplying health, education, and relief services, especially to the poorest groups of the population and those affected by the conflict.

The status of competence allocation and devolution in West Asia is more varied. The Afghan Government introduced a Sub-National Government Policy (LRGSP) in 2010, which aims to devolve certain central powers to local authorities. This document includes roles and responsibilities of Afghan local governments in various fields, such as justice, security, roads, water, sanitation, natural resources management, infrastructure, agriculture, education and energy, among others.⁴⁰ The Ministry of Urban Development, however, has planning oversight of local administrations' decision-making. In **Iran**, on the other hand, municipalities enjoy both direct responsibilities and shared responsibilities with higher levels of governance. Locally however, municipal offices and mayors have a limited or no role in the provision of many basic services. In the case of urban planning, for example, municipalities are generally tasked with the development and follow-up of projects that are usually defined and designed directly by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. Finally, in **Iraq**, district (*qadaa*) and sub-district (*nahiya*) councils have taken on several responsibilities of public service delivery to respond to local needs and interests, but most services remain under the central government's control. Following the country's structural political reform, governorates now manage and deliver most of the tasks related to the urban system. Accordingly, overlapping of authority and responsibility is still a fundamental problem in the relationship between federal and local governments, as well as a hindrance in terms of transparency and resource allocation.

The centralized nature of task and competence distribution in the Gulf countries has led to a relatively unusual picture in the sub-region. Emirati municipalities are in charge of daily urban service management but only as part of an ever-tighter distribution of tasks within the federal system, which remains largely in the hands of each Emirate's government-. In **Oman**, municipal councils have no specific competence other than providing recommendations for the delivery of urban services. Over the last few decades, several municipal responsibilities in **Kuwait** were in fact re-centralized, although municipal councils are still responsible for certain services — including roads, urban planning, sanitation, garbage disposal, food safety, licensing, environmental protection, and housing.⁴¹ Yemeni municipalities traditionally had little leeway when it came to local powers and responsibilities. A process of decentralization began in 2001 with the entry into force of a law on local authorities, which devolved most administrative tasks and competences to the local level. An amendment to the law was a step forward also in terms of the democratization of the appointment and accountability of

Lack of clarity about relationships between the central government, municipalities and other related local departments, has generally resulted in institutional competition and duplication.

local representatives. However, the President's office, as early as 2011, overturned most of these arrangements, returning the lion's share of policy control from the local level to central government.⁴² Finally, with the onset of the civil war in 2014 and the Saudi-led invasion of 2015, Yemeni municipalities found themselves in the unprecedented position of abandoning most local policy-making and focusing primarily on guaranteeing the supply of food and medicine to their communities.

In **Turkey**, on the other hand, municipal competences include an extensive range of tasks and responsibilities, with the exception inevitably of several basic national competences such as border security, justice and compulsory education. The Turkish system, however, still has certain overlaps in labour distribution between local governments and sectoral ministries. There have also been some instances of competence devolution by central government to local authorities, who have in turn rejected this due to bureaucratic difficulties in managing these tasks. Municipalities larger than 50,000 inhabitants, for example, have a legal obligation to provide sheltered housing for women and children: however, even after building the infrastructure (and thus complying with the law), and due to their limited capacity and the process's complexity, many municipalities are transferring the management and maintenance of shelters back to the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs. Similarly, in an attempt to rationalize their tasks, many municipalities have resorted to creating municipal unions, entities supported by specific national legislation: 789 such unions exist, sharing competences in a diverse range of fields, from geothermal energy production, to health and tourism.⁴³

Finally, urban legislation and regulations may have a very important role to play in preparing MEWA countries for the introduction of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda in an otherwise slowly evolving system. However, most urban planning and management laws, rules and regulations remain obsolete and have not been able to respond adequately to the needs (and challenges) of local governments willing to take on this task.

Local and regional governments finance

Inadequate access, delivery and provision of basic services and infrastructure have obstructed a real opportunity to achieve the SDGs and their targets in the MEWA region. A thorough revision of financial resources and their allocation across levels of governance is essential to overcoming this challenge. There are many obstacles in the way of LRGs' finance systems across the region. Generally speaking in the MEWA region **Turkey** and **Palestine** are probably the most decentralized

in terms of the spending capacity of their local governments. Countries such as Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon are lagging behind in this regard, while Gulf countries are as a rule so centralized that sub-national finance still depends largely on national decision-making. In most MEWA countries, however, the current institutional framework does not invest local governments with their own adequate revenues (be they taxes, fees or charges), making them unable to autonomously fund their expenditures. Increasing urbanization, on the one hand, has put even more financial pressure on local governments. Meanwhile obsolete institutional and regulatory frameworks, on the other, have made it even harder to recover their fair share of public services' operating costs or offset the impact of rising property value in urban contexts. This has ultimately most benefitted the private sector. Moreover, and generally across the entire MEWA region, an inadequate regulatory framework has limited local governments' access to alternative sources of funding and finance. Most MEWA local governments cannot legally issue municipal bonds, implement land-value capture models, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), value-based zoning mechanisms, or many other financial options which would require a step forward in financial decentralization for these to be accessible locally.

Similarly, local taxes and fees have so far played a minor part in the financing of local governance, systematically hindered by inefficient collection mechanisms. Very few countries in the MEWA region really enjoy any degree of autonomy in the management of their own local revenues. Although municipalities in Iran, Jordan, Turkey and Palestine are in fact able to generate income through property taxes, their share of local revenues (with the exception of Turkey) is still limited.⁴⁴ On the other hand, real-estate tax rates in Turkey, for example, are still set centrally by the Council of Ministers, with no engagement of municipalities. There are some positive examples, however: the city of Anliurfa, for example, doubled its tax revenue in one year by monitoring collection with improved IT systems.⁴⁵

Although municipal revenues in **Iran** increased eight-fold during the period 2006-2013, these came mostly from land sales and building permits. Meanwhile, over the past 45 years, the share of own revenue in the income of Tehran Municipality fell from about 40% to 20%.⁴⁶ Iranian cities have accordingly faced significant financial constraints in their ability to support the implementation of the SDGs.⁴⁷ Similarly, in **Iraq**, even though Iraqi governorates were granted the right to levy taxes, a judicial action has suspended this prerogative, leaving them highly dependent on central transfers. The system of tax collection, moreover, is strongly centralized. Specifically, in the case of the Iraqi economy, the Ministry of Finance has

been trying to retain control of the local budget, which has been spent entirely on reconstruction.

The current situation is even starker in the Gulf countries, where municipalities have basically behaved as implementing agencies for National Urban Policies (NUPs). With few exceptions, local governments in the Gulf have no direct taxing or borrowing powers and are dependent on central transfers for funding infrastructure and public service provision. Inevitably, any initiative to implement the SDGs needs to be centralized, top-down, and an integral part of the national development strategies. In **Bahrain**, for example, the budget allocated to governorates is agreed at the central level and managed as part of the overall budget of the Ministry of Interior.⁴⁸ In many Gulf countries, moreover, the wealth engendered by oil and hydrocarbons has allowed national governments to adopt single-handedly a specific model of urban planning and development, based mostly on ambitious megaprojects that rival — though more in appearance than function — a stereotypical image of the Western metropolis. This model of top-down urban development leaves the city, to a certain extent, devoid of its own main primary functions. In **Saudi Arabia**, for example, business licence and advertising fees and building permits are the only real source of income for local governments, while only a handful of cities — Riyadh, Jeddah, and the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah — are granted the capacity to manage local finance and maintain a local budget. Some cities, however, are seeking revenue from municipal land property to raise additional financial resources, and have been experimenting with PPPs to attract private investment. In an apparent acknowledgement of the urgency of this issue, Saudi Arabia's national Vision 2030 plan is now specifically addressing municipal finance.⁴⁹

In **Lebanon**, local governments cannot create additional taxes nor can they make changes to the tax base since they only have limited control of fee levels. While they collect up to 36 different kinds of fees, the cost of the collection process has been higher than the income obtained (direct fees represent around 40% of local revenues).⁵⁰ In **Jordan**, revenues raised by municipalities represent 43% of total local revenues. Municipalities have some control of some fees (e.g. waste collection, building permits), and property tax.⁵¹ Most Jordanian municipalities, however,

face budget deficits, mostly due to the inability to compensate for expenditure on salaries and local infrastructure maintenance (e.g. transport, roads and waste management). In the **State of Palestine**, on the other hand, local governments have maintained a certain degree of control over both the tax rate and the tax base. Inevitably, however, the current military occupation, the territorial fragmentation and the lack of actual control over border security and functioning have vastly affected the ability of local governments to collect a stable amount of own revenue, and they have relied extensively on foreign aid.⁵² At the national level, the MDLF, established in 2005, provides municipalities with grants and loan guarantees, as well as programmes to strengthen their financial management capabilities. In **Turkey**, finally, local taxes and fees represent around 30% of local revenues.⁵³

With regard to the remaining components of local budgets, local governments in most MEWA countries ultimately depend to a high degree on transfers from central governments: 70% of local revenue in **Turkey** come via grants, about 40% in **Jordan**. **Palestine** and **Afghanistan** are the only exceptions: in the former, the mechanism of grant and transfer has been inefficient due to the systemic issue in the organization of the country; in the latter, centre-to-local transfers are not established, and local governments are structurally without their own financial sources.⁵⁴ The centrality of transfers for the sustainability of local finance also highlights the importance of the criteria according to which national governments allocate resources via grants — as well as any flexibility that LRGs have to use these funds. Several countries have traditionally adopted pre-set allocation formulas: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The other governments in the region, however, define these criteria via centrally led national negotiations in which LRGs are generally not included.⁵⁵ In **Iran**, on the other hand, where transfers are allocated on a yearly basis, 60% of development transfers are earmarked for specific projects, and only 40% are left discretionary for the recipient.⁵⁶ In **Iraq**, central transfers are still essential for the sustainability of local government. They are allocated, however, in a highly unbalanced way: the four governorates included in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) — due to the particular status of this union as the country's only autonomous region — receive about 17% of the national budget via grants; the remaining fifteen governorates combined only receive about 5%.

Clearer allocation criteria and formulas are not necessarily conducive to more effective local finance. In most cases, metropolitan areas have been benefitting more than intermediary cities or smaller towns from intergovernmental transfers. More specifically, because of the

There are many obstacles in the way of local and regional governments' finance systems across the region.

extreme conditions imposed by the Syrian conflict on the whole region, transfer schemes and criteria have failed to take into consideration the sudden and dramatic change brought about by the refugee crisis. In **Turkey**, for example, a large city such as Gaziantep — on the Turkish-Syrian border, hosting over 400,000 refugees with a local population of about 1.5 million — receives transfer allocations about 14 times lower than Kocaeli, on the Marmara Sea, with a similar population but a much lower impact of refugee fluxes.⁵⁷ At a much lower scale, but with similar dynamics, transfer schemes also penalize affected territories and communities — one way or the other — by growing commuter flows among cities. Lebanese municipalities have met with the same set of challenges, as they have come to host over 1.4 million Syrian refugees.⁵⁸ The country's Independent Municipal Fund, a governmental agency in charge of fund allocation, has often been criticized for unpredictable transfers and inadequate criteria, hindering territorial equality.

Consequently, municipalities across the MEWA region have tried to find alternative sources of financial support. The simplest option for most local governments is borrowing from domestic banks or special purpose funds. Jordanian cities, for example, have made up 14% of their budgets through loans from the Cities and Villages Development Bank (CVDB). Longer-term

financing is more difficult to obtain in non-oil producing countries in the region. Loans from international institutions require sovereign guarantees and carry foreign-exchange risks. Moreover, borrowing from multilateral banks or international financial markets is often hindered by the lack of quality data and transparency in the financial system, which increases credit risks to an unsustainable level. In most MEWA countries, the existing legislation does not allow for the issuance of municipal bonds and attempts to instate this have been sporadic. In **Turkey**, the city of Antalya did plan a municipal bond initiative, but this was frustrated by the bureaucratic requirements of the process. On the other hand, Iran's experience has been relatively positive, in this regard: both Tehran and Tabriz have implemented municipal bond initiatives successfully.⁵⁹

Lack of financial autonomy, transparency and alternative options have curbed the capacity of MEWA LRGs to fund themselves, their activities and — inevitably — also their mobilization for the SDGs. In fact, the extensive reliance on short-term funds, has led to a general financial weakness, and many national governments in the region have used this to leverage more municipal amalgamation. In Jordan alone, over 300 municipalities were joined into 93 municipalities.⁶⁰ In 2014, Turkey amalgamated 2,950 municipalities into 1,398. 🕒



Women walking with kids, Syria (photo: Charles Roffey, bit.ly/2MsZR6v).

2.3. Multilevel governance mechanisms and trends for stakeholder involvement

The historical legacy of centralized administration has remained solidly embedded in the political system of the MEWA countries. It still influences city management and the mechanisms of urban and territorial governance. Across the region, the predominance of centralizing models and initiatives has paved the way to territorial coordination via hierarchical processes rather than co-ownership, negotiation or inclusive consultation.

Inevitably, this has also affected the role and effectiveness of national LGAs, making representation of local governments in national decision-making even weaker. An important exception is **Turkey**, where the UMT, established in 1945, has a consultative role in the drafting of legislation and holds one seat in the Presidential Local Government Commission. In Lebanon, a Committee of Mayors, gathering the representatives of the country's major cities, has been active since 1995.

Although many countries in the region have established a separate ministry addressing local government matters, concrete impact and change have been negligible. In **Iran**, the Office of Councils and Social Affairs within the Ministry of Interior oversees all municipal councils. Although mayors are elected by the councils, they are still vastly dependent on the Department of Municipal Affairs within the ministry. Line ministries are in charge of local services and policies in their respective fields, a mechanism that has frequently led to a lack of coordination among decision-makers formalized, to a certain extent, within often contradictory regulations. This trend has impeded the establishment of a consistent local government model or system across the region.

In **Iraq**, for example, governorate councils have extensive power over lower local councils in the implementation of local projects: at the administrative level, more generally, mayors need the approval of governors for any activities within

Phosphate train on its way to Aqaba, Jordan (photo: rikdom, bit.ly/2B1ASlj).



the municipal jurisdiction. In **Jordan**, the Ministry of Interior is the main authority in charge of local governments' functioning and activity, even though municipalities are formally under the control of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. After the adoption of the country's Decentralization Law (2015), the central government created in 2016 eight different ministerial committees and one central committee to assist local policy implementation. The role of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs — in the framework of the decentralization process — is expected to be reduced, focusing more on consultation and capacity-building, rather than strict policy supervision.⁶¹ In **Lebanon**, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities is in charge of local administration and exerts administrative supervision over municipal councils — including financial control — through Governors (*Muhafizes*).

They can suspend municipal decisions for three months. The Ministry is also responsible for planning, budgeting and expenditure of municipal revenue. The Palestinian Ministry of Local Government is in charge of the oversight of local authorities. The central government has been attempting to pool municipal services via intercommunal entities — the Joint Services Councils (JSCs) — to overcome the practical difficulties many local administrations meet in the delivery of basic services. In **Turkey**, a new General Directorate of Local Government was established in 2017 under the Ministry of Urbanization and Environment.

Finally, in the MEWA region most legal frameworks for citizen mobilization have been historically weak, and participatory channels have been either inadequate or non-existent. While mayors can play a pivotal role in creating a culture of participation in their cities, their actions seldom go beyond formal policy practices. Participation, however, varies across the region. In **Afghanistan**, the sub-national governance framework adopted since 2010 acknowledges the citizen's right to participate in decision-making, but in practice most decisions are still based on informal political ties. In **Iran**, the level of public participation in municipal decisions is very low, and official mobilization channels are limited to the election of local councillors. In **Lebanon**, public participation in urban planning and development remains marginal, but has been improving: in 2016, a platform set up by NGOs under the slogan of 'Beirut My City' won 37% of the votes in the capital. The winner-take-all electoral system left the movement with no representation in the city council, but it won international acclaim.⁶² In **Jordan**, the central government is currently working on a new framework to enable citizens to define and share their preferred projects. In **Turkey**, municipal elections are still the main institutional channel of participation: citizens vote for their mayor and for candidate lists linked to

Lack of coordination among decision-makers has impeded the establishment of a consistent local government model or system across the MEWA region.

political parties, however in most cases without any information available about the councillors they are supporting.

A specific challenge of the MEWA region, but also an area in which (modest) progress has been achieved, is women's participation in sub-national politics. **Saudi Arabia** granted female citizens the right to participate in local politics in 2015: since then, 21 women candidates have won seats in Saudi municipal councils.⁶³ In 2018, **Bahrain's** monarchy appointed two Bahraini women as director-generals of the Capital and Northern Municipalities. In **Iran**, a campaign to increase the number of woman-held seats in local legislatures led to the election of 415 women to city councils across the province of Sistan-Balochistan in the 2017 elections, up from 185 in the previous election. In Iraq's second election for governorate councils in 2013, 117 women were elected for a total of 440 seats, seven more than in the 2009 elections.⁶⁴

Ultimately, because of its history and traditional institutional setting, the MEWA region as a whole presents significant challenges for the implementation and achievement of the SDGs, and in particular for the active participation of LRGs in the process. The region is characterized by widening disparities in development levels and enduring armed conflict, making it even harder for poorer and war-torn countries, such as Yemen or Afghanistan, to conceptualize — let alone implement and achieve — the SDG targets locally. Despite its heterogeneity, the MEWA region still has a common trend that emerges across all countries in that historically it rewards strong political centralization: this is limiting authority, autonomy and capacity (including but not limited to financial resources) of LRGs in all MEWA countries. Accordingly, their ability to advance in policy-making and either adapt to or introduce the SDGs in their activities is severely limited. This notwithstanding, it is important to emphasize that many LRGs in the MEWA region have sought ways to introduce and localize the SDGs in their territories and communities — often in opposition to the constraints imposed by their national systems. The second part of this chapter explores and analyses these efforts in more detail. ○

3. The contribution of local and regional governments to the localization of the SDGs

3.1 Promoting local ownership to localize the SDGs

There is plenty of evidence of the importance of local governments and their national associations in the successful localization of the SDGs from around the world. While the SDGs as a framework are inherently intergovernmental and their realization tied to national policies, budget and political will, the achievement of most Goals still depends extensively on the cooperation, commitment and participation of local and regional authorities. SDG 11 on 'inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' cities and human settlements, for example, acknowledges the transformative power of sustainable urbanization and the impact that local governments can have on driving (global) change from the bottom up.

The implementation of a complex and comprehensive Goal such as SDG 11 requires not only improvements in the delivery of basic services (health, education, water and food security, energy, among others), but also access to inclusive economic opportunities and the protection of women, youth, minorities and other vulnerable groups. While the resources for this would in most countries be allocated by national governments, the design and successful implementation of specific programmes are a local responsibility and require true cross-level co-ownership, participation and mobilization of local communities, actors and stakeholders.

Not surprisingly, considering the region's traditionally centralized political and administrative structures, local governments have only rarely — and only in a few countries of the region — actively participated in the process of implementing the SDGs, as well as in the preparation of the VNRs. This can partly be explained by the still limited development and presence of LGAs and networks across the region: the job of intermediating across governance tiers and representing the shared interests of local authorities performed by associations and networks can be a valuable enabler for local governments to gain visibility and centrality in SDG-related decision-making. **Turkey, Lebanon and Palestine** are essentially the only MEWA countries with a developed, established network of local government associations and organizations. Turkish local governments have come together in the UMT, which has to date been

included in the community of partners invited to all the national events related to either the SDGs or the Turkish government's VNR for the United Nations. Since 2017, the UMT has taken on the task of circulating information and knowledge about the SDG framework to all Turkey's mayors and municipalities.

The Mersin Metropolitan Municipality and the municipalities of Nilufer (Zmir province), Nevşehir and Bakırköy (a municipality in the larger conglomeration of Istanbul) have organized several SDG-related workshops. Seferishar, in the Zmir province, created a webpage for reporting practices and examples of local implementation. The municipalities (and Istanbul districts) of Bakırköy, Esenler and Maltepe have already developed their own local reports on the SDGs. The Regional Municipal Union of Marmara has organized workshops and seminars on the SDGs for its member municipalities. Several NGOs have also been active in monitoring and promoting municipal activities in support of SDG implementation: the *Yereliz* ('We are local') Association created an online reporting system that maps local government efforts in support of SDG targets and their achievement. The Maya Sustainable Development Agency has organized local workshops and conferences to raise awareness among local stakeholders and communities.

The national government — via the Presidential Directorate in charge of the realization of Turkey's VNR for the 2019 HLPF — has shown an increasing willingness to engage the local level. The UMT was selected as the coordinating institution for local administrations contributing to the reporting process and bringing to the table the experiences of LRGs in the country. The UMT directly engaged with 50 municipalities in the process, while reaching out to over 1,400 municipalities for them to

The implementation of the SDGs requires improvements in the delivery of basic services and the protection of vulnerable groups.

contribute to the document's recommendations.⁶⁵ The UMT attended the 2019 HLPF in New York along with the national government delegation.

In Lebanon and Palestine, national municipal associations have developed to a certain degree. In **Lebanon**, the *Bureau Technique des Villes Libanaises* (BTVL, Technical Office of Lebanese Cities), also known as *Cités Unies Liban* (United Cities Lebanon), has a membership of 66 municipalities and 22 federations of municipalities, comprising 80% of the country's population. The country's largest municipalities collaborate under the aegis of BTVL. However, when the national government prepared its VNR for the 2018 HLPF, the municipalities of the BTVL were informed, but not invited to contribute to the process.⁶⁶ When the **State of Palestine** presented its 2018 VNR, the national LGA was neither informed nor involved in the process. The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), however, has been particularly active in the territory. It has established the Palestinian City Managers Network (PCMN), which involves higher-level administrators responsible for running the day-to-day operations of Palestinian municipalities,⁶⁷ and has historically been proactive in global networks of local authorities and in the effort of granting their members increasing visibility on the international stage.


In **Iraq**, UN-Habitat has monitored and supported the process of establishing a national LGA to improve information and experience exchange among municipalities, channelling their concerns and priorities to reach regional and central governments. Although the Iraqi national LGA has been active in conferences and specific projects, it is still in its infancy institutionally and politically. Using a similar process, the World Bank has assisted in the creation of the Independent Directorate of Local Authorities in **Afghanistan**.

Besides these efforts, several municipalities in the region have also actively sought to participate in international initiatives, particularly on issues of climate change, sustainability and resilience. Many cities in the MEWA region are part of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.⁶⁸ UCLG has maintained an active presence in the region through the Istanbul-based regional headquarters of UCLG MEWA: in the past year, it has developed several dissemination initiatives in the region about the SDGs, aimed at training local governments and their officials on the process of localization through workshops and conferences. In 2018 and 2019, UCLG MEWA completed a pilot project to map SDG implementation: this was initially launched in **Turkey** — with the financial sponsorship and partnership of the World Academy for Local Government and Democracy (WALD). UCLG MEWA planned to use the project to integrate SDG-related municipal activities as widely as possible into the VNRs of

the countries in the region. UCLG MEWA plans to disseminate the results and outcomes of the project throughout the region to incentivize mutual learning and collaboration.

In **Jordan**, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported a dedicated "roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs with a 2030 time-horizon" to reinforce SDG-related initiatives in planning at the national and sub-national levels: this includes awareness-raising, mapping, mainstreaming and financing development initiatives. Jordan's VNR — submitted in 2017 — stressed the participation of both elected municipal councils and appointed governorate councils to the reviewing process. Development-related priorities for the country's 12 governorates, however, are still centralized through the Governorate Development Programmes: while these are 'expected' to be fully aligned with the SDGs, there is no significant evidence of actual implementation or integration of the Goals in the initiatives undertaken at the local level.

UN-Habitat has also been very active in Afghanistan, sponsoring several programmes in partnership with the national government and sub-national authorities. Even if designed outside the SDG framework, many of the 30 projects active on the ground since 2008 have a strong impact on the achievement of core SDG targets and development indicators in Afghan territories and communities. UNDP, as mentioned above, has also been a key player for SDG localization in the region. In **Bahrain**, UNDP — in partnership with other UN agencies such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) — has aimed to engage young Bahrainis in the Capital Governorate to issue 'Volunteering Passports' in the SDG framework to increase awareness at the local level.⁶⁹ In **Saudi Arabia**, a national-level UNDP-led project included a pillar dedicated to localization. Through UNDP support, moreover, the Riyadh Urban Observatory has engaged in discussion with local actors to promote the integration of the SDGs and their related indicators in the Observatory's toolkit for monitoring and reporting on implementation in the city of Riyadh.

In **Palestine**, UNDP has organized awareness-raising workshops with the participation of sectoral, national and local-level representatives. In **Syria**, the agency has also been assisting governorates in the preparation of their voluntary reviews. In Iraq, with the support of the national government, UNDP has set up a project to integrate the SDGs at the governorate level. Governorate Sustainable Development Committees (GSDCs) have been established to support implementation of NDPs (which are already aligned with the SDGs) and monitor implementation progress at the provincial level.⁷⁰ 

3.2 Local initiatives in line with the 2030 Agenda

Despite MEWA LRGs' historical reliance on the support of national governments, evidence of innovative or 'game-changing' progress in the region's countries is scarce: limited information on new programmes — catalysed by the SDGs or any other global agenda — is available about new lines of funding or support to local initiatives. There are, however, significant examples in Turkey, where several projects — mostly related to SDGs 3, 6, 10 and 11 — were clearly beneficial to SDG localization and increased policy consistency between central and local levels.⁷¹

In other countries, certain governmental priorities have been consistent with some of the main objectives of the SDGs, and some of the policies that national governments and other tiers of governance have been able to develop are to an extent aligned with these agendas. Informal settlements, access to essential services and urban management challenges — all core elements of the commitments behind the SDGs — have been more and more central for national and local policy arenas across the MEWA region.

Urban development

The SDG closest to the reality and actual commitments and expectations of cities and local governments is SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities. Most of the advances, initiatives and strategic alignment of local governments within the framework of the SDGs have an impact on the implementation of SDG 11, even when there is no explicit reference to the Goals.

Over the past few years, several countries in the region have put in place urban development strategies as a tool to approach their main urban and territorial challenges, although the contents and objectives have been diverse. **Turkey**, for example, is implementing an Integrated Urban Development Strategy and Action Plan, with different sub-programmes designed to manage urban growth and sprawl; prevent disaster risk; promote urban regeneration and reduce regional disparities; develop integrated transit

and transport in major cities; and curb sub-standard housing supply. **Saudi Arabia**, facing increasing urbanization rates, launched a National Spatial Strategy 2030 and a Future Saudi Cities Programme (in partnership with UN Habitat) to tackle urban sprawl reduction; promotion of spatially balanced planning and development; improvement of public transportation in and between major cities; national investment promotion towards less-developed regions, and empowering middle and small-sized cities

Over 400 Turkish, Syrian, Afghani and Iraqi women from the SADA Women Empowerment and Solidarity Center in Gaziantep celebrate International's Women's Day along Turkey's border with Syria, March 8th, 2019 (photo: UN Women Europe and Central Asia, bit.ly/2AVOrTz).



and settlements as regional growth hubs.⁷² A major challenge will be the devolution of greater responsibilities to local governments. While local governments currently prepare local master plans and monitor their implementation, their autonomy is limited as higher-level officials have the power to overrule local decisions and central government transfers still account for 70% of local expenditures due to their low efficiency in revenue collection and the traditional provision of many public services free of charge.⁷³

In **Afghanistan**, one of the less urbanized countries of the region, the Ministry of Urban Development Affairs, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, and the Municipality of Kabul, in partnership with UN-Habitat, launched in 2014 (before the SDGs were established) the nationwide Future of Afghan Cities Programme (FoAC). After a successful database and reporting phase, which led to the publication of the State of Afghan Cities report in 2015, the programme moved to a second stage. In 2016, the partnership produced an atlas and a dataset of Afghan cities and regions.⁷⁴ Similarly, the Afghan Citizens' Charter project — in partnership with the World Bank and several local authorities — promotes the improvement of service and infrastructure delivery through the engagement of local communities by means of Community Development Councils. **Qatar's** Ministry of Municipality and Environment, meanwhile, has developed a Sustainable Strategy 2018-2022 and plans to provide the country's cities with support for food security, environmental protection, waste management and recycling.

Another dimension of specific provisions of the SDG 11.4 — cultural legacy and preservation — has been a controversial issue in planning and spatial policies in many countries of the MEWA region. Either in war-torn areas or because of structural indifference by political authorities, many Middle Eastern municipalities have witnessed destruction and abandonment of historical heritage and millennia-old settlements. Mosul, in **Iraq**, has already accessed financial assistance from the central government to rebuild the old city. The Turkish municipality of Altindag (a district of Ankara's metro area) has renovated the once abandoned historical centre of Ankara, refurbishing it into a cultural hub for the city.

Informal settlements and social inclusion

Following trends of growing inequality and the displacement of refugees escaping conflict in several areas of the MEWA region, many urban areas have experienced massive population influx, urban growth and major imbalances contributing to fast growth of informal settlements. **Lebanon's** dynamics of urban growth, exacerbated by an extremely high number of refugees, have led to the sprawl of larger cities. In 2015, 1.8 million people — 53.1% of the urban population — were living in informal settlements and urban slums.⁷⁵ In response to the inflow of Syrian refugees that started in 2011, Lebanon's municipalities expanded services, schools opened their doors to refugee children, resulting in a doubling in enrolments and the ability of local governments to operate and maintain the educational system.⁷⁶ Iran's informal settlements today host about one third of the country's urban population.⁷⁷ The municipalities of Tehran and Isfahan have established specialized agencies that have been working with the Urban Development and Revitalization Organization (UDRO) on informal settlements and neighbourhood upgrading and renovation.⁷⁸ Afghanistan's Community-Led Urban Infrastructure Programme seeks to secure and stabilize urban areas through community empowerment and the improvement of living conditions. In Iraq, the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), in partnership with UNDP, the national government, and the governorates, has focused on rebuilding and renovating urban infrastructure.⁷⁹

Basic services

Inevitably, due to the climatic and geographic conditions of the region, issues of **sustainable water consumption and provision** and management of wastewaters have been crucial for national and local governments across the MEWA region, and especially in the desert areas in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf. Desalinated water currently provides for over two-thirds of potable water used in **Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar** and the **UAE**, and 61% in **Saudi Arabia**. Water recycling, sanitation and waste management technologies have become essential alternative sources of water to meet a skyrocketing demand in the region's urban areas.⁸⁰ Almost all urban settlements in almost all countries of the region have some degree of water recycling and wastewater treatment system in place. In **Turkey**, for example, the number of domestic wastewater treatment facility passed from 126 in 2002 to 881 municipalities in 2018 and the rate of municipal population using the services increased from 35% to 75%. Within the same period, the percentage of population using safety managed drinking water passed from 95% to 99%. Following the

Many MEWA urban areas have experienced massive population influx, urban growth and major imbalances contributing to fast growth of informal settlements.

new legislation, municipalities shall reduce the rate of water loss, averaging 25% in 2023.⁸¹

Waste management has also traditionally posed a challenge to local governance in the region. The **Greater Beirut** area's main landfill site was closed in 2015: since then the municipality has struggled to remedy this situation because of both inadequate financial resources and a centralized approach that has historically limited the ability of local government and stakeholders to address these issues.⁸² Gulf countries, thanks to a substantially different national economy, have been able to establish highly efficient landfill systems. Larger cities such as **Doha**, in **Qatar**, have even been able to invest in food and organic waste treatment for the production of compost and chemical products. In **Oman**, quite uniquely for the region, solid waste landfills are managed jointly by the general government and certain municipalities, including **Muscat**, the capital city, and **Salalah**. In **Turkey**, in the framework of the National Waste Management Plan, the number of municipal landfills increased to 88 providing services to 62.3 million inhabitants in 1,160 municipalities and three incineration plants. As of April 2019, in 499 municipalities packaging waste is collected separately at the source. A Zero Waste Project was initiated to foster and recover recycling (in the framework of a National Recycling Strategy). Municipalities with financing difficulties are supported by the Solid Waste Programme.⁸³ The metropolitan municipality of **Istanbul** has established a network of container recycling across the city, the credits of which can be spent on public transport fees. **Beirut** has partnered with a domestic private waste management company to launch the first phase of a local waste recycling project. Again, exposing perhaps a regional susceptibility to the appeal of mega-planning, the city of Dubai has inaugurated its 'Glow Garden', a structure made out of 500,000 recyclable glass vials, porcelain ware, plastic bottles, dishes, and thousands of compact discs recovered from municipal waste — a reminder of the massive accumulation of waste in densely urbanized settlements.

Many other essential elements of the SDGs, e.g. **transport and energy**, are being increasingly integrated in the region's municipal agendas. The debate on alternative and sustainable sources of energy and the improvement of public transportation — especially when considering the massive untapped potential for solar energy production in the whole area — is challenged by the easy access to fossil fuel energy in the region. However, several examples show growing progress in this regard. The city of **Istanbul** is developing efficient management of energy in municipal buildings, in facilities and parks. Several Turkish cities have developed public

rail system projects (subway, light rail systems, trams) or created bicycle lanes (e.g. Istanbul, Izmir, Kocaeli, Kayseri and Konya). Istanbul has been able to expand its public transport network, growing the underground network and infrastructures, while imposing some restrictions on private motorized transport. In **Izmir**, a solar power station was established on 10,000 m² of roofs by the local transport authority ESHOT General Directorate. This station aims to meet the energy needs of 20 ESHOT buses fully powered by electricity.⁸⁴ **Malatya**, also in Turkey, already uses electric bus vehicles with routes that allow for battery recharging. **Qazvin**, in Iran, signed a deal in 2018 with a Chinese company to build the country's first tram network. **Riyadh**, the capital of Saudi Arabia, has allocated an investment of USD 16 billion to fund an underground system extending 178 km according to the plans. At the same time, **Qatar** and some of the **UAE** (including Abu Dhabi, the largest state of the country) have been developing green building ratings and certifications, in order to integrate the latest environmental construction standard in their national regulation.⁸⁵

Box 1

Resilience plan actions in Byblos, Ramallah and Amman

Consistent with the participatory approach of the 100RC initiatives, the experiences and activities that the cities of Amman (Jordan), Byblos (Lebanon) and Ramallah (Palestine) have put into practice have helped identify major resilience challenges, as shaped by local conditions and structures. They have also assisted the development of plans that truly reflect local priorities and concerns. Byblos' resilience plan was developed through dialogue with key stakeholders — the Municipal Council, government ministries, the police, NGOs, academic institutions, and civic groups. The plan prioritizes municipal data collection and use as a prerequisite for improved planning and city management. In Ramallah, the preparation of the resilience plan involved working groups from the Municipal Council, universities and the private sector, as well as conversations with local political and community leaders. A similar process was followed in Amman for the preparation of its resilience plan. Transport was a critical component for the Jordanian capital, and required the development of an integrated mobility plan: this includes a three-corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network to open in 2019, and the enhancement of walkability, especially through the creation of a railway corridor park. All these measures add to initiatives against climate change, and the improvement of digital connectedness, urban infrastructure and participatory mechanisms.

Source: 100 Resilient Cities network (<https://www.100resilientcities.org>).

Resilient cities and territories

Local governments in the MEWA region have been developing innovative approaches to improve resilience and sustainability in their territories and communities. Amman in Jordan, Byblos in **Lebanon** and Ramallah in **Palestine**, for example, have all joined the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) network: the membership helped the municipalities assess the status of their resilience outlook and develop state-of-the-art strategic planning to adequately meet resilience criteria.

In **Turkey**, 141 Urban Regeneration and Development Projects Areas and ten Renovation Areas in cities are being developed with the support of the government (USD 2.83 billion spent since 2012). Many cities, such as the Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality are implementing a Disaster Management and Decision Support System Project (AYDES) with the national Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD). The project implements an electronic tracking and management system for all stages of integrated disaster management.⁸⁶

With the Aqaba Declaration,⁸⁷ approved at the first Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction,⁸⁸ in 2013, under the aegis of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

and UNDP, Arab countries and members of the League of Arab Countries acknowledged the risks and vulnerabilities of Arab cities in the face of climate change, earthquakes, desertification, and flooding. The signatories committed to dedicate part of their budget to risk prevention and preparedness, awareness-raising and education on resilience and climate change, with particular attention given to vulnerable cultural heritage and protected sites, among several other measures.

Environment and climate change

Climate change, which is central to the policy commitments and innovation framework of the SDGs, is also a key issue for local governments and a fundamental challenge tackled by local initiatives and activities. Besides SDG 13 on climate change, environmental, resilience and sustainability issues are at the core of SDG 7 on clean energy, SDG 11 on cities and human settlements, SDG 12 on sustainable production and consumption, SDG 14 on life below water and SDG 15 on life on earth. Throughout the MEWA region, many municipalities have developed initiatives and policies that refer to a number of these Goals' targets: 30 cities have made commitments within the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy in 2019.⁸⁹

In **Jordan**, the Greater Amman Municipality has committed since 2015 to a plan to become a green city by 2020. In **Turkey**, several frontrunning cities and municipalities have been implementing climate action plans for years, and have also been joining various international networks active in this field.⁹⁰ Following a regulation passed in 2017, municipalities are expected to increase green areas in their spatial planning and improve accessibility to green areas. Taking initiative on air pollution, the number of air quality monitoring stations increased from 36 in 2007 to 253 in 2017. Several regional authorities, moreover, have developed air quality improvement plans.⁹¹ The municipality of **Tehran** organizes an annual Organic Week Festival to promote sustainable land-use patterns. The Corniche Area park, in the **municipality of Abu Dhabi**, in an internationally awarded structure which embodies the country's quest to join the highest global standards in planning and management of public and green spaces. **Qatari** cities are promoting the development of desert campsites as a way to fund natural resource protection and alleviate touristic pressure on coastal localities. Similarly, the central government is funding sustainable greenhouse farming in cities. These kind of interventions — as is the case with similar mega-planning or top-down solutions — are fairly endemic in the Gulf region, where local government can count on significant financial support from the national level.

Men chat in shrine near Kashan, Iran (photo: Charles Roffey, t.ly/80zbB).



In **Iran**, on the other hand, the Ministry for Health and the Tehran Municipality have joined forces with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This has been to improve air pollution analysis equipment throughout the city, historically affected by extremely high levels of pollution.

Many cities in the region, maintain policy competences over coastline protection and regulation, with a strong impact on marine environment and sea life preservation. The city of **Istanbul**, for example, has managed waste collection in the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn: in the first three-quarters of 2018 alone, the city recovered 140 trucks of waste. The municipality of **Shahama**, embedded in the Abu Dhabi metro area in the **UAE**, has allocated parts of its budget to ecosystem protection for the marine environment specific to the Abu Dhabi region.

International cooperation

The role of international donors and cooperation agencies has been significant as well. The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the cooperation branch of the Swedish Association of Local Governments (SLK International) partnered in **Iraq** with the Al Qaddissiyah and Dohuk governorates to establish the 'Governance in Social Care' project (2012-2017). This project supported improvements in social care at the sub-national level.⁹² In **Lebanon**, assistance by European LGAs and international institutions has been crucial to sustain healthcare, education and relief provision to the refugee population and other vulnerable groups not directly covered by UN relief efforts.

In **Jordan**, the governorate of Al-Mafraq partnered with the City of Amsterdam and VNG International (VNGi, the cooperation branch of the Dutch national LGA) to develop a Municipal Assistance Programme for the Al Za'atari Refugee Camp. VNGi also worked in Jordan, with funding from USAID, with the Cities Implementing Transparent Innovative and Effective Solutions (CITIES) programme. The project provides technical assistance to governorates and municipal stakeholders to translate administrative reforms into innovative and sustainable solutions for service delivery, participatory mechanisms, and community cohesion and stability — to improve citizens' awareness, responsiveness and resilience. Donor assistance has been essential particularly in the case of **Palestine**, where municipalities have extremely scarce resources and political leeway and are often unable to address local policy issues autonomously. Palestinian cities have depended on external aid for public service and infrastructure provision and local economic development (see Box 2 for an example, specifically cooperation with the Dutch government). Additionally, in 2005

Box 2

Local Government Capacity Programme (LGCP), Palestinian Territory

Building on the successful history of collaboration between Palestinian local authorities and VNGi, the Local Government Capacity Programme (LGCP), in place from 2012-2016, focused on local economic development in the Palestinian territory. The collaboration led to positive outcomes in sustainable development, lower unemployment and increased food security, thus helping improve the legitimacy of local governments in their communities. The Dutch government, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, backed an approach that promoted local self-sufficiency: the LGCP initially supported the activities of 12 local governments in the West Bank, providing both funds and the capacity to stimulate local economic development. The project was carried out under the umbrella of the MDLF, through which the most important donors to the area work together with the Palestinian Authority. Selected local governments could submit applications for financial and technical support for projects, workshops, on-the-job coaching and training. The municipality of Bethlehem was the first to establish a Council for Local Economic Development, together with the private sector and civil society, an output of the project's participatory spirit, which put particular emphasis on the establishment of strategic business alliances.

Source: <https://www.vng-international.nl/palestinian-territory-local-government-capacity-programme-lgcp-2012-2016>.

Palestine established an MDLF,⁹³ an independent public institution, which assists local governments in economic development promotion. While many of the stakeholders involved have been responsive and aware of the SDG framework, actual localization in the State of Palestine has hardly progressed, mostly due to periodic violence and conflict in the area (and the Gaza Strip especially), and the continued Israeli occupation in the West Bank.

In assessing the reach and impact of the SDG framework and the other global agendas in the MEWA region, this section shows activities and initiatives that are contributing to the localization process. However, because of structural circumstances of the region, most progress and initiatives have been the prerogative of national governments, occasionally with the involvement or consultation of LRGs and local stakeholders. As a rule of thumb, the motivation, commitment and leadership of LRGs in the localization of the SDGs has a clear correlation with the degree of (planned) decentralization and/or the level of wealth and financial resources available at the national level. ○

4. Conclusions

Despite the immense socio-economic, cultural and historical diversity of the MEWA region, certain trends in the way in which countries approach the SDG framework and the global commitments of the new agendas help elicit some region-wide conclusions. With the exception of Afghanistan and Yemen, the MEWA region is now (and increasingly) highly urbanized, and it is estimated that its cities will have to accommodate over 96 million new residents by 2030. An exceptionally large youth cohort will continue to fuel the intense demand for jobs, housing and services that — with the exception perhaps of Gulf countries, thanks to their reliance on the economy of hydrocarbons — all countries in the MEWA region will struggle to meet.

In recent years, recurring civil strife in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen have exacerbated the challenge of the region's high urbanization rate. War has destroyed urban infrastructure and torn the socio-cultural fabric apart. This damage has rapidly spilled over to neighbouring countries because of successive, overwhelming waves of refugees displaced by region-wide conflict. Against this gloomy backdrop, several MEWA countries have made impressive progress in accomplishing human and economic development advances — thus contributing to the achievement of several SDGs — despite the consequences and impact of conflict. However, socio-economic and gender inequalities remain major challenges for all countries in the region.

Ultimately, in the MEWA region as in the rest of the world, **urban planning and territorial management are shared responsibilities in a complex and evolving mechanism in which central, regional and local authorities should work together to a varying degree of engagement and effectiveness.** In the MEWA countries specifically, however, political and financial resources are still concentrated in

national ministries and presidential offices: the devolution of responsibilities to the provincial, metropolitan or local level has been partial at best, and such woeful progress has had significant consequences.

On the one hand, inconsistent devolution has provided most MEWA cities — with perhaps the exception of Turkish municipalities — with an uncertain, unreliable mandate and strategic outlook to plan and manage urbanization and urban expansion and development. This has affected the ability of local governments to include the mission and scope of the SDGs and the other global agendas in their own policy-making: thus, the dimensions of sustainability, inclusiveness and policy co-creation have inevitably been undermined. On the other hand, the financing issue is still essential for the quality and effectiveness of local government in the region.

Municipalities, provinces and other local authorities across MEWA countries still lack adequate financial resources and mandates to fund a proactive role in a truly multilevel governance (MLG) in the region. This has translated into an endemic inability to fund service provision and infrastructural assets, with the public sector especially compromised. The sole exception in the MEWA region is the Gulf area. However the uniqueness of those countries' highly centralized political systems and the unprecedented resources available to them through the extraction economy make their local governments a case study whose features can hardly be replicated elsewhere. State-fed funds have nurtured an approach to local policy-making that relies on mega-planning urbanism and has concealed — when it has not neglected them altogether — issues of inequality, marginalization and unaccountable or non-democratic rule.

There are several constraints on local governments and public administration to fully contribute to governance and policy-making.

Inadequate property records and the specific organization of tax revenue and collection systems (many MEWA local governments, for example, are still unable to collect user fees reliably), in particular, have been hindering the capacity of local governments to fund themselves and the provision of basic public services. **If MEWA local governments expect to play an active, guiding role in the implementation of the SDGs and the other global agendas — such as the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Paris Climate Agreement — they will need enhanced, reliable, effective local financing sources.** Capturing their fair share of land-value appreciation following public investment and improvement will be essential to funding infrastructure and delivering better and more inclusive services.

Finally, the combination of the region's geography and ecology and the organization of urban, territorial and spatial planning have made environmental challenges and the pressures of climate change particularly threatening for MEWA local governments and cities. With the exception of Turkey and Iran, all other countries in the region are already using water at unsustainable rates — as skyrocketing demand meets stagnating supply, dwindling reserves and an average 20%-40% loss of water due to obsolescence or lack of maintenance of underfunded distribution networks. Similarly, while access to improved sanitation systems has increased in almost all countries, these statistics tend also to include poorer-quality, on-site sanitation systems, with a high social and environmental cost, in most precarious or informal settlements. Full high-capital water-borne systems, in fact, have often not been expanded to cover newly urbanized areas or more informal neighbourhoods, with a strong impact on quality of life and socio-economic equality.

Similarly, waste management and disposal have been lacking in many urban systems across the region, with strong spatial inequalities in service provision and delivery. Recycling, moreover, is not yet socially or economically rooted in the urban culture of the area, and has not provided the same kind of relief on environmental impact as it has in more aware regions or urban systems.

Traffic congestion is historically crippling in the region's larger cities, and generally mobility across MEWA countries is highly dependent on motorized private transport (even mass transportation is usually performed, more or less informally, with private and obsolete vehicles). Reliance on motorized, polluting vehicles has reached unsustainable levels in many countries, with high environmental impact and economic costs that considerably hinder the achievement of all related SDGs and targets. **Any improvement in this regard, however, will inevitably require**

the devolution of more and better spatial control and development authority to the local level, alongside the adoption of consistent and full-fledged National Urban Policies (NUPs), integrated with strategies and plans across all levels. The impact on health, inequality and socio-economic opportunity makes this point particularly important with regard to the actual localization of the SDGs and their co-ownership at local and territorial levels.

Ultimately, balancing the growing pressure of rapid urbanization and the achievement of the SDGs and making them compatible in a complicated and diverse region such as MEWA will require a major investment of political will and commitment. Even in spite of the historical legacy of strongly centralized governance systems and the intense pressure of conflict, war and destruction in many areas of the region, cities and territories have an opportunity to become engines of growth and drivers of change for the whole region.

To be effective, the next steps for MEWA countries **must include increased autonomy and resources devolved to more engaged and efficient local governments; increased capacities to provide, maintain and effectively deliver basic public services and infrastructural development (all the more important in war-torn territories); and a consistent governance mechanism able to empower a growing youth and urbanized population,** allowing them to truly co-own their future and their land, and embrace the opportunities offered by the SDGs. ☉

Even in spite of centralized governance and the intense pressure of conflict and war, MEWA cities and territories have an opportunity to become engines of growth.

07



North America

Regional chapter



The Alaska Railroad at the Turnagain Fjord (photo: Lawrence's lenses, bit.ly/2AZkodB).

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North America

Canada
United States of America
Antigua and Barbuda
Bahamas
Barbados
Dominica
Grenada
Haiti
Jamaica
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Trinidad and Tobago

1. Introduction

Canada and the United States are among the world's most developed countries with 374 million inhabitants and a high-level ranking on the Human Development Index (position 12 and 13 respectively in 2018). This gives both significant advantages in respect of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The vast majority of residents enjoy a wide range of basic services that function relatively well in both countries, including provision of potable water, waste collection, public education, and access to electricity and other types of energies.

Despite their relative wealth, both countries also experience serious socio-economic inequalities. This is especially true of the United States, where urban segregation, poverty, and violence still remain at high levels when compared

with other countries in the OECD.¹ Many more citizens who are not technically impoverished face significant economic hardship. Housing affordability is nearing crisis in the United States, with average housing prices rising 84% between 2000 and 2017, while median household incomes have risen only 2.4%.²

The level of inequality in Canada is less stark than in the United States but Canada has also experienced increasing rates of homelessness and issues around social and affordable housing. Furthermore, it has become more and more concerned about the social crisis affecting, in particular, indigenous peoples (e.g. the First Nations). Areas of particular social concern affecting indigenous communities include housing, access to water, employment, education,

Downtown Detroit, one of the urban areas most affected by the housing and financial crises (photo: Stephanie Tuba, t.ly/dPmD6).



health, social distress, and high suicide rates. These are only some of the challenges that both countries will need to address to fully meet the ambitious targets of the SDGs.

In the United States, the federal administration of President Donald J. Trump has been stepping back from the global environmental commitments enshrined in the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 — perhaps the most notable shift in international environmental relations since this global agenda was first adopted. This controversial decision is matched by domestic policy changes that promote coal power, lower vehicle emission standards, and either repeal or reduce the enforcement of other environmental regulations. Meanwhile, many state and local governments have responded differently, exercising their authority to set policy, raise revenue, and determine spending priorities by declaring their intention to support the Paris Climate Agreement at the sub-national level. Some states have created cap-and-trade systems, such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative that includes ten U.S. states; or the Western Climate Initiative, which includes both U.S. states and Canadian provinces. Twenty-three of the 50 state governors in the United States have joined the U.S. Climate Alliance, and more than 400 cities have joined the Climate Mayors campaign. Both represent commitments to advocate for stronger climate policy and share local strategies to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. As a very significant part of the international consensus on the new global development policy, the commitments on climate change, resilience and sustainability have had a strong impact on multilevel governance, and in turn competence and budget allocations.

In Canada, the situation is slightly different. In 2018, for the first time, Canada adopted national strategies that explicitly seek to meet the SDGs. It also submitted its Voluntary National Review (VNR) on progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).³ Over the past few years, Canada has maintained a clear international stance in terms of its commitments on climate change. Further it has promoted gender equality policies; has maintained, through social and fiscal policies, its commitment to support the ‘middle class’ and reduce socio-economic inequalities

in its communities; and has actively promoted a more peaceful and secure world, notably by adopting an overtly feminist approach to policy-making and empowering women both in its territory and around the world. Far from being a straightforward or easy process however, the federalist nature of the Canadian territorial organization has created disparities and divisions across different tiers of governance in the quest to implement and localize the global agendas.

Ultimately, when it comes to achieving the SDGs, both the United States and Canada have key social and economic assets, but there is still a lot of work to be done. The United States has not yet established a national framework to implement the SDGs nor has either really made an institutionally proactive or formal effort to implement the SDGs or align its national strategies with the Global Goals. Canada, on the other hand, has drafted a first iteration of a strategy that will be formalized in early 2020 (Canada 2030 Agenda).

There are complex institutional, legal and political barriers preventing Canada and the United States from establishing centralized frameworks and overcoming these will be essential to the localization of the SDGs: as expressed by the United Nations, realizing the 2030 Agenda will require the commitment of all stakeholders and a broad ownership of the SDGs by all tiers of governance, in both developing and developed countries. Thus, in North America also, local governments will be expected to serve an important function in the implementation of the SDGs: they will need to become valued stakeholders and be granted the resources and political leeway to contribute to the achievement and fulfilment of all the complex dimensions of sustainable development.

The geography and territorial organization of the United States and Canada means the commitment of cities as well as rural and remote areas will be essential to making localization a reality in the region. While both countries have high urbanization rates (roughly 82%), the number of centres of high population is in fact relatively small, with the rest of the urban population scattered in smaller settlements across a huge territory. Both countries in fact, have a relatively low population density. Under these conditions, the most common urban design and land-use pattern across all of North America has been neither urban nor rural but rather suburban sprawl. This has enormous consequences for the socio-economic, political and productive fabric of the typical North American city and community. Most Americans and Canadians live in relatively dense communities — between 580 and 1,000 people per square kilometre (km), or 1,500 and 2,500 people per square mile — that are nonetheless largely isolated from urban services or infrastructural fabric, and often

Both the United States and Canada have key social and economic assets to achieving the SDGs, but they have yet to establish a formal national framework for the implementation of the Global Goals.

dozens of miles away from the nearest, truly urban 'centre'. With the significant independent authority and autonomy that is necessary to adapt to this geography, in both the United States and Canada, many policy competences such as land use, public education, housing development, water and sanitation and waste management services are almost entirely managed by state, provincial, or local governments. These services have a significant impact when it comes to the achievement — and localization — of the SDGs.

As with all the other world regions, SDG 11 on sustainable urbanization and making cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, and resilient is particularly significant for local governments in North America. Where they are equipped with relevant competences, local governments have championed many of the SDGs and contributed meaningfully to transformative social, economic, and environmental change. In fact, local and regional concerns, input and support have been integrated for all the SDGs (albeit often implicitly) — and not just SDG 11.

Nearly all 17 Goals include targets that directly or indirectly relate to the work of municipal governments in the region. The role of these municipal governments goes beyond mere implementation. Since they are often best-placed to link global agendas with local communities, sub-national ownership is vital to the wider achievement of the SDGs.⁴ As both policy-makers and service providers, local governments in North America are strategically well-placed to guide and catalyse sustainable development through local action.

This chapter on North America will focus primarily on the United States and Canada simply because of their relative size, economic strength, and the range of the localization efforts already underway in each country. It is important to note, however, that Jamaica, an upper middle-income island nation in the Caribbean, is also included in the North American region. Despite the country's limited (financial and political) resources (and visibility), linked to its geography and location, Jamaica passed a series of three local government reform acts in 2016 that established a new governance framework, based on the principles of participatory local governance and local self-management. These regulations also expanded local mandates to foster sustainable development. Jamaica also created its own Roadmap for SDG Implementation in April 2017, and submitted a VNR in June 2018.⁵ This is an outstanding effort when compared with surrounding countries that share a similar socio-economic and political context.

The main part of this chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with the institutional frameworks in which local governments are evolving in the United States



Crowd at the West Indian Day Parade, New York, United States (photo: Alex, bit.ly/2Vt8lcs).

and Canada. This includes the national, regional and local structure of governments, along with the fiscal structure and an overall analysis of 'infra-governmental' relations. The second section focuses more directly on local and regional contributions to the localization of the SDGs. This assesses the role of local government associations (LGAs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in SDG implementation. It then reviews how LRGs are making communities more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; their contribution to carbon reduction; how they foster sustainable and modern energy along with sustainable mobility; and how they provide water and sanitation, social housing and other crucial services for community wellbeing and socio-economic advancement. The chapter concludes with an examination of the means of implementation, and actual opportunities, tools and choices available to local governments to improve localization. 📍

2. National and local institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs

Neither Canada nor the United States have a formal national framework for the implementation of the SDGs. This means there is no clear definition of the role of LRGs in the process of localization, except for those tasks they were already carrying out before the establishment of the SDG framework. Moreover, a national-level conversation regarding the SDGs is lacking, which limits local governments' exposure to and awareness of the SDGs and hindering progress towards the explicit implementation and monitoring of the Goals.

The lack of a more formally coordinated framework for SDG implementation at all levels of government is preventing the integration of the SDGs with regional and local government monitoring systems, with widespread effect. This is particularly relevant when it comes to LRGs assessing their own performance or aligning their policies and initiatives with the SDGs and their (local and national) targets.

Owing to the high level of economic development and a strong tradition of liberal democracy in Canada and the United States, several objectives and regulatory systems at all levels of government share the spirit of the SDGs. This can be seen in nationwide public education; residential and commercial recycling systems; decades-long enforcement of sanitary, drinking water and air quality standards; and workplace safety and minimum wage protections, for example. Furthermore, local governments in North America are generally well-staffed and well-resourced, especially in large urban centres. In terms of actual production, so far as the strategic alignment at the local level is concerned, the total number of local sustainability plans is unknown. However, in a 2015 survey of 1,800 local governments in the United States, 32% responded that they had adopted plans aligned with the spirit and purpose of the SDGs – at the very start of period of the 2030 Agenda.⁶ A 2015 report further identified at least 114 cities in the United States with specific emissions reduction targets.⁷ There are nearly 200 members of the United States-based Urban Sustainability Directors Network, a membership association that seeks to represent sustainability professionals in the largest North American municipalities. In Canada, the FCM has implemented a similar program called the Partners for Climate Protection, to assist Canadian municipalities in taking action on climate change by reducing their emissions in their municipalities.

This program is now being seen as the Canadian chapter of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, in partnership with the International Urban Cooperation.

While progress is clearly visible in some key areas, the legacy of a long-standing federal system of checks, balances, the rule of law, and the separation of powers has prevented bold, centralized action necessitated by the 2030 Agenda and the other global commitments. At the same time, however, the federal organization of these countries has also given sub-national authorities greater capabilities and room for manoeuvre. Localization, in other words, is all the more essential to the realization of the SDGs in a political and institutional context such as North America.

The prospects for localization in the region, however, have to be measured against a complex process of decentralization and devolution imposed by the federal system: on the one hand, sub-national governments (SNGs) (including states or provinces, counties, and cities) are empowered with several fundamental competences and responsibilities; on the other hand, the ability to make policy and, most importantly, govern local income via taxation and spending is *shared* between national, state/provincial and local governments. Addressing this complexity with strategies to improve and streamline processes will be essential for North American local governments to fully contribute to the SDGs.

Addressing the complex process of decentralization and devolution will be essential for North American LRGs to fully contribute to the SDGs.

2.1 National frameworks

Important questions with regard to national frameworks include: What is the 'enabling environment' (be it institutional, political or administrative) in which North American local governments have to act for the localization of the SDGs? What national tools or initiatives can 'trickle down' to the local level and foster implementation in territories and communities?.

At the national level, for example, the United States has yet to volunteer to submit a Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the HLPF. As with all other UN member states, it is bound to do so twice before 2030. Moreover, no federal agency has been put in charge of drafting the VNRs. A related statistical project, Measuring America: U.S. Statistics for Sustainable Development,⁸ is collectively managed by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs; the Department of State's Bureau of International Organizations; the General Services Administration; and the Office of Science and Technology Policy. The site aggregates and links data with dozens of key national datasets and SDG metrics.

An independent report from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's (SDSN) gives the most complete picture of U.S. progress towards the implementation of the SDGs. It concludes that: 'significant progress must be made to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030'.⁹ Although some states perform better than others, 'even the best performers have not achieved any of the Goals, and all states have some Goals [in which major challenges remain]'.¹⁰ The report determines that the United States is making most progress on SDG 6 (water), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), and SDG 15 (life on land). The indicators in which most states have major challenges include

SDG 1 (end poverty), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

The United States' approach to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs is heavily influenced not only by the country's institutional structure but also by the national political discourse. The United States has two historically dominant political parties, with political agendas that will ultimately define (and limit) the political conversation and policy-making. So far as global development policy and international relations are concerned, policy positions on the SDGs span the full political spectrum in the U.S. from overt support to a more reserved stance that questions the role of the federal government in the process while explicitly supporting greater local control. This political dynamic precedes the SDGs, of course, but as a consequence it has resulted in the politicization of the Goals as well as the other global environmental commitments, to an extent that is almost unmatched in other developed nations.

Notwithstanding, the United States federal government has driven improvements in key areas and over the course of several decades. Citizens enjoy a relatively strong protection of civil rights regardless of age, gender, and race. Federal law in the United States has unquestionably advanced SDG-related goals for several decades. The federal Clean Air Act was passed in 1963 and the Clean Water Act dates back to 1972, laws that have clearly advanced SDGs 6, 13, and 14. Both acts are still in force today albeit with amendments to adjust acceptable pollution levels or to redefine which pollutants would be subject to regulation. The Clean Water Act is a particularly comprehensive set of federal regulations applying to drinking water, the management of stormwater, and the protection of major rivers and lakes. However, and with increasing visibility in the public discourse over the last few years, multiple cities in the United States have recorded water treatment, sanitary sewer and stormwater systems that fail to meet federal water standards. Since 2014, the population of Flint, Michigan, has been exposed to twice the level of lead in drinking water than before, with long-term health consequences for both adults and infants.¹¹ This case exposed a controversial mix of lack of transparency,

The United States' approach to the 2030 Agenda is heavily influenced by the country's institutional structure and national political discourse.

management bottlenecks and dangerously obsolete infrastructure. Federal law does provide for a system of legal settlements that stipulate how and when the city intends to upgrade its systems to achieve compliance, but examples such as that in Flint prove that a complex system of multilevel competences and responsibilities can weaken accountability and detract from policy effectiveness.

U.S. federal laws also contain numerous provisions guaranteeing equal protection under law and seeking to eliminate discrimination (SDGs 5, 10, and 11). The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. constitution guaranteed civil rights to all citizens in 1868 following the American Civil War and the abolition of institutional slavery. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act outlawed discrimination based on race, colour, religion, gender, and national origin. Later court cases would establish that these protections also extend to sexual orientation. There are legitimate indicators that the trajectory drawn by the evolution of American legislation on equality is not just compatible, but a catalyst even for the kind of vision and progress heralded by the SDGs and the other global agendas. In spite of this progressiveness, however, the history of how these laws have been applied — particularly with respect to racial and gender equality — is extremely fraught.

Thus, while in most instances, efforts were made to reduce the practice of discrimination, there was no corresponding effort to remedy the long-standing effects of past injustices. The pay gap between men and women is frequently cited as an example. The Institute for Women's Policy and Research has found that women in the United States make 80 cents on the dollar compared with their male counterparts.¹² Interracial wealth gaps are even starker. In 2014, the U.S. Census found that the average wealth of white households was USD 130,800, while the average wealth of Hispanic households was USD 17,530, and that of black households was more than 92% lower, at USD 9,590.¹³ In neighbouring Canada, the power to implement the SDGs at the federal level is organized through the parliament's legislative power, the executive branch, and several regulations and powers already granted to each sectoral department. The coordination of the SDGs at the federal level is done through Employment Social Development Canada. The constitutional distribution of legislative powers, however, often limits the intervention of the federal government in many SDG-related areas. Provinces have exclusive powers in several of them, such as health, education, and local governance. In these fields, the power of the federal government, albeit essential, is often limited to funding. In the multi-party Canadian political system, most parties are broadly aligned with the SDGs, although as is also the case in the United States, the Goals have rarely



An environmental demonstration in Oakland, California, United States (photo: Rainforest Action Network, bit.ly/329AiOE).

been 'foundational' for their political platforms. However, some parties have either implemented or at least adopted political platforms that, in many respects, align with the SDGs. All federal political parties in Canada, moreover, support the Paris Climate Agreement, but the level of commitment and the policies designed to reach its targets may of course vary significantly from one party to another.

Canada has been an overt supporter of the SDG framework since it was established in 2015. For the past four years, the SDGs have been the main framework through which Canadian institutions have worked on international assistance. More recently, however, under the current federal administration, Canada has committed to make the SDGs a development framework of its own. In its latest budget, the national government committed USD 37 million (approximately CAD 50 million) to establish an SDG unit with Employment Social Development Canada and monitor and report on Canada's efforts on implementation.¹⁴ On 17 July 2018, Canada presented its first VNR at the HLPF, highlighting Canada's progress and action plans to achieve the agenda at home and abroad.¹⁵ Furthermore, Statistics Canada launched the Sustainable Development Goals Data Hub in 2018 as a centralized knowledge resource to track SDG implementation. The federal government has made an effort to engage provincial and local governments along with the private sector and civil society in meetings and documents preparation. For the time being, however, commitment from these partners has remained non-compulsory and somewhat marginal. 📍

2.2 Local and regional government institutional frameworks

The United States has one of the most complex sets of regional and local government laws in the world. As a federal presidential republic, it comprises approximately 89,000 local governments, including 3,031 counties, 19,522 municipalities, 16,364 townships, 37,203 special districts, and 12,884 independent school districts (see Table 1). While municipal systems among many states are similar in policy, methods, and practice, there are numerous variations, exceptions and differences in form and function. These differences even exist within states. A complex system of taxes and transfers has been established to provide services at the three levels of government. Income tax rates are moderately progressive, and it is estimated that 44% of people living in the United States — mostly low-wage workers — paid no federal income tax in 2017. After taxes, various national welfare, nutrition and housing assistance programmes continue to help support the poorest in the population to achieve minimum standards of living.

Organized in a similar federal model, Canada also has three levels of government: federal, provincial (the federated state level), and municipal. Municipal governments have no formal constitutional status or rights. They are created by provinces, which retain the constitutional right to legislate the municipal sectors in each of their jurisdictions. Over time, Canadian municipalities

have gained the de facto status of a legitimate self-standing level of government. There are approximately 5,000 municipal governments in the country. Municipal governments include cities, towns, villages, rural (county) and metropolitan municipalities.

Local government laws in Canada are under the jurisdiction of provinces. However, Canada's municipal systems are generally similar in policy, methods and practice across most provinces — apart from certain variations, most of them are more or less derived from a common British model. A province and its municipalities are not equal status: provinces assign certain responsibilities to municipalities and regulate them. The jurisdictional relationship between the federal government and municipalities is limited, and usually handled through federal-provincial/territorial agreements. However, in particular over the last decade, all levels of government have been engaged in mutual dialogue on national topics of common concern, including infrastructure, social and affordable housing, climate and inclusion. Municipal governments in Canada are run democratically by municipal councils led by elected mayors.

As regards the division of responsibility for public services delivery and provision, local governments across North America are by and large comparable. In general, municipalities are usually responsible for waste collection,

Table 1 Number of sub-national levels of governments in the United States and Canada

Indicators	United States	Canada
National	1 federal government	1 federal government
Intermediate	50 states	10 provinces
Local		
Upper tier	3,031 counties	199 counties, regions, districts
Lower tier	16,364 townships 19,522 municipalities 37,203 special districts	5000 municipalities

Source: OECD Data.; U.S. Census Bureau; Statscan.

management and recycling, public transit, fire services, policing, local economic development, libraries, local roads and bridges, parks and recreation, and other local recreational facilities and services, along with other types of local services. As far as basic services are concerned, perhaps the biggest difference between local government responsibilities in Canada and the United States is the level of involvement of local governments in primary and secondary education: in the latter, local governments play a significant role in education, while in Canada this is fundamentally the responsibility of provinces.

Municipalities can outsource some services, but they also rely on a professional public service and employ large numbers of staff to deliver direct services to the population. Furthermore, they can create special purpose bodies to manage specific services, e.g. transit, water, or conservation authorities. These have some degree of independence from municipal jurisdictions, but they rely on municipalities for funding, regulation, and oversight.

One structural challenge facing local governments is the discontinuity in priorities, staff and focus created by local election cycles. Municipal election frequency varies by city, but many cities in the United States have mayoral elections every two years, and city council members may be elected on a rotating basis, with some members of the council up for re-election every year. This problem is not as significant in Canada, where municipal democracy is ruled by fixed election dates based on provincial and territorial legislation.

Local financial structures

The system and mechanism of financial powers to tax and raise revenue are similar in complexity to structure of the LRGs. Cities in the United States and Canada balance a combination of revenues, expenditures for services, and long-term maintenance obligations. In both countries, municipal governments raise and manage their own revenues and receive intergovernmental grants from the state and federal levels of government.

In the United States, total local government spending was estimated to be USD 1.6 trillion in 2016. This compares to USD 1.4 trillion spending by states and USD 3.3 trillion spending by the federal government on non-defence services.¹⁶ Figure 1 demonstrates that the specific sources of revenue for local governments vary greatly between states. Property taxes, which fluctuate significantly according to state, generally make up the majority of city government revenue. For example, in the state of Maine, property taxes constitute approximately 98% of the state's city government revenue, while in Oklahoma the figure is only make up about 12%. Most states

allow municipalities to collect sales tax, but some, such as Connecticut, do not. For states such as Maine and New Hampshire, the proportion of total revenues is less than 1%. Just 17 states allow cities and counties to collect income tax.¹⁷

Besides own revenues, intergovernmental transfers are another essential source of funding at the local level. U.S. municipalities receive a much larger share of their revenues from state governments than they do from the federal government. According to the U.S. Census, in 2015 approximately 38% of the revenues that municipalities received from state governments were dedicated to education, 17% to general local government support, and 13% to public welfare. About 40% of the revenues that municipalities received from the federal government were allocated to housing and community development, and about 13% to public welfare. The result of this financial and regulatory variation is that LRGs are ultimately granted significant political and economic discretion and leeway to align with, remain neutral, or even work *against* the priorities set at other levels of governance. Finally, municipal governments in the United States may issue their own bonds to support major capital projects. The U.S. municipal bond market is fairly unique in that the interest paid to investors on this debt is often tax-free. This, combined with the fact that local government bonds are typically viewed as low-risk, results in very low interest rates for cities to borrow.

Canadian municipal governments raise and manage their own revenues and receive intergovernmental grants. With a few exceptions (Saskatchewan and British Columbia), municipal own-source revenues come mostly from property taxes.¹⁸ Municipalities can control and regulate their own property-tax rate to cover the cost of services not funded by intergovernmental transfers. Municipalities can levy a few other taxes (such as permits and, occasionally, sales taxes or tourist-related fees) and they can also generate cost recovery for public utility services through user fees which represent the second largest own-source revenues. But these revenues remain relatively small compared with property taxes. Municipalities can also borrow money to pay for capital infrastructure expenditures, but this is limited by strong provincial regulations and borrowing restrictions. The other important source of municipal revenues is intergovernmental transfers. Provincial transfers are much more important than federal transfers. Federal transfers to local governments are normally subject to agreements with provinces prior to proceeding with allocations to municipalities. Municipalities moreover can control and regulate their own property tax rate to cover the cost of services not funded by intergovernmental transfers.¹⁹ ◉

Figure 1

Own-source revenue for U.S. municipalities by state ⁽¹⁾

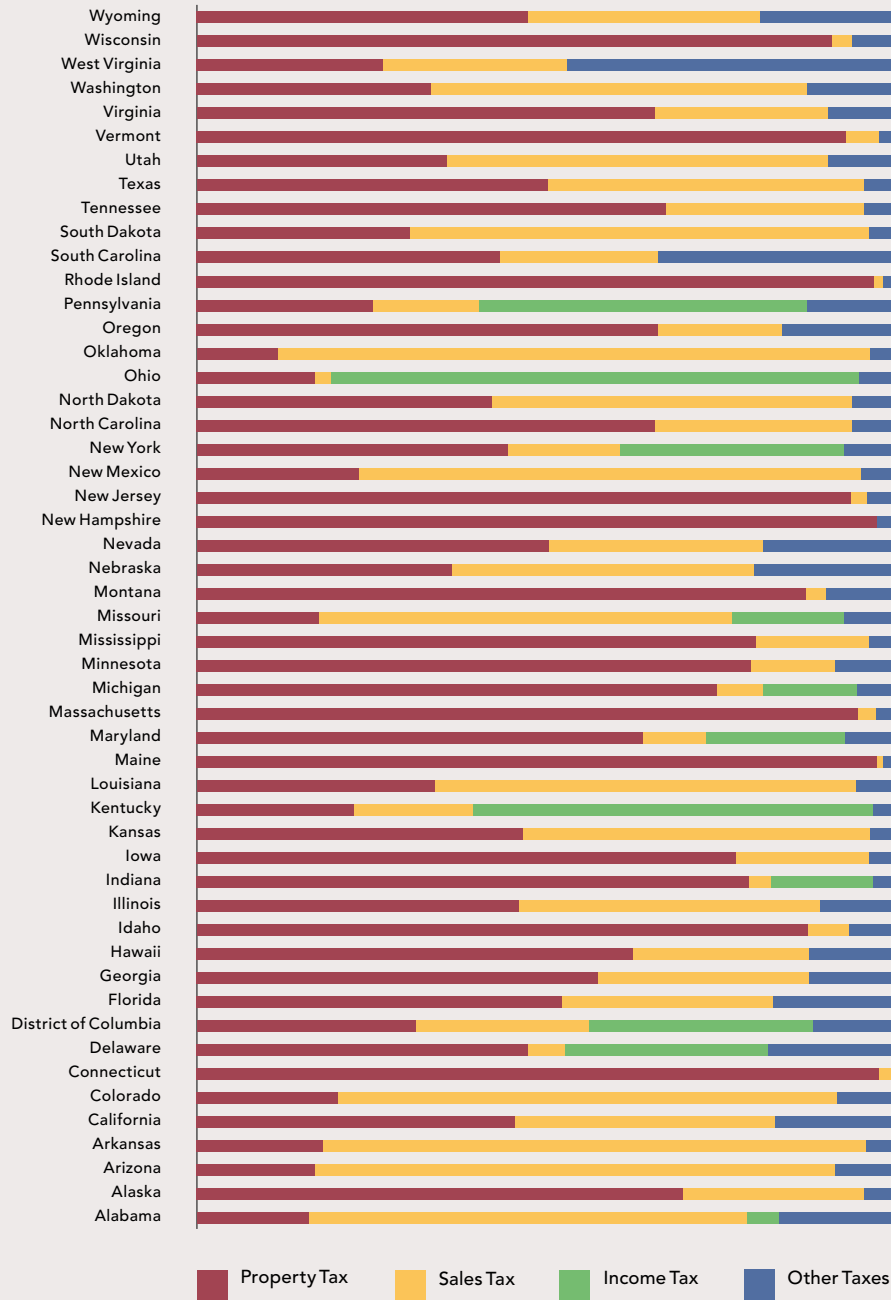
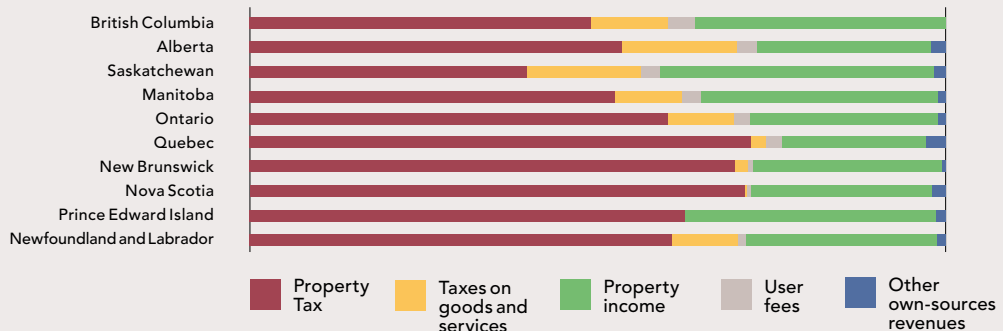


Figure 2

Own-source revenue for Canadian municipalities by province ⁽²⁾



(1) Source: U.S. Census Bureau State and Local Government Finance, 2015.

(2) Source: Statistics Canada. Table 10-10-0020-01 Canadian government finance statistics for municipalities and other local public administrations.


2.3 Intergovernmental relations: How multilevel governance works in North America

The essence of multilevel governance and power-sharing is embedded in the constitutional structure of the United States. The U.S. Constitution — the core of the mechanism of checks and balances that regulates powers and competences in the country — says, according to Amendment 10 (the last of the amendments introduced by the original Bill of Rights in 1791), that any power not explicitly granted by the constitution to the federal government is automatically a prerogative of the federation's states. There is no mention of local government within the constitution, and each state sets its own rules in the definition of the powers of cities, towns, counties, and other municipal governments.

With regard to intergovernmental coordination, a wide array of programmes is established at the federal level, and funding is allocated to state and local governments through proscriptive spending formulas and competitive grant applications. A clear example is the management of the federal highway system. Every year, the U.S. Department of Transportation allocates billions of dollars to all 50 state Departments of Transportation for the construction and maintenance of the highway network within each state's jurisdiction. States are also responsible for raising additional revenue to match this funding, even though the federal formulas are designed to reduce inequalities between urban and rural, larger and smaller, and wealthier and poorer states. Certain standards are federally regulated to guarantee consistency in design, service and interoperability, but ultimately no federal agencies are involved in planning, procurement or management of any of such construction or maintenance projects. Similar formula-based, multilevel funding and grant programmes exist for the provision of affordable housing, public transit, aviation, freight rail, energy and water infrastructure, and other critical infrastructure systems. These are long-standing mechanisms of the federal system and have historically been well-funded. By preserving the effectiveness of universal infrastructural and service provision access — from paved roads, to clean water, access to jobs and global routes,

housing and food security — the United States has, to a certain extent, guaranteed a significant contribution to the achievement of many SDGs and targets.

In Canada too, coordination among local, regional and federal governments for the implementation of the SDGs has not been clearly or institutionally defined. Multilateral or cross-tier initiatives are, in fact, often used for policy coordination purposes. For instance, the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change is managing Canada's plan towards the fulfilment of the Paris Agreement's commitment on climate change, in collaboration with provinces and territories. These kinds of initiatives do not normally involve municipal governments directly. Provinces would work on more sectoral plans with the municipalities to achieve specific economic, social, or environmental goals. Initiatives (overtly) involving the three levels of government are thus relatively rare. The federal government would normally use its residual and spending power (via grants, transfers and contributions) to move its agenda forward. Whenever the municipal level is concerned, however, the federal government has an obligation to engage provinces first for any policy initiative that may support or affect municipalities.

The Federal Infrastructure Programme is a good example of intergovernmental cooperation. It has existed since the mid-1990s and has become a milestone in the history of cross-tier policy relations among federal, provincial and municipal entities. For projects mobilized and funded through this programme, the federal government typically covers one third of the cost, while the provincial and municipal levels cover the remaining funding. Even though provinces are, in principle, responsible for the final selection and adjudication of projects, the federal government plays an influential (albeit indirect) role in setting criteria and guidelines for selection. The programme also includes a gas-tax fund quota, allowing municipalities to receive a (predictable) per capita grant to support infrastructural investments at their governance level. 

3. The contribution of local and regional governments to the localization of the SDGs

This report's premise is that while global in nature, the SDGs are the responsibility of all levels of government: more importantly, the achievement of the Goals is unthinkable unless all levels, and the local level in particular, are involved at all stages, and duly empowered to participate fully in the implementation process.

The above scenario is particularly true in Canada and the United States due to the relative independence and autonomy of states, provinces, counties and municipalities in both countries. Furthermore, the United States and Canada boast a well-developed and well-funded network of NGOs and private philanthropic foundations. Many of these are dedicated to advancing charitable causes and frequently provide grant support that local governments use to expand local services and improve conditions for citizens. A number of the services and projects funded and sustained through this network affect or contribute to the achievement of specific SDGs. These grassroots 'catalysts' of improvement and localization must be engaged and included, if SDG implementation is to be fully co-owned and participatory.

As has been discussed, given the lack of an institutionalized national framework for implementation, there is very little exposure to and awareness of the SDGs among LRGs and the elected officials who lead them. This has been true since the 2030 Agenda was first established in all regions of the world. Nonetheless, even if local governments are not explicitly using the SDGs as their development policy framework or are not 'branding' their policy decisions and initiatives within the SDG framework, their actions and those of NGOs, civil and community leaders, public and private sectors, grassroots organizations and mobilizers often address fundamental issues of sustainable development. Planning, housing, basic service provision, mobility, environment, resilience, culture and prosperity are critical dimensions of territorial development that can be substantially impacted by proactive, engaged local governments willing to contribute to the realization of the Goals.

As well as the inherent potential of the local level in the achievement of the SDGs, several pioneering and high-profile cities and local governments in North America have initiated efforts that explicitly pursue the SDGs and firmly embed them in local strategies and medium-

term planning. New York City has submitted its own Voluntary *Local* Review (VLR) at the 2018 HLPF, one of the first local authorities to formally do so within the official process of reporting; the city of San Jose, California, has a formal partnership with the SDSN, and the San Jose State University has already created a local SDG implementation dashboard; and Los Angeles presented its VLR to the HLPF in 2019. These efforts remain somewhat anecdotal, albeit powerful examples, but focusing on the largest and most economically thriving cities only can present a skewed picture.

There are more than 18,000 cities, towns, and villages in the United States, and over 5,000 in Canada, most of which are small, isolated towns. Only 74 million people live in the 100 most populous North American cities that are most commonly recognized and studied for their sustainability agendas. Meanwhile, more than 250 million residents inhabit fragmented suburban municipalities or rural areas with populations under 50,000 — a socio-economic and geographical context for which the toolkits currently available for SDG implementation are perhaps less suitable, tested or targeted. Awareness-raising, knowledge exchange and bottom-up engagement of local authorities as well as their communities is all the more important in this context. The actual on-the-ground commitment and efforts of LGAs and civil society are detailed in the next sub-section. ◉

Significant efforts have been made by LRGs to explicitly pursue the SDGs and align them with their local strategies, but these initiatives are mainly from the largest and most economically thriving cities.

3.1 The role of local government associations and non-governmental organizations

Local government associations (LGAs) and many stakeholders active within civil society, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other grassroots organizations, are perhaps the most effective players in the North American policy arena to advance on topics and subjects related to the SDGs. The United States, for instance, can count on an unparalleled network of national non-profit organizations, NGOs, local community foundations, and other organizations, whose mission to some degree aligns with one or more of the SDGs.²⁰ The non-profit or charitable sector accounts for 9%-10% of all wages and salaries paid. In 2013, public charities reported USD 1.74 trillion in total revenues.²¹ These organizations help

U.S. governments and businesses, but are also globally active, pursuing activities — charitable, religious, educational, scientific, or otherwise — that serve the public good in a way that is highly compatible with the mission of the 2030 Agenda.

The diversity of the SDGs and the other global goals has allowed for the emergence of many similar initiatives and actors in the 'ecosystem' of North America's LGAs, civil society and grassroots organizations and non-profit institutions. The United Way, for instance, is the largest privately funded non-profit organization in the world, and focuses on improving education, equitable income, and health.²² The National League of Cities (NLC), mentioned above, is the oldest and

Box 1

New York City's Voluntary Local Review (VLR)

In July 2018, New York City became the first city to present — in the wider framework of the HLPF — its VLR on SDG implementation in the local context. Since 2015, the city has pursued an ambitious and comprehensive sustainability agenda that is laid out in the 'OneNYC' master plan. The VLR was a pioneering document: alongside the effort of three Japanese cities, it was one of the first examples of a document that was locally engineered and sourced, and designed to complement the intergovernmental discussion of the HLPF with the perspective of LRGs. The presentation of the review was a milestone in the evolution of 'OneNYC' and perhaps its most visible moment globally.

Although the 'OneNYC' plan was developed before the SDGs were established, the Mayor's Office for International Affairs quickly saw the connection between the two frameworks, and created the Global Vision-Urban Action programme to use the SDGs to translate local progress into a more common language, which other cities and communities could use and emulate globally. The reporting effort within the HLPF scenario was essential, but the city made it clear that the larger mission of its strategy was 'to encourage cities and other stakeholders to join us in a conversation, not only about measuring progress towards the 2030 Agenda, but most importantly, about the policies and other strategies to get there', as stated by Commissioner Penny Abeywardena from New York's Mayor's Office for International Affairs.

Such leadership by example appears to be bearing fruit: other cities including Baltimore, Los Angeles, Orlando and San Jose have each indicated that they will either track progress towards the SDGs or explicitly use them as a basis for their own local sustainability plans.

Source: <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/44158-propuesta-plataforma-urbana-ciudades-america-latina-caribe>.

largest organization representing cities, towns and villages in the United States: as of 2019, its membership includes slightly more than 2,000 dues-paying municipalities. Multiple member-driven policy positions within the NLC have called for more urgent action to reduce GHG emissions, promote clean energy and improved energy efficiency, conserve natural resources, and reduce inequalities related to race, gender, and income.²⁴ Similarly, cities with a population of 30,000 or more are represented in the United States Conference of Mayors, their official non-partisan organization. Each city is represented by its chief elected official, the mayor. The conference has led the creation of the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, which vows to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions consistent with the Kyoto Protocol requirements. Since 2005, the agreement has been signed by 1,060 U.S. mayors.²⁵

The United States branch of ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability, hosts about 200 member cities. ICLEI has been a leader in the movement of local governments advocating for deep reductions in carbon pollution and tangible improvements in sustainability and resilience. In total, 251 cities have submitted their GHG inventory to ICLEI's 'ClearPath' tool.²⁶ The Urban Sustainability Directors Network has established a peer-to-peer network of local government staff professionals from communities across the United States and Canada, competent in the creation of a healthier environment, economic prosperity, and increased social equity.²⁷ As mentioned in the introduction, political volatility can be a serious hindrance to consensus around and fulfilment of ambitious global goals and agendas: the case of the U.S. government threatening to drop out of the Paris Climate Agreement has cast doubt on the commitment of one of the world's largest polluters to contribute to a global effort to curb the effect of carbon emissions and fight climate change. In response to this development, from the bottom-up, the 'We Are Still In' coalition united 280 U.S. cities and counties, alongside a number of businesses, universities, religious institutions, healthcare organizations, willing to uphold the Paris Climate Agreement and its application in territories and communities of the United States.²⁸ Similarly, Climate Mayors unites 250 mayors that have engaged in peer-to-peer networking to 'demonstrate leadership on climate change through meaningful actions in their communities'. The coalition is led by mayors Eric Garcetti (Los Angeles) and Sylvester Turner (Houston), from two cities that have been hit by rampaging gentrification, urban segregation and car-ridden sprawling and de-densification; as well as Martin Walsh (Boston) and Madeline Rogero (Knoxville).²⁹ Finally, the United States hosts Nature Conservancy, the largest environmentally-focused non-profit organization, committed to the

Box 2

STAR Communities (now LEED for Cities)

STAR Communities is a non-profit organization and the leading certification programme for measuring sustainability. The STAR Communities Rating System was founded in 2007 with the explicit goal of providing U.S. cities, towns and counties with a common framework for sustainability. Much like the LEED standard for buildings, STAR is composed of objectives and measures of urban sustainability that have been vetted by technical experts. The system contains seven goal areas, 45 objectives and more than 500 outcome measures to capture a holistic picture of local sustainability. To date, more than 70 cities and counties have been certified through this third-party verification system.

STAR Communities recently conducted a review of all 116 quantitative outcome measures (in addition to 17 innovation and process measures) in its rating system and mapped them to the 17 SDG goal areas, noting dozens of similarities between the priorities and the metrics used to evaluate progress.²³

A handful of cities have gone beyond self-evaluation and incorporated portions of the STAR communities system into their municipal processes. For example, after achieving a four-STAR rating, the city of West Palm Beach, Florida, revised its comprehensive plan to include several key metrics the city wished to track and improve. Mayor Jeri Muoio formally announced a goal to reduce GHG emissions by 32% by 2025, and 'all but eliminate' emissions by 2050.

In 2018, STAR merged with the U.S. Green Building Council, becoming LEED for Cities.

Sources: STAR Communities, 'Alignment Between STAR and the SDGs', 8 March 2018, <http://www.starcommunities.org/press-releases/alignment-between-star-and-the-sdgs/>; STAR Communities, 'Case Study: Communicating Results Through Open Data Dashboards', 23 May 2018, <http://www.starcommunities.org/starupdates/case-study-communicating-results-through-open-data-dashboards/>; and STAR Communities, 'STAR's Merger with the U.S. Green Building Council', 15 October 2018, <http://www.starcommunities.org/starupdates/faqs-star-leed-for-cities/>.

preservation and protection of the natural world and working 'to balance the needs of a growing population with those of nature'.³⁰

Besides sustainability and climate change, issues of urban coexistence and resilience are being addressed by a large movement of non-profit organizations in North America. The Urban Institute, for example, in an independent non-profit research organization, funded by both government contracts and outside funders. Founded by President Lyndon Johnson, it aims to help solve 'the problem of the American city and its people'.³¹ The Rockefeller Foundation developed the 100 Resilient Cities project (100RC), an initiative which has so far involved 97 cities around the world, and 30 cities in the United States and Canada. The key resilience challenges identified by 100RC relate closely to the SDGs: hurricane recovery and mitigation in New Orleans, following in particular the wave of destruction of hurricane Katrina in 2009; the lack of economic opportunity in a city like St. Louis; aging infrastructure and

population in Montreal; or the well-known case study of housing affordability in a community such as Vancouver.³²

These are just a few examples of the strength and engagement of the non-profit sector and civil society in the United States. The Environmental Defense Fund, the Institute for Sustainable Communities, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Resources for the Future, the U.S. Climate Action Network, the Western Climate Initiative, the World Resources Institute, and the World Wildlife Fund are further examples of this flourishing 'ecosystem' of the United States, which has strong ties and roots in local governance.

Canada's landscape is not unlike that of the United States: several municipalities and NGOs have been directly or indirectly involved in monitoring and implementation of the SDGs. As mentioned above, a number of universities and non-profit organizations have been involved in the process: the University of Waterloo has been officially identified by the UN as the host of the Canadian branch of the SDSN. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) SDG Knowledge Hub includes a series of reports on

'Tracking the SDGs in Canadian Cities', which provide implementation-related data on the 14 largest Canadian cities (see Section 3.3).³³

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is the most influential municipal network nationally in Canada. It has actively contributed to both domestic and international development efforts. The FCM supports the SDGs as a development assistance monitoring tool in all its international initiatives (see Box 3). These are funded by Global Affairs Canada, the government of Canada's department that manages the country's diplomatic and consular relations along with international development. The FCM addresses many issues relevant to the SDG targets in its national and international programmes — e.g. Municipalities for Climate Innovation, Municipal Asset Management, First Nations-Municipal Collaboration, Partners for Climate Protection, and Towards Parity in Municipal Politics. The FCM's advocacy work focuses on affordable housing, public transit, infrastructure deficit, emergency preparedness and response, clean water, climate change and resilience, immigration and refugee settlement, telecommunications, and Northern and remote communities.³⁴ Moreover, the FCM hosts the Big City Mayors' Caucus, which has long been the national voice and forum for the 22 largest municipalities in Canada. Many of the issues addressed by the Big City Mayors' Caucus are closely linked to the localization of SDGs and municipal commitment across the country.³⁵

Additionally, provincial and territorial municipal associations are established in each province and territory: they address similar issues but their advocacy aims and actions target primarily the provincial and territorial context. While most of them do not yet explicitly promote the SDGs as a policy framework, their advocacy priorities and actions have had a positive influence on the localization of the Goals at the provincial and territorial level.

The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) is a non-profit research organization dedicated to building capacity for healthy communities since 1990. It has provided a wealth of innovative approaches and tools to influence policy and increase municipal sustainability. The CUI addresses several sustainability issues: good density through complete community models; smart planning by applying digital technology to empower and connect communities; community resilience and sustainability by supporting the transition to resilient, low-carbon communities; housing affordability through new forms of equity, policy, and land use; and population aging by developing community inclusiveness for all ages, abilities and incomes. The CUI is also managing a collaborative carbon reduction platform for downtown Toronto, named Toronto 2030 Districts Project.³⁶

Box 3

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the SDGs

Since 1987, the FCM has maintained a strong international programme that has given Canadian municipal experts the opportunity to share knowledge and build relationships with counterparts in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe. Funded by Global Affairs Canada, the FCM is active in 13 countries and delivers more than USD 15 million in international project funds annually. The FCM's international priorities include:

- Strengthening local leadership by training elected officials and administrative staff, encouraging greater citizen engagement in the local decision-making process, and improving intergovernmental relations.
- Enhancing the ability of local governments to stimulate private-sector activity to help promote economic development and reduce poverty by creating jobs, trade, and foreign investment.
- Helping local governments respond to disasters or conflicts and ensure their capacity to build safer communities.
- Fostering environmental leadership and innovation at the municipal level to help build more resilient and sustainable communities, improving the quality of life of all citizens.

The FCM's involvement in these sectors supports both the implementation of the SDGs abroad and Canada's international development commitments towards the SDGs.

Source: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, <https://fcm.ca/en/programs/international-programs>.



Toronto from the CN Tower
(photo: © Andrea Ciambra).

The Urban Land Institute Toronto (ULI), finally, is an important Canadian think-tank with a membership of more than 1,600 public and private sector members in the field of land development and conservation. It is a sister organization of ULI America. ULI is an international organization whose aim is to promote responsible land use and create sustainable communities in North America, Europe and Asia. Despite its remit not being the SDGs explicitly, it has an impact on the localization of the SDGs as a thought leader on human settlements and has historically promoted advancement in resilient, inclusive and sustainable communities.³⁷

Countless additional charities and non-profit organizations at the local or regional level help clean waterways, conserve land and protect wildlife with a positive impact on territories and communities. This notwithstanding, very few LGAs and NGOs in North America are explicitly using the SDG platform as a catalyst or a roadmap for their action at the local level. As is the case with all other regions, however, these initiatives

and agendas are contributing significantly to the actual achievement of the Goals, and have been responsible for an otherwise unachievable degree of mobilization, participation and inclusion. Even though these actions do not directly have a connection with the global framework of the UN, they are further evidence that the daily work of local administrations will be essential for the achievement of the SDGs. The next sections will further explore specific initiatives that local governments have implemented and to what extent these have been supporting and improving localization. 📍

LGA and NGO initiatives have encouraged the strong mobilization of LRGs around the Global Goals.

3.2 Local and regional government policies in line with the 2030 Agenda

Box 4

Municipality of Repentigny: 'A City for All'

'A City for All' is a multi-pronged initiative by the municipality of Repentigny, Quebec. It uses digital technologies to elicit more inclusive service provision and full community participation. Launched in 2017, 'A City for All' includes the following key frameworks:

- *Carrefour informationnel et social* (Informational and social crossroads) is a partnership initiative between the municipal government, the *MRC de L'Assomption*, the *Centre à Nous*, and other community partners, with support from the *Caisse Desjardins Pierre-Le Gardeur (Ville de Repentigny, 2017)*. Focused on vulnerable populations — 67% of whom are women, including with language difficulties, functional limitations and limited access to basic support — it provides a wide range of social and community services through an integrated system accessible by telephone or the Internet.
- *Créalab* is a multimedia laboratory housed in the municipal library directed at youth. A variety of creative digital technologies allow young people to express themselves through photos, video, music and 3D design. With a particular focus on providing access to young immigrants and youth with behavioural issues, the facility has been used by approximately 13,500 teenagers, facilitated 1,200 school workshops and has attracted 175 young entrepreneurs as of November 2018.
- *Mes services municipaux* (My municipal services) is aimed at citizens and families within the municipality generally and is designed to improve access to information on municipal services and activities. By using an interactive map application, citizens can quickly find relevant information at a neighbourhood level, as well as connect with municipal staff.

Importantly, these initiatives are generating insights and data that can be used for future urban planning and policy development.

Sources: Chartier, Pierre, 'Repentigny, finaliste Prix international de Guangzhou pour l'innovation urbaine', *Hebdo Rive Nord*, 7 November 2018, <https://www.hebdorivenord.com/article/2018/11/7/repentigny-finaliste-prix-international-de-guangzhou-pour-l-innovation-urbaine>; Ville de Repentigny, 'Repentigny, finaliste du Prix international de Guangzhou pour l'innovation urbaine', 30 October 2018, <https://www.ville.repentigny.qc.ca/communiqués/repentigny-finaliste-du-prix-international-de-guangzhou-pour-l-e2%80%99innovation-urbaine.html>; and Ville de Repentigny, 'Le Carrefour informationnel et social ouvre ses portes au Centre à Nous', 5 June 2017, <https://www.ville.repentigny.qc.ca/communiqués/le-carrefour-informationnel-et-social-ouvre-ses-po.html>

In this section we assess the types of policies and initiatives that have been developed by LRGs to localize the SDGs; their impact on the national level; how engaged LRGs have been in real multilevel coordination; and to what extent localization has affected (or improved) institutional mechanisms and dialogue across different tiers of governance.

The SDGs are, in and of themselves, a positive framework for municipal and local action and mobilization and many of the features of local governments can contribute positively and directly to the achievement of the Goals. In the case of SDG 11, this was explicitly designed for urban and local action to meet fundamental priorities at the sub-national level, and to provide a collaborative, and genuinely co-owned roadmap towards more sustainable urban and territorial communities.

Here we focus specifically on the policies, initiatives and innovative solutions most frequently found in the comprehensive plans and sustainability agendas of local municipal governments: carbon reduction and climate change measures; access to sustainable energy; sustainable mobility; basic services, such as sustainable management of water and sanitation; and issues of precarious, unaffordable housing and homelessness.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation

The United States is the world's second largest emitter of GHGs, after China, and is responsible for 15% of global emissions causing climate change. Emissions peaked in 2007 and have been falling for the past decade. In 2016, the last year for which data is available, emissions were 12% below their 2005 levels.³⁸ Meanwhile, although Canada also ranks among the highest GHG emitters per capita in the world, considering the size of its economy and population, its environmental footprint in absolute terms is not as high as that of the U.S. This data is essential in a region that is constantly and increasingly threatened and hit by the effects of climate change: severe and unpredictable climate events sweep the continent regularly; wildfire and drought have considerably damaged the economy, productivity and social

fabric of large portions of the United States; and several coastal megalopolises are endangered by alarming rates of sea level growth, threatening to displace, hurt or kill millions of people. Ultimately, North America is one of the territories most exposed to the consequences of climate change and global warming and yet, its economy is based on a production and consumption mechanism which is causing even more environmental depletion and vulnerability. Disaster risk prevention and management is particularly important for territories, communities and local governments: the local level has invested in infrastructure and services, and has competences in risk response and mitigation. Climate change as a challenge shows that effective policy and the actual implementation of all the SDGs depends significantly on the constant involvement of all tiers of governance.

As of 2015, analysis by ICLEI USA and the World Wildlife Fund found that 116 U.S. cities, representing 14% of the U.S. population, were reporting GHG inventories and reduction targets through platforms such as ClearPath,³⁹ the carbonn Climate Registry (cCR),⁴⁰ and the Carbon Disclosure Project.⁴¹ There are however many more communities that, even though they may not be able to actually run an emissions inventory or provide existing databases with local data, are still engaged in reduction efforts, particularly via the promotion of energy efficiency and green buildings. The California Air Resources Board, for example, sets regional targets for state-wide GHG reductions, and local governments within each region are responsible for adopting collective transportation, housing, and land-use plans consistent with the state target of emitting 40% below the 1990 levels by 2030.⁴² Additionally, another 19 states plus the District of Columbia have already adopted state-wide GHG reduction targets.⁴³

As a result of the variety and frequency of natural disasters in the United States, moreover, the country has been improving its emergency management and disaster response systems. Federal policy requires the creation of emergency response plans as well as separate hazard mitigation plans to reduce local risk. However, most cities in the United States are still in severe need of structural adaptation to risk mitigation, due to their vulnerability to those events that climate change is rapidly exacerbating: in 2017 alone, when multiple historically large hurricanes, inland floods and wildfire occurred throughout the country, natural disaster response was estimated to cost a record USD 306 billion. Ultimately, cities in the United States have most of the tools and information necessary to adapt: however, 'many of the promising practices are piecemeal and fail to comprehensively address climate change and its associated uncertainties',⁴⁴ especially since the

magnitude, frequency and impact of catastrophic or extreme events increases at an unprecedented rate.

In Canada, on the other hand, municipalities and local stakeholders have raised a certain degree of awareness and mobilized on disaster resilience in the face of climate change threats and impact.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, there has been little local action to update local policies, infrastructure or resources to manage this threat.⁴⁶ A case such as

Box 5

British Columbia Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act

The British Columbia (BC) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act of 2007 legislated aggressive GHG consumption reduction targets for the province: 33% reduction of 2007 levels by 2020, and 90% of 2007 levels by 2050. The Act also stipulates that BC public sector organizations must become carbon-neutral by 2010, meaning that they must produce zero GHG emissions.

To achieve these ambitious reductions, one of the measures put into place was the Green Communities Act. This requires that each local government includes targets, policies and actions for the reduction of GHG emissions in its Official Community Plans. Although the Green Communities Act does not include any centralized emissions targets, timelines or steps for municipalities to take towards GHG reduction, it does ensure that municipalities consider the environmental implications of city decisions in their planning. The legislation is progressive in signalling GHG reduction as a provincial priority and also signposts for municipalities and residents that emissions reductions are at least partially a municipal responsibility. This means that municipalities have some — albeit loose — accountability to their residents in delivering on emissions reductions. At a bare minimum, the legislation ensures that GHG reduction is part of the conversation in all municipalities, and part of the planning process.

The cases of the BC Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act and the Green Communities Act demonstrate that a provincial mandate to include climate considerations in municipal planning is somewhat effective. Ninety percent of BC municipalities partially complied with the Green Communities Act by setting targets, and 75% fully complied by setting and adopting targets.⁴⁹ Thus, the Act precipitated the widespread adoption of GHG reduction targets, leading to substantive progress in emissions reductions.⁵⁰ Recent analysis shown that despite the lack of compliance mechanisms, only a few municipalities set token targets aimed at marginal change.⁵¹ BC model therefore is a promising approach for other provinces seeking to reduce GHG emissions at the local level, and could inspire other municipalities to take the initiative on climate change mitigation.

Sources: Government of British Columbia, 'Climate Change Accountability Act', http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_07042_01; and Government of British Columbia, 'Local Government (Green Communities) Statutes Amendment Act - Bill 27 - Resources | BC Climate Action Toolkit', <https://www.toolkit.bc.ca/resource/bill-27-resources>.

British Columbia (BC) — where all municipalities are now required to have local climate change action plans and 84% of them have undertaken public mobilization and education initiatives as part of their climate change-related policies (see also Box 5) — remains more an isolated example of good practice than the symptom of a structural trend.⁴⁷

Moreover, it is essential to bear in mind that cities are not the only communities that have a role to play in a territory's sustainable development or in the transition to a low-carbon future. Rural and indigenous communities in the United States and Canada, for instance, are even more reliant on fossil fuels than urban communities are.⁴⁸ With lower

population density and relatively fewer resources available at the governance level, residents in rural communities and smaller towns are generally more reliant on personal rather than public transportation; and amenities or public space are often more spread out and less accessible without vehicle travel. Many of these areas, moreover, have experienced long demographic decline and a significant loss in economic momentum, as job creation and innovation increasingly concentrates in urban centres. Lack of economic development and activity and loss of social and financial capital in rural and indigenous community, consequently, have made them generally more reliant on older infrastructure, left them off-grid, or impeded them from upgrading to less polluting or greener energy and activities. This is especially true for remoter and more isolated communities (see also Box 6).

Box 6

The T'Sou-ke Nation Solar Community

Rural and indigenous communities can also be low-carbon communities and as such can be an example to both small and large communities across North America. In 2007, the T'Sou-ke First Nation (band government) in BC began developing a solar micro-grid. This provides electricity to members of the First Nation and solar-powered hot water to approximately half the community's homes. The project includes three separate solar systems, including a six-kilowatt system, a seven-kilowatt system, and a 62-kilowatt system. These generate enough energy to power the community and sell excess power back to the BC hydro-grid. The First Nation also has a solar-powered electric vehicle charging station, and grows wasabi year-round in a greenhouse, which it sells commercially.

Although significantly smaller than most Canadian communities, T-Sou-ke First Nation has a population density lower than BC's major cities but higher than many of the province's smaller cities and towns. This shows that communities do not need large amounts of excess land — in short supply in cities — to manage a solar project: T'Sou-ke's solar units are all situated on top of buildings in the community. T'Sou-ke moreover has significantly less capital than many larger and more economically developed communities. It raised funds from 15 private and public organizations for the construction of the solar project, covering 80% of its costs. This was a challenging and time-consuming process for the First Nation, creating many obstacles in completing the project. Admittedly, communities with greater access to capital would find an investment like this more feasible than the T'Sou-ke Nation.

The T'Sou-ke Nation solar project however demonstrates that even small, rural and indigenous communities that have long relied on dirty energy sources can transition to clean, low-carbon solutions. If a small community with relatively few resources such as T'Sou-ke, can become a low-carbon community, it can be an example and provide lessons for Canadian communities of all sizes.

Sources: T'Sou-ke First Nation, 'First Nation Takes Lead on Solar Power', <http://www.tsoukenation.com/first-nation-takes-lead-on-solar-power/>; and 'Sun keeps shining on T'Sou-ke', <http://www.tsoukenation.com/sun-keeps-shining-on-tsou-ke/>.

Facilitate access to sustainable and modern energy

Adopting sustainable and modern energy sources is an important part of achieving GHG emissions reductions. LRGs that are serious about GHG emissions reductions must be actively involved in implementing SDG 7, focused on affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy, in their communities. Local renewable energy production projects, projects to improve energy efficiency in local buildings and infrastructure, and policies to reduce local energy use are all examples of potential SDG 7-related actions, as a part of local governments' efforts to reduce GHG emissions. Local governments' own infrastructure can be built or retrofitted to be more energy-efficient and even to produce energy.

Sustainable energy and efficient buildings policies are increasingly common in U.S. cities. Nearly every major city has adopted requirements that public buildings meet LEED standards and many policies require or incentivize certification of private development. A recent market survey conducted by commercial real-estate and investment firm CBRE and Maastricht University found that green-certified office space across the 30 largest metros of the United States has reached 41% of market totals. Chicago leads the nation and 69.8% of its office space is green-certified.⁵² Washington, D.C. adopted legislation in November 2018 pledging that 100% of energy for municipal operations would be renewable by 2032. The city had previously adopted a green construction code for private development in 2014. The state of California will require solar on nearly all new residential construction beginning on 1 January 2020.

In Banff, Alberta, all new buildings above 500 square feet must meet the LEED silver level energy-saving standard, a policy that has reduced emissions by about 18 tonnes annually for the

municipality's transit storage facility. Likewise, in Markham, Ontario, all new municipal buildings must have the potential to produce solar power, and the city has retrofitted many of its existing warehouses and other large buildings accordingly. Not only do small-scale energy production projects like these reduce cities' emissions; they also provide a source of income for local governments as energy producers. While these projects are relatively small in scale, they reduce dependency on non-renewable energy sources.

Energy production is most often independent from municipalities, but local governments' financial and planning powers contribute to facilitating the development of local renewable energy projects and incentivize energy consumption reductions within their communities. For example, Hydro Toronto provides incentives targeted at local businesses to offset the costs of making new builds energy-efficient through its High Performance New Construction Program. The City of North Vancouver has a set of bylaws that stipulate energy efficiency requirements for new builds above and beyond the British Columbia Building Code, which must be met for a building permit application to be approved.

In the United States, 90 cities, more than ten counties and two states have joined the Ready for 100 campaign. Led by the Sierra Club, these sub-national governments have set specific target dates to transition to 100% renewable energy. Six cities in the U.S. — Aspen, Burlington, Georgetown, Greensburg, Rock Port and Kodiak Island — have already hit their targets.⁵³

Safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable mobility

The whole North American territorial and urban pattern is characterized by a high dependence on the automobile and private, wheeled and motor-based transportation. The systems of infrastructure and cities, as well as the actual design of urban planning, are conceived around the idea of single-vehicle mobility and have historically neglected alternative means of transportation — including more efficient, sustainable or cleaner means such as railway or bus, which have grown into too expensive, inconvenient or even unsafe alternatives in many contexts. The United States, especially, has a capillary network of highways that connect (and almost always cut through) metropolitan areas, intermediary cities and even smaller towns and villages, with an intrinsic effect on the design of public space and the actual development of communities and locality 'identity', especially within cities and neighbourhoods. New and transformative public transit projects and sustainable mobility initiatives are happening, but these have to compete with a formidable automobile culture, and it will take some time to counter the decades

Box 7

The 2030 District Network initiative

The 2030 Districts Network is a U.S.-based non-profit organization composed of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in designated urban areas in Canada and the United States committed to reducing energy use, water use, and transport emissions.⁵⁴ The districts are regrouping public and private entities committed to significantly lowering GHG emissions produced by buildings, transportation and water use within large cities' downtown areas. The vision is to establish a global network of thriving high-performance building districts and cities, uniting communities to catalyse transformation in the built environment, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

In 2019, the network included more than 394 million square feet of commercial real-estate, whose owners have committed to achieving the Architecture 2030 Challenge for Planning goals to reduce resource use. More than 990 organizations in mid-sized and large cities have agreed to join the network and more than 1,600 buildings are committed to the goals. The 20 current city members are: Albuquerque, Ann Arbor, Austin, Burlington, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Ithaca, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland (ME), San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Stamford (CT) in the United States, and Toronto in Canada.

Source: 2030 Districts Network, <http://www.2030districts.org/districts>.

of infrastructure and other development that has supported automobiles.

Local governments hold the key to incentivizing more sustainable transportation through investments in public transit, bike lanes, car pool lanes, and other mobility policies. Vancouver shows how a city can act relatively quickly. It has made significant investments into public transit in the past few decades, has set ambitious goals related to sustainable transportation, and has seen a near doubling of public transit ridership in the past 15 years.⁵⁵

In the United States, roughly one third of all transit trips are made on buses or railways within the New York metropolitan area for instance. Both the United States and Canada are sprawling countries, but the United States has far fewer wide-reaching and consistent services than in major Canadian cities.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, heavy rail systems and other mass transit are not the only option for sustainable mobility, and recent efforts have been made in many cities to support Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) through complementary land use. This consists of 'developing compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods around existing or new public transit stops offering frequent and high-quality public transportation',⁵⁷ which can go

Box 8

Water energy mapping for Ontario communities

Ontario's successful transition away from coal and towards more renewable sources of energy has significantly reduced its carbon emissions, a positive step towards its climate change mitigation goals. This has not come without a cost, however. Renewable forms of energy production, such as hydroelectric production, biomass and nuclear production, all use significant amounts of water, which has the potential to place significant strain on Ontario's water resources.

In Ontario, power generation accounts for 84% of water withdrawals. Water scarcity is already a reality for Ontario; more than 40% of water in rivers in Southern Ontario was withdrawn for human use in 2009, meaning Ontario must make significant efforts to conserve its water resources to prevent water shortages in the future. On the other hand, energy is essential to treat and provide water. In Ontario, the total energy for water services could provide heat to every home in the country, and water services supplied by municipalities make up between one and two-thirds of municipal electricity costs in Ontario. This relationship is known as the water-energy nexus and can contribute significantly to exacerbating climate change. Thus, improving the energy efficiency of water services is also important for ensuring the reliability and sustainability of resources.

Water energy mapping is one step towards sustainably managing Ontario's water and energy resources. The province visually maps water use and supply to better track and manage water resources and identify potential water inefficiencies. It developed metrics to analyse the conditions of its different watersheds, including the available supply and the human requirements for water within the area. In addition, the province also maps the energy use of public sector operations, including water treatment and services facilities. The government of Ontario describes this as helping organizations in the broader public sector, including its municipalities, better understand how and where they use energy and how they can save it. An integrated energy mapping programme was implemented in four Ontario municipalities to visually demonstrate the amount of energy used, including in buildings and transportation. The maps, which use hydro billing and other city data about building characteristics, help these municipalities to understand how to improve energy efficiency across the city, and to target specific areas or categories of energy user. Ontario's water and energy mapping is a powerful tool to analyse the province's use of both water and energy resources — and how those resources are linked to one another — at both a macro and a micro level. Further, they demonstrate the importance of detailed data in reducing both water and energy consumption, and in informing decisions about sustainable resource use.

Source: Canadian Urban Institute, 'Integrated Energy Mapping for Ontario Communities Lessons Learned Report', November 2011, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/546bbd2ae4b077803c592197/t/54b807a6e4b060f2e9745d1e/1421346726645/CUIPublication.IntegratedEnergyMappingOntario.pdf>.

Box 9

Montreal's transportation electrification strategy

The City of Montreal is showing significant leadership on SDG Target 11.2, (safe, affordable transit). It has developed a transportation electrification strategy, which includes electrifying public transportation and its own fleet of vehicles, providing electric-friendly parking with charging stations, and adopting strategies to encourage residents and the private sector to use electric vehicles.⁵⁸ The Montreal transit electrification strategy also takes a lead on SDG Target 11.3 (sustainable urban planning).

The city's planned sustainable transit is supposed to be integrated with housing solutions and an urban centre that can support long-term growth without creating pollution or placing strains on natural resources. It plans to incorporate electrification into city planning processes, ensuring that new housing builds are fitted with electric charging stations, and develop incentives for retrofits that offer more charging stations.⁵⁹ Its focus on public transit also puts it in a position to grow sustainably.

Source: City of Montreal, 'Electrifying Montreal-Transportation Electrification Strategy 2016-2020', http://ville.montreal.Qc.ca/Pls/Portal/Docs/Page/Proj_urbains_fr/Media/Documents/Transportation_electrification_strategy_2016_2020_Pdf.

as far as having residential complexes attached to public transit stations. Transit, complete streets, and similar transportation initiatives are underdeveloped in the United States and Canada yet have great potential, but TOD represents a multifaceted approach that is necessary to ensure that local economies and housing markets are able to adequately adapt, leading to more equitable access to mobility and a reduction in transportation-related emissions as envisioned by SDG 7. Another approach to sustainable mobility that does not require public transit investments are complete street initiatives, also referred to as active transportation (e.g. Bonita Springs City, Florida). Complete streets are deliberately designed to be inclusive of all transportation methods and individuals' accessibility needs, often designing roads where cars, bicycles and pedestrians can safely and efficiently coexist. In North America, this is a significant change from street design that has historically prioritized automobile traffic at the expense of bike and pedestrian safety.

Sustainable management of water and sanitation and waste

When it comes to the achievement of the SDGs in North America, SDG 6 on the management of water, sanitation and solid waste services and provision is perhaps the Goal most likely to be attained. With very few exceptions, the populations of the United States and Canada have access to adequate water and sanitation.⁶⁰ In fact, the real challenge for most LRGs has been preserving water resources to maintain a sustainable and reliable supply in the longer term. The targets of SDG 6 are, in this regard, particularly strict: local governments have had to address water pollution (SDG 6.3), water resource efficiency (SDG 6.4), and the implementation of a truly integrated water management system (SDG 6.5).

LRGs have a significant role to play when it comes to water pollution. At the municipal level, wastewater produced by households, businesses, and industries is a large overall polluter of water resources at regional level across the whole of North America. For the past two decades, at least, many local governments have responded to this trend by investing more in the construction and management of water treatment facilities. The percentage of residents in Canada having no access to wastewater treatment fell dramatically from 20% to 3%, while the number of Canadian households served by municipal sewage systems with secondary treatment mechanisms (or better) has grown from 40% to 69%.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the history of sanitation management in the United States is less positive. Sanitary or combined sewer overflows have been an issue across the United States, mostly because of inadequate infrastructure or maintenance: blockages, power failures at pump or lift stations and, in many instances, heavy rains and other extreme weather conditions have all affected the country's sanitation network, often resulting in the contamination of rivers and other sources of potable water or waterways. Nonetheless, cities, states, and the federal government cooperate extensively to reduce these problems with a wide range of strategies, including monitoring, expansion of system capacity, and green infrastructure to slow stormwater run-off. Nationwide data on the scale of the problem is generally either unavailable or incomplete. For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates there are between 23,000 and 75,000 sanitary sewer overflows per year. Still, the American Society of Civil Engineers reports that 'years of treatment plant upgrades and more stringent federal and state regulations have significantly reduced untreated releases and improved water quality nationwide'.⁶²

At the same time, LRGs play a significant role in improving water-use efficiency and water resource conservation. Water use in the United

Box 10

Electric buses gaining momentum in the United States

Electric bus technology has recently reached a tipping point of cost efficiency and range, and cities that have made commitments to reduce transportation emissions are beginning to take notice.

In 2012, Chicago's Mayor Emanuel started a plan to modernize Chicago's transportation system as part of a broader set of green initiatives. In 2014, with the help of two federal grants, Chicago deployed the first two fully electric buses for regular service in the country. The trial has evidently gone well, as the Chicago Transit Authority recently contracted for an additional 20 electric buses in 2018, along with improved charging stations. Where the original buses took four to five hours to charge, the infrastructure and technology improvements will allow the new buses to charge in less than 30 minutes.

San Francisco already operates a large number of trolley buses that run along overhead wires and are powered by green energy, but the city has also stepped up by setting an ambitious goal of an all-electric bus fleet by 2035. Today, the San Francisco bus fleet of 800 includes 265 electric hybrid buses. These electric hybrid buses have the capability to only run on battery with a gas backup, but fully electric buses have proven difficult because of the city's extremely hilly topography, as well as its requirement that buses have an expected 15-year service life. The city will soon pilot its first nine fully electric buses using crowded and hilly routes to evaluate performance and determine what other upgrades are required for a fully electric fleet.

Many more cities are poised to roll out their first electric buses through a recent grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Low or No Emission Vehicle Program recently announced USD 84 million would be granted to 41 states for 52 different projects.

Sources: Blanco, Sebastian, 'The U.S. Just Spent \$84M On Electric Buses', Forbes, 4 September 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sebastianblanco/2018/08/31/84-million-electric-buses/>; Banchemo, Rick, 'San Francisco Commits To All-Electric Bus Fleet By 2035', SF Metro Transit Authority webpage, 15 May 2018, <https://www.sfmta.com/press-releases/san-francisco-commits-all-electric-bus-fleet-2035>; Gribbon, Sadie, 'SF aims for fully electric bus fleet by 2035', San Francisco Examiner, 16 May 2018, <http://www.sfoxaminer.com/sf-aims-fully-electric-bus-fleet-2035/>; and Chicago Transit Authority, 'Electric Buses', <https://www.transitchicago.com/electricbus/>

States peaked in 1980 and has been fairly stable, despite a growing population and economy.⁶³ More recently, conservation has accelerated: the United States, for example, withdrew 9% less water in 2015 than it did in 2010.⁶⁴ Many local governments have implemented water conservation programmes, retrofit programmes and regulations to reduce water use. Several have also introduced public awareness campaigns along with infrastructure initiatives to improve water efficiency at the systemic level.

Given the link between water resources and energy use, integrated water resource management is vital to overall sustainability.

Concerted efforts were made to improve collection and recycling from the 1970s to the 1990s as a way to make the whole system more sustainable, however only 31%-35% of waste has been effectively recycled since 2005.

Box 11

Watershed management and wildfire mitigation in Flagstaff, Arizona

Water management is an essential part of Flagstaff, Arizona's history. The city of Flagstaff was established in 1882 as a railroad stop for train water and passengers. Since the 1800s, the city has built dams, changed policies, and created several water augmentation projects. In 2018, Flagstaff focused on sustainability and securing water supply for its growing population. It created a Water Services Integrated Master Plan as a guide for long-term management of its water supply. The plan's key points include water policy, wastewater, quantifying water resources, and information on working with aging water infrastructure systems. It is an update of the original 1996 Water Master Plan and now includes a land-use regional plan, updated state policies, and a population projection.

Furthermore, in 2012, Flagstaff created a digital model of the city's groundwater from a large water sustainability study. The study compiled information from the area's hydrological and geological data. This digital model helps predict water availability and impact of different water usage scenarios by measuring aquifer thickness, hydraulic properties, recharge, discharge and water levels. It is a highly effective tool for future water management but was also an intricate part of Flagstaff's 2013 Adequate Water Supply Designation.

Flagstaff continues to abide by and update its 2013 Adequate Water Supply Designation. Although it is not in an area that the state does not require creates a designation, the city still takes steps to secure water supply, legal rights to water, infrastructure and water treatment capabilities for the next 100 years.

Flagstaff supports many watershed monitoring projects in the area. Monitoring helps to establish a baseline for conditions, keep track of water impact, and compare real-life conditions to the digital model predictions. The city partners with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to monitor the C-aquifer that supplies most of the town's water. In 2014, Flagstaff joined the Upper Lake Mary Monitoring Project that creates a 'flowtopography' by monitoring surface water flows through Newman Canyon. Flagstaff is just one of many partners of this project, including USGS, the National Park Service and Northern Arizona University. The city also plans to drill and monitor five wells in the next ten years.

Sources: Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project, <http://flagstaffwatershedprotection.org/>; and 'Our View: Thinning forests for Flagstaff watershed protection reason to celebrate', Arizona Daily Sun, 12 October 2017, https://azdailysun.com/opinion/editorial/our-view-thinning-forests-for-flagstaffwatershed-protection-reason-to/article_5c7e455c-9ea0-569d-b1a5-d11fb0c77b78.html.

Implementing strategies such as water energy mapping can help identify trends and inform policies for effectively managing resources and reducing waste. Ontario's water energy mapping is just one example of a successful water resource management initiative (see Box 8).

On the other hand, experiences and initiatives in solid waste management have had mixed results. Certainly most residents and households across Canada and the United States have full access to effective waste collection and recycling service provision, but this can only partially compensate for the sheer volume of solid waste produced in both countries, with the United States being, in fact, one of the world's largest producers of waste. In the region, concerted efforts were made to improve collection and recycling from the 1970s to the 1990s as a way to make the whole system more sustainable. Efficiency rates of such initiatives and mechanisms have, however, stagnated at between 31% and 35% of effectively recycled waste since 2005. Policies and actions in this field also encounter complicated geopolitical and international obstacles. In North America, for example, new initiatives to improve recycling and waste management became necessary after the National Sword Regulation in China prohibited the import of scrap materials and specific recyclable products from abroad. This policy, which affected the recycled material market worldwide, is still having a long-term impact on the capacity of many countries, including the United States. At the local level, many municipalities have responded by maintaining policies of waste separation and zero-waste goals, adopting specific fees or implementing strategic programmes. On the other hand, several local governments, which relied on fees from exporting scrap materials, have had to change their local policies altogether, often suspending residential recycling programmes entirely.⁶⁵

Housing and homelessness

Policies around (social and affordable) housing, precarious settlement and homelessness are still fundamental instruments in the toolkit of municipalities and local governments. Intervention in these fields is essential to improve performance on poverty (SDG 1), inequality (SDG 10), and the inclusiveness and sustainability of human and urban settlements (SDG 11).

When it comes to affordability and accessibility of adequate housing, North America is still struggling. From 2006 to 2010, in the United States alone over 13.3 million home foreclosures were executed.⁶⁶ As signalled by reports of the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, since the 2008 economic crises, giant private equity firms like Blackstone have scavenged for housing debt for pennies on the dollar, becoming the United States' largest rental landlords and de facto controlling

housing availability in various urban markets. Many of these conglomerates have adopted the same pattern in other continents and markets. These trends inflated housing value in most of Canada's largest metro areas and municipalities,⁶⁷ making phenomena such as evictions, vacancy, gentrification and income-based discrimination and segregation more acute and persistent. A lack of concrete national housing plans and a cut in federal investments, combined with a shortage of land for housing, resulted in an additional surge of housing market prices in many metropolitan areas in the United States and Canada. This prompted both governments to seek a policy solution in collaboration with the local governments involved. New taxation on vacancies (Vancouver) or the reallocation of vacant property (Los Angeles), help towards homeowners' down payments via tourism tax revenue or similar influx (Seattle), or extended support to build-to-rent real-estate development have been just a few of the many policy solutions considered by local and national regulators in North America.

Canada's new National Housing Strategy (NHS), implemented in 2017, is a positive step forward in terms of precarious and low-income housing legislation. With the National Housing Co-Investment Fund, the government of Canada, along with partners, aims to build up to 60,000 new affordable housing units within ten years, repair up to 240,000 units of existing housing, create and repair up to 4,000 shelters for victims of family violence, build 2,400 affordable units for individuals with developmental disabilities, and create 7,000 affordable units for seniors.⁶⁸ The NHS focuses on a high-level partnership with all levels of government to maximize investments and improve project coordination to fit each city's different needs.⁶⁹

On the other hand, nearly all communities in the United States have grappled with serious issues of housing affordability and accessibility, no matter their size, level of prosperity or growth pressures. The responses have been varied. Some cities have sought to provide enough housing for all incomes by preserving existing affordable housing units and creating new ones. Others have focused on preventing poor housing conditions and housing displacement. A number have concentrated on helping households access and afford private-market housing or connecting housing strategies to employment, mobility and health initiatives.⁷⁰ Given the diverse landscape of housing affordability, cities must build and maintain the proper tools and flexibility to meet the needs of their residents. To that end, cities have implemented solutions such as inclusionary housing, rent control, fair housing and housing trust funds. They have also leveraged programmes such as their states' tax incentive programmes to expand housing affordability and access.⁷¹

Box 12

Circular economy – Sustainable waste management in Boulder, Colorado

Boulder, Colorado adopted its first zero waste plan in 2006, expressing the belief that: 'A true zero waste system is cyclical, like nature: everything we produce, consume, and dispose of eventually goes back to feed the larger system at the end of its useful life'.

Today, less than half of Boulder's waste ends up in landfills, making its waste diversion programme one of the most successful in the United States. This success has been made possible by Boulder's Zero Waste Strategic Plan, which outlines three priorities:

- Develop the infrastructure to provide recycling services across all sectors;
- Improve streams through targeting; and
- Reduce per capita waste generation.

Boulder depends heavily on its relationships with outside stakeholders to foster the local circular economy. For instance, the city government works closely with the Boulder Chamber of Commerce to improve outreach to the local business community and emphasize co-creation.

Additionally, in 2017, the city convened the Task Force on the Circular Economy in partnership with the University of Colorado, Boulder. Boulder has an agreement with the university to research sustainability initiatives and the development of a fully circular economy. While these partnerships have been invaluable, the city still struggles with per-capita waste reduction.

To address this, Boulder adopted its Universal Zero Waste Ordinance. This stipulates that all properties, commercial and residential, must recycle and compost. Furthermore, recycling and composting receptacles must be made available at any special events.

The city also uses negative reinforcement, such as assessing fees on all disposable paper and plastic bags distributed at grocery stores and levying a trash tax on haulers throughout the city. This revenue is used to fund Boulder's waste reduction efforts.

Sources: City of Boulder, 'We Are Zero Waste Boulder', <https://bouldercolorado.gov/zero-waste>; and City of Boulder, 'Zero Waste Strategic Plan', November 2015, https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/Zero-Waste-Strategic-Plan-Action-Plan-Web-1-201604131208.pdf?_ga=2.150315058.566415638.1552527992-1117643889.1552527992.

Policies around (social and affordable) housing, precarious settlement and homelessness are fundamental instruments in the toolkit of local governments.

Box 13

Housing First – Pathway Vermont

The Pathways Vermont non-profit organization launched its Housing First (HF) model in 2010 across the state of Vermont in the United States. While the programme is managed as an NGO initiative, it receives more than 95% of its funding from federal contracts, state contracts or reimbursements from the Medicaid federal healthcare programme.


Pathways prioritizes a virtual Assertive Community Treatment approach, meaning clients and team members meet in person or virtually via video conference technologies. The organization's use of virtual resources such as the iCloud network creates efficiencies in its programme's activities as it enables real-time exchange of client file information.⁷⁴ Moreover, its HF model has shown great success due to the scope of the long-term services offered. These include support for employment, computer literacy, substance abuse, and psychiatry, as well as peer specialists and nurses. The programme's housing retention rate is 85%, demonstrating its success in the fight against chronic homelessness.

Pathways also tailored its HF model to help those with long correctional records transition back into the community. In fact, numbers show that 81% of participants have not returned to long-term incarceration.⁷⁵ By providing housing and support services, re-incarceration rates decrease, as do state expenditures.

Sources: Pathways Vermont, 'Housing First', <http://www.pathwaysvermont.org/what-we-do/our-programs/housing-first/>; Pathways Vermont, 'Annual Highlights, Fiscal Year 2018', <https://www.pathwaysvermont.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FY-18-Annual-Highlights-Report-Online-version.pdf>.

The shortage in low-cost housing has put a strain on the low-income populations that increasingly live in precarious situations. In 2014, 18% of Canadian households were using more than 50% of their income on rent, thus facing extreme affordability problems.⁷² In the United States, the figure was 17% in 2015, a 42% increase from 2001.⁷³ This gradual exclusion from the housing market puts many more households at risk of homelessness. Moreover, SDG 1 requires that all have equal rights to economic resources, access to basic services, and ownership and control over land and other forms of property. In this sense, low-income groups are highly marginalized from housing resources and capabilities.

SDG 10 further aims to promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, without discrimination. In North America, visible minority groups, single parents (especially mothers), immigrants, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities are more likely to live in situations of precarious housing than the rest of the population. This is why the promotion of indigenous housing programmes, repair grants and new affordable housing construction are key elements to ensure quality housing for the poorest. In Canada, protecting these communities from unstable and unsafe homes has been an important component in reducing inequalities amongst the country's diverse population. Not only would solving housing problems be a step forward in alleviating day-to-day living strains and stress: it would also promote the social and economic inclusion of those groups considered most at risk of exclusion and homelessness.

Furthermore, Target 7 of SDG 10 specifically seeks to facilitate orderly and safe migration and mobility of people. As cities and urban migration expand, organizing the flow of people into cities from rural areas and abroad is necessary to ensure their proper and secure movement and settlement. Several North American cities have high immigration rates and cities need to be able to offer housing space for newcomers: in this regard, affordability has been a major issue, considering that migrant groups are generally more vulnerable to economic competition, lower wages and growing exclusion from access to services. The development of strategic urban plans enable cities to organize inclusive expansion, while reducing inequality gaps and fighting the socio-economic segregation that is increasingly tearing through their fabric. 

Box 14

Scaling up affordable ownership housing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

In 2017, publication of the 'Scaling Up Affordable Ownership Housing in the GTA' research report offered a clearer pathway and insight into low-income housing solutions in the GTA. The report demonstrates how affordable rental units can be made available for moderate and low-income residents when eligible renters are able to enter the GTA housing ownership market. Thus, it states that if 5% of the middle-income renters who use less than 30% of their income on rent could access housing ownership, this would make available up to 10,000 affordable rental housing units in five years.⁷⁶ For this to be possible, the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) recommends creating access to capital for all levels of government by making available specific loans and funds. It also suggests enabling access to land by encouraging the City of Toronto to create an Affordable Housing Land List and selling public land to non-profit housing organizations.⁷⁷ The third recommendation is to exempt non-profits from the municipality's inclusionary zoning by law. Finally, the report suggests amending the definition of 'affordable' in the provincial policy statement to better reflect the current economy.⁷⁸ Thus, the GTA Housing Lab and CUI initiative provide some interesting information and solutions, as applied to low-income housing.

Source: Canadian Urban Institute, <http://www.canurb.org/housing-affordability/>.


3.3 Monitoring local and regional governments' contribution to the SDGs

The assessment of progress and localization of the SDGs in North America requires the active, independent participation of all levels of governments, particularly to ensure monitoring, data collection and follow-up. Data is not reported in a systematic fashion and there is still much progress to be made to monitor the progress of the SDGs in Canada and the United States.

The United States federal government appears to be stepping back from environmental commitments, with its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change and the repeal of various environmental regulations. LRGs have reacted by declaring their own support for the Paris Climate Agreement. States have also created cap-and-trade systems, such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative put forward by ten U.S. states, and the Western Climate Initiative, which groups together American states and Canadian provinces. Canada has only recently adopted strategies explicitly seeking to meet the SDGs and indicated its plan to submit a VNR of its progress in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The current Canadian federal government is also in the process of implementing a carbon price policy coast to coast. The Association of Municipalities Ontario has taken action at a more local level by creating a Low-Carbon Economy Opportunities Task Force to advise member municipalities in their transition to a Low-Carbon economy, as well as offering municipal perspectives on provincial and federal policies.

SDSN has recently expanded its coverage by releasing a U.S. Cities Sustainable Development Goals Index entitled: 'Leaving No U.S. City Behind'. This gives a ranking of the 100 most populated metropolitan areas in the United States on the SDGs. Canada has also made some progress on the creation and funding of monitoring tools. Statistics Canada is now mandated by the government of Canada as the SDGs' data hub for the entire country and for all levels of government. This initiative was approved in September 2018. Since 2018, as

already mentioned, the University of Waterloo has been identified as the Canadian host of SDSN in the country. The University of Waterloo has one of the largest Schools of Environment Studies in Canada. It will work closely with the UN and Canadian stakeholders to identify the best solutions to meet SDG objectives, and share this knowledge with Canadians as well as the rest of the global community. Meanwhile, IISD, the aforementioned Canadian-based think-tank dedicated to promoting human development and environmental sustainability, has established an SDG Knowledge Hub. This data portal includes a series named 'Tracking the SDGs in Canadian Cities', which has so far provided data on the 14 largest Canadian municipalities. IISD has also produced briefing notes providing specific overviews on how these cities stand in regard to the most relevant SDGs.

Finally, Statistics Canada should be able to provide a broader picture of the situation in both large and small municipalities. To date the monitoring systems to study and report on the localization of the SDGs have focused on only the largest cities: this is a challenge which LRGs globally are struggling with, considering how difficult it is for smaller urban settlement to adequately access and take advantage of the SDG official indicators or, alternatively, deploy the kind of capacity and (financial, technical and human) resources needed to adapt global indicators to the local reality. 

'Tracking the SDGs in Canadian Cities' has so far provided data on the 14 largest Canadian municipalities. IISD has also produced briefing notes on how these cities stand in regard to the most relevant SDGs.

4. Conclusions

As mentioned throughout this chapter, LRGs play a fundamental role in the implementation of the SDGs in the North American region. Indeed, their involvement has meant progress towards the localization of the SDGs has been consistent across the United States and Canada.

There are many more commonalities between the two countries but also key differences. In both, progress is highly fragmented, which reflects the nature and structure of their federal systems of government. Not only do both countries lack a national framework for implementing and tracking the SDGs, but it is also difficult to imagine how such a comprehensive framework could exist without sparking serious legal challenges from state and provincial governments.

The most significant divergence between the two countries is current commitment of political leadership. While there are no clear initiatives to support the SDGs and other UN frameworks under the current administration in the United States, in Canada conversely there are. The United States federal government appears to be stepping back from environmental commitments, with its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change and the repeal of various environmental

regulations. Canada has only adopted strategies explicitly seeking to meet the SDGs and submitted its first VNR to the UN in 2018.

Besides the territorial hegemony of the region's two largest countries, it is worth remembering that Jamaica stands out for having adopted an SDG implementation framework and strategy in 2017. The 'Roadmap for SDG implementation in Jamaica' constitutes a national strategic planning framework, which explicitly acknowledges the crucial role of local government.

With a national framework for implementation under development in Canada, and in the absence of such a framework in the United States and, to date, no overt commitment by the U.S. to present its VNR to the HLPF, awareness of the SDGs among LRGs in North America remains low. Therefore, **international LRG networks and institutions must continue to support and raise awareness of the SDGs.**

Nevertheless, when compared with other regions, **LRGs in North America are potentially uniquely empowered to drive change, innovate and pursue new initiatives.** In fact, areas such as land use, public education, and basic services are almost entirely managed by states, provinces or local governments. LRGs have reacted to the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement by declaring their own support for climate change initiatives. States have taken different actions, created cap-and-trade systems, such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative put forward by ten U.S. states, and the Western Climate Initiative, which groups together American states and Canadian provinces. In Canada, the Association of Municipalities Ontario has taken action at a more local level by creating a Low-Carbon Economy Opportunities Task Force to advise member municipalities in

Jamaica stands out for having adopted an SDG implementation framework and strategy in 2017, which explicitly acknowledge the crucial role of local governments.

their transition to a low-carbon economy, as well as offering municipal perspectives on provincial and federal policies.

Indeed, **if either Canada or the United States are to achieve any of the SDG targets, it will require action at all levels of government.** National governments can act in two important ways: aligning funding from intergovernmental transfers with SDG targets and improving the quality of data availability. With regards to data, the U.S. government's official statistics site acknowledges serious gaps in available data to track the achievement of the SDGs. Although Canada submitted its first VNR in 2018, the United States, as has been stated, has yet to do so, and the online SDG implementation tracker indicates only 99 of 244 metrics have been reported while data sources are being explored for the remaining 145.

Second, **since national governments in North America cannot mandate a top-down plan for implementation, federal funding should be used to incentivize further action.** For this end, Canada launched two calls to support projects. Funds could be used, for example, to support LRGs to adopt frameworks for SDG implementation along with comparative countrywide data collection.

As documented throughout this chapter, much of the legal authority to set strict guidelines and establish dedicated programmes to implement the SDGs lies at the state and provincial level. California and Massachusetts in the United States and the provinces of British Columbia and Quebec in Canada are beginning to demonstrate how this can work in practice. Ultimately, when evaluating overall progress and looking ahead to the 2030 target date for achievement of the SDGs, there is both room for optimism, and for concern.

Positively, indicators show that the United States and Canada are already ahead of their peers in several areas. **Localization and continued progress on the SDGs can happen rapidly because LRGs have strong and independent authority to act.** In the goal areas that require significant improvement, states, provinces, and municipalities can raise their own revenue, set their own budgetary priorities, and swiftly take action. Within just three years of the SDGs being adopted, cities like New York and Los Angeles has completed a VLR, and a small number of cities elsewhere in the region have begun to follow suit. This bodes well for the future, and replication in other major cities.

A more pessimistic view however is that, despite all of their advantages, Canada and the United States are not currently on course to achieve any of the SDGs. The same laws and intergovernmental relationships that give LRGs the authority to act independently also inhibit any coordinated action. Although they are currently ahead of their peers in some metrics, the **United States' and Canada's**

When evaluating overall progress and looking ahead to the 2030 target date for the achievement of the SDGs, there is both room for optimism, and for concern.

lack of a national shared strategy means there is a need to develop this common framework and strengthen intergovernmental collaboration.

Fragmentation of government authority will mean much greater national awareness and urgency are needed to replicate solutions across thousands of local municipalities and special districts. While a handful of cities have begun to consider the SDGs as a framework that can guide local action, few cities have the staff time, expertise or data availability to follow.

Both positive and more negative views in fact hold true. The most economically, environmentally and socially sustainable metropolitan areas will perform well globally. State and local political priorities will align, and several of the SDGs will perhaps be addressed. At the same time, improvements are very likely to be geographically concentrated and inequalities that currently exist in U.S. and Canadian societies will grow. The United States and Canada are examples of countries where, with increasing geographical, economic, social and political disparities, there is a major risk of law-makers disagreeing on at least some of the SDGs, dysfunction occurring, and infrastructure and services being allowed to further deteriorate causing greater inequalities. **Far greater efforts need to be made to 'leave no one behind' if progress toward the SDGs is to be shared more widely. ☉**

08



Metropolitan Areas

Thematic chapter



A 'spaghetti junction' highway interchange in Shanghai, China (photo: Denys Nevozhai, t.ly/2W0Ad).

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Metropolis members

Africa

Abidjan
Accra
Addis Ababa
Alexandria
Antananarivo
Bamako
Bangui
Brazzaville
Cairo
Casablanca
Cotonou
Dakar
Douala
Durban
Gauteng
Harare
Johannesburg
Libreville
Marrakech
Niamey
Nouakchott
Rabat
Tunis
Victoria
Yaoundé

Asia

Ahvaz
Amman
Baghdad
Bangkok
Beijing
Beyrouth
Bhopal
Bogor
Busan
Changchun
Changsha
Chengdu
Chongqing
Colombo
Daegu
Daejeon
Dalian
Diyarbakir
East Kalimantan
Faisalabad
Fuzhou
Gaziantep
Goyang
Guangzhou
Gujranwala
Gwangju
Gyeonggi
Haikou
Hangzhou
Hanoi
Harbin
Hyderabad
Incheon
Isfahan
Istanbul
Jakarta
Jilin
Jinan
Kaohsiung
Karaj
Kathmandu
Kuala Lumpur
Kunming
Lahore
Male'
Mashhad
Nanjing
Nanning
New Delhi - NIUA
New Taipei

Ramallah

Seoul
Shanghai
Shenzhen
Shiraz
South Tangerang
Surabaya
Tabriz
Taichung
Taipei
Tehran
Tianjin
Ulsan
Wuhan
Xi'an
Xiamen
Yiwu
Zhengzhou

Europe

Athens
Barcelona
(metropolitan area)
Barcelona (city of)
Berlin
Bruxelles
Bucharest
Grand Lyon
Grand Paris
Greater
Manchester
Kazan
Lisboa
Madrid
Moscow
Sarajevo
Sofia
Torino
Zagreb

Latin America and the Caribbean

Belo Horizonte
Bogotá
Brasília
Buenos Aires
Córdoba
Guarulhos
Guayaquil
La Habana
La Paz
Medellín
Minas Gerais
Montevideo
Porto Alegre
Quito
Rio de Janeiro
Rosario
San Salvador
Santiago de Chile
São Paulo
Valle de Aburrá

North America

Atlanta
Ciudad de México
Guadalajara
Monterrey
Montréal
Puebla
Tijuana
Toronto

Source: www.metropolis.org
(August 2019).

1. Introduction

The accelerated expansion of metropolitan regions is an increasingly visible phenomenon in the 21st century. According to United Nations (UN) data the urban population of the world has grown rapidly, increasing from 751 million in 1950 to 4.2 billion in 2018. More than 1.8 billion people live in cities with more than 1 million inhabitants (43% of the urban population and 24% of the total world population), while 556 million (13% of the urban population) live in 33 megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants. Tokyo is the world's largest city with an agglomeration of 37 million inhabitants, followed by Delhi with 29 million, Shanghai with 26 million, and Mexico City and São Paulo each with around 22 million inhabitants. Cairo, Mumbai, Beijing and Dhaka all have close to 20 million inhabitants. By 2030, the world is projected to have 43 megacities, most of them in developing regions.¹

Metropolitan areas, as defined in the GOLD IV Report, are urban agglomerations with more than one million inhabitants, including the physical contiguous urban area and the pattern of its labour market. However, different types of metropolitan areas co-exist in the global system of cities, from globalized 'established' metropolises hosting the densest concentrations of firms, capital and educated labour (e.g. Hong Kong, London, New York, Paris and Tokyo), through extended metropolitan areas of low and middle low-income countries dominated by slums and informal economies (e.g. Dhaka, Kinshasa, Lagos), with a group of 'emerging' world cities of large fast-growing economies (such as Istanbul, Mexico City, São Paulo and Shanghai) in between,

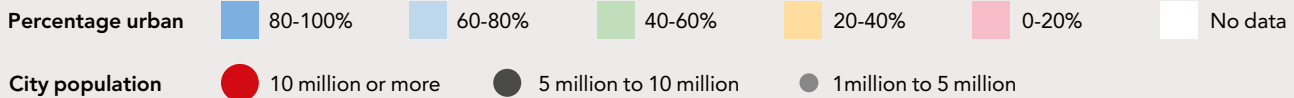
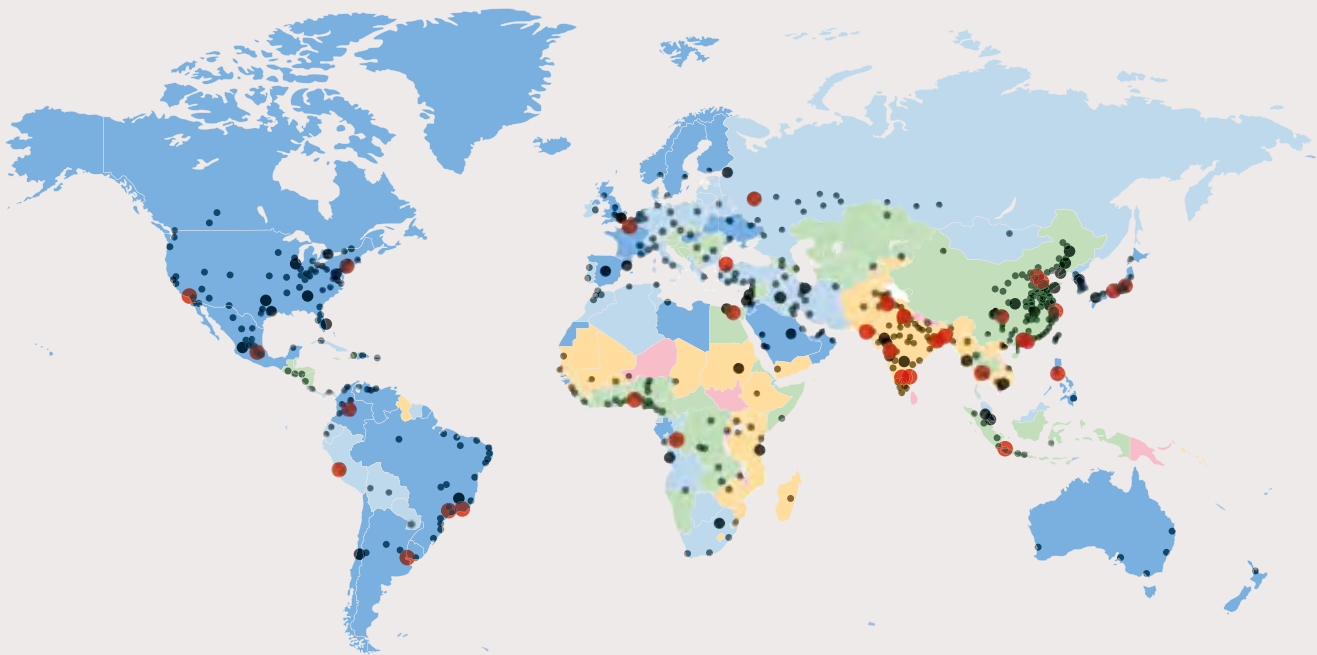
to metropolises of emerging countries with more pronounced social and economic contrasts (e.g. Cairo, Delhi, Johannesburg, Manila).

Globally, metropolitan cities are seen as places of innovation, wealth generation, culture and opportunity, accounting for 60% of the world's GDP.² They are home to government bodies, leading companies, universities, research and cultural centres and key civil society organisations (CSOs), as well as a large proportion of talent and creativity, technological innovation, interconnectedness and artistic output worldwide. However, the quality of life in many metropolitan areas is increasingly threatened by congestion, pollution, social and gender inequalities and violence amongst other socio-economic and environmental problems. Metropolitan cities often have fragmented urban landscapes ranging from wealthy to marginalized (or even ghettoized) neighbourhoods, with core

Different types of metropolitan areas co-exist in the global system of cities, from globalized 'established' metropolises hosting the densest concentrations of firms, capital and educated labour, through extended metropolitan areas of low and middle low-income countries dominated by slums and informal economies.

Figure 1

Percentage of urban and urban agglomerations by size class (2018)



Data source: World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 revision.

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

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and peripheral areas. The growth of metropolitan areas has given rise to peripheral development spaces on the outskirts — called suburbs — which become peripheral to the urban economy, main infrastructures or institutional processes. In developing countries, rapid urbanization has often seen the rise of extended informal settlements in these peripheries, home to hundreds of thousands of people with limited or no access to basic services who are often more exposed to natural disasters. It is worth remembering that over 900 million people currently live in slums, most of them within metropolitan areas.

Metropolitan areas have become a key battleground for reducing inequalities, addressing climate change challenges and protecting human rights and, as specifically highlighted by the New Urban Agenda, establishing the 'right to the city' (right to gender equality, housing, mobility, safety,

basic services and culture), a principle supported by organizations representing metropolitan cities such as Metropolis,³ as well as the peripheral cities of metropolitan areas organized through the UCLG's Peripheral Cities Committee. The New Urban Agenda, moreover, lays the groundwork for more initiatives towards more democratic and sustainable cities, within the framework of human rights. The inclusion of women's right to the city in the New Urban Agenda, in particular, can become a tool to demand the fulfilment of these commitments and monitor their implementation. Indeed, the challenges facing metropolitan areas show regional specificities.⁴

The Asia-Pacific region dominates the global urban system, with around 326 cities with a population of over one million, of which 21 are megacities (predicted to rise to 27 by 2035). The GDP growth of Asia-Pacific cities in recent years

has shown a strong positive correlation with urbanization. There are, nevertheless, important sub-regional differences. While big cities in East Asia show high densities, many metropolitan areas — particularly in the South and South-East of the region — are growing at a faster rate than population growth rates, leading to sprawl and a fall in population density. Disparities are also growing between cities and countries across the region, hindering the achievement of SDG 10. While the proportion of the urban population living in slums has decreased, the number of people living in slums is increasing, particularly in South and South-East Asian sub-regions. As mentioned in the Asia-Pacific chapter, Asia is home to more than half the world's cities most vulnerable to natural disasters such as rising sea levels as a result of climate change.⁵

Latin America and the Caribbean region have 74 cities with more than one million inhabitants (46% of the urban population) and six megacities. Here one of the main concerns is security in metropolitan areas. The annual report on the 50 most dangerous cities⁶ states that most are found in Latin America, except for three in South Africa and four in the United States. Inequalities, environmental problems and the impact of natural disasters are also increasing in urban areas. The New Urban Agenda aims to achieve adequate shelter and secure tenure, particularly for people living in slums; promote a more inclusive urbanism to reduce segmented urban spaces characterized by gentrified neighbourhoods (gated communities, condos, etc.) and informal settlements (shanty towns, slums, *favelas*, *villas miseria*, etc.); and promote the right to the city for all.⁷


Africa's population is expected to more than double by 2050 to around 2.5 billion (25% of the global population).⁸ During this period, the urban population will increase threefold, from around 587 million people to around 1.5 billion.⁹ The region currently has 68 cities with more than one million inhabitants (37% of all urban dwellers) and five megacities. Urban planning systems have not changed significantly since the colonial era, and although some efforts have been made, many master plans are outdated or not applied.¹⁰ Moreover, economic growth does not generate sufficient employment options in the urban formal sector, thus urban areas tend to have high rates of unemployment and informal activities, particularly for youth. There are difficulties managing the pace of urban population growth which has contributed to the development of informal settlements with limited access to basic services. The proportion of people living in informal settlements represents 40% to 58% of urban dwellers.¹¹ Cities are also facing environmental degradation and environmental risks such as flooding, hurricanes, etc.¹²

The countries of the Global North are home to the remaining metropolitan areas (Europe,

including Russia, and Northern America together contain 111 cities of more than one million inhabitants, with four megacities). As outlined in the Urban Agenda for the European Union adopted in Amsterdam in May 2016, issues relating to social inclusion and sustainability are a priority for European urban areas. Four issues in particular have been highlighted as key: a) environment (climate change mitigation and adaptation, aging infrastructure and densification); b) competitiveness (jobs and new technologies, innovative territorial competitiveness); c) transport and energy (mobility, pollution reduction and energy efficiency); and d) social and territorial cohesion (migration and refugees, social participation).¹³ Gentrification has become a key issue in European metropolitan areas, since it influences the price of housing at the metropolitan scale.

Northern American metropolitan areas are facing five main challenges with regards to sustainable development: a) institutional fragmentation within and between areas which prevents metropolitan coordination; b) legacy technology (energy, transportation, and water infrastructure in Northern America are old and in need of renewal); c) the existing car-oriented approach to land-use, transportation and housing; d) lack of a national framework for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and carbon reduction strategies, leaving it to lower levels of government (states and municipalities) to take the initiative on sustainable development; and e) income inequality and the precariousness of housing in large metropolitan areas (in the United States for example, in spite of being one of the wealthiest nations on the planet, there is 22% child poverty).¹⁴

Finally, the impact of technology in large cities around the world is also worth mentioning. First, the efficient use of technology as part of the 'smart cities' paradigm: acknowledging information and data to be a common good, but also respecting the rights of citizens to privacy, freedom of expression and democracy, which a number of cities are already doing.¹⁵ Second, the impact of the shared economy in cities, especially in sectors such as tourism and e-commerce, will be an important challenge to monitor.¹⁶

One of the main purposes of this chapter is to illustrate how metropolitan governance affects the implementation of the SDGs.¹⁷ The first part reviews the main challenges such as institutional fragmentation and the need for coordinated multilevel governance, while the second part addresses how metropolitan areas are implementing the SDGs. Throughout, it showcases examples of positive and less positive reforms and experiments from around the world. Finally, the chapter concludes with policy recommendations. 

2. The metropolitan context and the SDGs

Metropolitan governance and its broad institutional environment has a direct impact on the implementation of the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda must be translated into actions and policies at different scales. Metropolitan governance is thus key to the success of an integrated approach to sustainable development, as required in the implementation of the SDGs. While national political commitment and leadership are vital, given the governance structures of most countries responsibility for actual implementation lies with local institutions.¹⁸ A range of issues must be factored in to the way metropolitan areas approach implementation of the SDGs.

As the process of reform and adjustment has not kept pace with urban expansion, metropolitan governance has not kept pace with the intensified demands made upon them. As highlighted in the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas approved in Montreal in October 2015 for Habitat III, in general metropolitan areas enjoy limited political recognition.¹⁹ This results in metropolitan spaces being institutionally fragmented: multiple administrations and agencies oversee the development of urban policies, causing problems both of duplication and lack of responsibility. There is also the question of governance and leadership. In a few cases, metropolitan areas have directly or indirectly elected metropolitan governments. In OECD countries,²⁰ Northern America²¹ and Latin America²² indirect election models predominate, where those elected as political representatives in their respective municipalities form part of the metropolitan structure, with a direct impact on metropolitan institutional legitimacy and visibility from the citizen's viewpoint.

The Declaration stresses the need to promote a new partnership with other levels of government to strengthen metropolitan governance mechanisms and implement financing mechanisms adapted to metropolitan challenges; develop integrated participatory planning to reduce sprawl, promote the use of fully disaggregated data (by age, gender and territory) on socio-demographic and economic trends, and foster functionally and socially mixed neighbourhoods; ensure safe and sustainable mobility and environmental sustainability to fight

climate change; and promote inclusive policies for housing, social services, gender equality and cultural heritage. Transversally, gender equality should be mainstreamed within all such policies. In fact, metropolitan areas often have limited fiscal autonomy: they mostly depend on transfers from other administrations, as well as on the national institutional framework and the powers and resources devolved to them.²³

Those elements that shape the institutional environment at a metropolitan scale for the development of the SDGs are briefly reviewed in the next section. The first section examines the different models of metropolitan governance and their relationship with the implementation of SDGs, while the second considers the institutional environment and arrangements needed to facilitate actions. The last section is devoted to analysis of references to metropolitan areas in the Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) of 2016, 2017 and 2018. [🔗](#)

The Habitat III thematic meeting in Montreal, in October 2015 (photo: © Metropolis/BenDesjardins).



2.1 Metropolitan governance

As big cities have grown beyond their historical political and electoral boundaries, their governance has become more complex and fragmented, comprising a series of local governments, authorities, agencies and interests that were not designed to address issues at the metropolitan scale. This means that they are usually governed by some form of power-sharing, with varying levels of legitimacy and transparency. In fact there are many models of metropolitan governance, with no one model suitable for all. Each metropolitan area has its particularities and form of governance. As stated in GOLD IV and other reports,²⁴ four main models of metropolitan governance are generally recognized based on the type of institutional arrangements in place, ranging from models of hard to soft governance:²⁵

- Metropolitan governments or structures created expressly to deal with metropolitan challenges (one-tier or two-tier).
- Sectoral metropolitan agencies to manage or plan single services (public transport, environment, police, etc.).
- Vertical coordination, in which metropolitan policies are not carried out by a metropolitan body but de facto by other levels of government that already exist (a region, a province, a county, etc.).
- Less institutionalized models (soft or informal coordination) based on municipalities' voluntary cooperation, whether through an association of municipalities or by means of strategic planning.

Each model has its advantages and disadvantages. Most metropolitan areas are in fact hybrids of more than one model because of their complex geographies, the status of different delivery agencies, and the fact that they are nested within governance structures both above and below them. While there is an ongoing debate about the positive and negative

features of these different types of metropolitan governance, this chapter considers them through the lens of implementation of the SDGs.²⁶

Different ideas are associated with the development of urban sustainable agendas and the model of metropolitan governance. The **first model, that of metropolitan governments**, does not in itself guarantee effective implementation of the SDGs, especially when there is a lack of binding mechanisms (often the case in the two-tier model).²⁷ In other words, the absence of exclusive powers for these institutions in key areas such as metropolitan infrastructures is a weakness in metropolitan arrangements. Competence for key infrastructures such as highways, railways, ports and airports is typically in the hands of national or sub-national governments (federated states and regions). Another obstacle is the lack of fiscal autonomy of metropolitan institutions, which is especially problematic in light of the fact that municipal expenditures per capita tend to be higher in metropolitan areas because of the nature of services (e.g. public transportation and waste collection). In most cases, funding from metropolitan institutions comes from a mixture of sources, mainly transfers from other levels of governments and taxes. Whilst in France, new *métropoles* have more financial autonomy (own taxes), in England there is a direct assignment from central government.²⁸ Relying heavily on own-source revenues (taxes and user fees) and having the freedom to levy taxes creates more fiscal autonomy than reliance on intergovernmental transfers, which can be unpredictable and restrict the ability of metro institutions to control their own destiny.²⁹

The absence of powerful metropolitan governments means that, in practice, the actions of metropolitan governments are often bypassed by the municipalities (for example in Barcelona and Montreal)³⁰ or central government (for example, Bangkok).³¹ In this sense, in order to

achieve greater policy coherence, cooperation needs to be strengthened between different levels of government to ensure that policies aligned with the SDGs are effective. That said, it is also true that having a metropolitan government at least provides the institutional framework to legitimize the development of urban agendas. One clear example of this is Seoul, capital city of South Korea and one of eight high-level local governments classed as a 'Special City'. Democratic reforms in South Korea in the 1990s led to the first mayoral election in Seoul in 1995. Seoul is pursuing sustainable development through key initiatives based on participatory urban planning and governance processes. It is the only metropolitan area in the Asia-Pacific region to attempt to address all 17 SDG Goals, but not all the Targets (see Asia-Pacific chapter, Box 4). In fact, the metropolitan government of Seoul does not cover the full metropolitan functional area.

In contrast, the **second model of metropolitan governance based on sectorial metropolitan agencies** (and utilities) that manage or plan a single task or service (public transport, environment, police, etc.) can be useful for the implementation of one of the Goals (e.g. mobility, water and sanitation etc.), but the main weakness of this model is that it lacks an integrated vision. To compensate for this single issue focus, coordination with other agencies and levels of government is essential, as is the case in Melbourne. Indeed, Greater Melbourne is made up of 31 municipalities which vary in land area and budget. At both state and municipal government levels there are initiatives underway to localize the SDGs.³²

As for the **third model of vertical coordination**, where metropolitan policies are not carried out by a metropolitan body but by other levels of government that already exist (a region, a province, a county etc.), the development of SDGs depends mainly on the competences and financing of this layer of government (and how it is coordinated with other layers). One example of this is Metropolitan Lagos, located in Lagos State in the south-west of Nigeria. The metropolitan area of Lagos comprises 16 local government areas which, together with a further four local government areas, combine to form the State of Lagos. Many of the local government area's responsibilities in Lagos have been taken over by the state government which has established up to 11 agencies to undertake functions in Lagos, and this has contributed to high institutional fragmentation. Attempts have been made to move beyond sectorial metropolitan authorities to a Lagos Mega-City Development Authority, as set out in a Bill, but this has not yet been realized.³³ In contrast, Berlin also has a model of vertical coordination which has proved more successful.

This chapter considers the different types of metropolitan governance through the lens of implementation of the SDGs.

With 3.5 million inhabitants, it is both a German Land of the Federal Republic of Germany and a city. This means that the Senate Chancellery of the federal state of Berlin is located in Berlin Town Hall and is the official seat of the Governing Mayor of Berlin, who has the same rank as a minister-president. The city-state of Berlin has more powers than ordinary German cities. However, the metropolitan area exceeds the administrative limits of the city-state and includes the surrounding municipalities of the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan region, with no institutional recognition. It is the city-state of Berlin then that leads the development of a metropolitan vision.³⁴

Finally, the **fourth less institutionalized models are based on municipalities' voluntary cooperation**, whether through an association of municipalities or by means of strategic planning. These are soft forms of metropolitan governance, where other actors can participate in the development of the SDGs. This model is often used as a mechanism to gather all actors together where there is high institutional fragmentation. There is therefore a large degree of openness towards public and private actors and other stakeholders. One outstanding example is New York City (NYC), which was the first city in the world to report to the UN on the status of efforts to achieve the global benchmarks to address poverty, inequality and climate change by the year 2030. NYC's achievements in sustainability since 2015 have been carried out under the OneNYC strategic plan (see North American chapter, Box 1).

Although there is no one size fits all solution, adequate metropolitan governance arrangements can contribute to an integrated vision on sustainable urban development, which is required for implementation of the SDGs. At the same time, the increasingly complex landscape of urban metropolitan areas — megacities, urban regions and corridors — and the challenges posed by the SDGs and related global agendas requires a rethink of metropolitan governance systems in order to better address the whole urban functional area and overcome institutional, social and spatial fragmentation. Weak metropolitan governance undermines the potential of metropolitan areas to function as cornerstones of national sustainable development. 🕒

2.2 Institutional arrangements to foster the implementation of the SDGs

The extent to which multilevel governance works is a key factor in creating an enabling institutional environment for the implementation of the SDGs. Indeed, lack of coordination between the different institutions involved in metropolitan management with competences related to the development of the SDGs clearly affects their implementation.³⁵ In the case of metropolitan areas, this coordination is in the hands of cities when no metropolitan institutions exist or when metropolitan institutions have limited powers.

A key question related to institutional fragmentation is city form and size, which affects leadership and the capacity to guide the development of urban agendas. Some metropolitan areas are monocentric, with a dominant central city where the implementation of the SDGs is clearly led by the main city, especially when they have a predominant demographic, economic and political weight (e.g. Madrid and Berlin). This is also the case for consolidated local governments such as eThekweni Municipality (a merger of Durban and other municipalities) in South Africa, Nairobi in Kenya and Toronto in Canada, where one finds a single elected local government administering the whole metropolitan area (but where the urban area has spilled over the administrative boundaries). Other metropolitan areas, such as Manila, are polycentric and leadership is more diluted among the different municipalities.

Another significant problem concerns utility service agencies, which may be provided by a public agency state-owned enterprise, Public-

Private Partnership (PPP) or other outsourcing arrangement. Many of these utilities are not brought into the localizing of the SDGs, and some show no interest in doing so. For example, there is little incentive for privatized water utilities to achieve savings in water supply as this will have an impact on profits. This problem has arisen in Manila and Jakarta, where water supplies have been privatized. The same applies to solid waste services, electricity and energy, where payments are based on increased sales rather than rewarding efficiencies which would support achievement of the SDGs. Some cities, often prompted by the citizenship, have fostered the creation of city-owned enterprises for the supply of basic services such as energy, following the principles of environmental sustainability (i.e. they only supply renewable energy) and social sustainability (i.e. they ensure service provision to the most vulnerable groups). This is the case in Hamburg,³⁶ Barcelona³⁷ (energy services), Paris,³⁸ and Dar es Salaam³⁹ (water services), with numbers growing.

In this sense, as underlined in GOLD IV, empowered local governments with stronger democratic legitimacy are a precondition for promoting inclusive implementation arrangements to facilitate dialogue and consensus. Their success depends on the availability of an adequate legal framework and related incentives to achieve 'buy-in' from all levels of government — particularly from core and peripheral cities.⁴⁰ This is important as peripheral jurisdictions often find it difficult to advance their interests over the interests of central cities, whose bargaining power with investors and higher levels of government can be superior.⁴¹ The imperative for peripheral cities and territories is to create governance arrangements that reflect both their importance to metropolitan areas and their distinctiveness within them, fostering a polycentric and inclusive approach to metropolitan issues. Existing examples show that the democratic legitimacy of local government-led metropolitan partnerships is critical to building

A significant problem concerns utility service agencies that are not brought into or show no interest in localizing the SDGs.

effective policies for larger regional issues, as well as strong respect for the principle of subsidiarity in multi-layered contexts.⁴²

This situation differs depending on the characteristics of cities and metropolitan spaces in each continent, but there are several cases in all the continents where multilevel governance is not particularly effective. Metro cities such as Los Angeles, Manila, Bangkok, Sao Paulo, Colombo and Sydney comprise a multiplicity of layers of central government agencies and local governments, often with differing political leanings. Cities such as Bangkok, Delhi, and Manila have imposed metropolitan development authority governance structures to address coordination and urban management issues, but these have a number of weaknesses.⁴³ In Auckland, New Zealand, regional difficulties in coordination between five local governments led the central government to hold an enquiry that resulted in amalgamations into one metropolitan region.⁴⁴ In some cases, however, local governments have been able to build voluntary bottom-up metropolitan partnerships despite a national context that largely favours top-down arrangements. Greater Manchester in the United Kingdom is one example where the practice of voluntary partnership emerged over 25 years under the stewardship of committed and charismatic local politicians. This resulted in the establishment of a combined authority to bring together ten local authorities and provide a stronger and more democratically legitimate model of metropolitan governance.⁴⁵ In Indonesia, the Kartamantul partnership stands out as an example of horizontal cooperation (see Box 1).

The complexity of multiple layers of local government and the competition for resources between them makes it extremely difficult to create a competitive enabling environment in large cities. A deep-rooted ethos of political consensus can make this voluntary approach highly effective, although this is the exception rather than the rule (e.g. in Switzerland, the Netherlands and Sweden).⁴⁷ In other cases, tackling the institutional challenges facing local government will involve reducing the number of institutions operating at a metropolitan scale and increasing the profile of local government. One of the emerging experiences in Africa has been ensuring local government powers are entrenched in the constitution and, through re-demarcation, that single jurisdictions are created, particularly in metropolitan areas. This was the case in South Africa in the period 1996-2000 and, more recently, in Kenya, where Nairobi and Mombasa have been accorded county status.

In the Asia-Pacific region, some metropolitan areas actively working on the SDGs have established independent frameworks and reporting mechanisms that will have to be

Box 1

The Kartamantul Partnership

Like other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Indonesia faces many challenges in localizing the SDGs at a metropolitan level. These apply to Kartamantul as much as they apply to Jakarta or Medan.

1. Functional assignment. Most of the SDG indicator achievements are carried out by programmes at city/regency levels, while the preparation of local action plans is executed by provincial governments (money follows function).
2. Coordination between provinces and cities/regencies. In several local training sessions conducted by the Localize SDGs programme, one of the issues raised was that coordination should be improved between provincial and city/regency governments in relation to the SDGs. At provincial levels, awareness of the SDGs is relatively high whereas at city/regency levels it is less pronounced.
3. Data availability. The Ministry of Planning (Bappenas) has prepared SDG indicators metadata. However, at regional levels not all data is available due to limited access, differences in calculation etc.

Kartamantul (Greater Yogyakarta) forms part of the Special Yogyakarta region and is made up of Yogyakarta City, Sleman and Bantul Regency. The population of Kartamantul in 2017 was 2.4 million,⁴⁶ covering an area of 1,114 km². Kartamantul is an inter-local government partnership in Indonesia managed by a joint secretariat, covering one city (Yogyakarta) and two regencies (Sleman Regency and Bantul Regency). It was set up after decentralization in 2000 to manage and coordinate the following services, although it does not rely on a formal metropolitan regional plan: garbage management, liquid and solid waste management, drainage management, road management, clean water, transportation and spatial layout in the region. The Kartamantul Partnership can be sustained as long as local governments recognize their mutual dependency and act for common, shared interests and objectives. In this sense, it has proved to be a valuable management mechanism to ensure improved coordination of planning and infrastructure in the region.

Source: Bappenas (2018). 'The Survey on Promoting Planning and Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) In the Republic of Indonesia'.

integrated into national reporting and sub-metropolitan regions reporting at a later stage. However, in metropolitan areas such of Manila and Jakarta, cities making up the metropolitan area have different agendas and priorities in localizing the SDGs.⁴⁸ It is extremely difficult, therefore, to gain consensus between the many layers of metropolitan government, and even more difficult when metropolitan utilities such as state-owned or privatized water and electricity utilities are included in the reporting framework.

Moreover, the degree of local autonomy also affects the capacity to solve metropolitan

The 2010 gay pride parade as it cruises through the favela of Rocinha, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (photo: Saulo Cruz, bit.ly/2Mx8jSd).



challenges in implementing the SDGs. While in European Nordic countries municipalities have a high degree of financial autonomy and competences in health, education and sustainability, local governments of most African,⁴⁹ Asian and Latin American countries lack the powers and financial, technical and human resources to solve these issues. In other words, they are more dependent on national policies. The opportunity of SDGs to bridge the gap requires the development of improved and new governance arrangements and structures to coordinate approaches both vertically and horizontally between the different governments and agencies and ensure an adequate share of resources across all levels of government to achieve common targets.

Over the past few years, governance approaches have shifted towards more participatory and decentralized processes, in which the principles of co-creation, accountability, transparency, inclusion and citizen rights advocacy have been the true drivers of social change. However, despite this progress towards more inclusive mechanisms, and even though women and other vulnerable groups enjoy an unprecedented institutional presence in decision-making processes, there is still much to be done before governance models truly promote equality and challenge discrimination and women's rights violations (SDG 5). These goals can only be achieved by acknowledging

and highlighting the inequalities and difficulties that women still face in their daily lives in metropolises and urban communities: differences in class, education, accessible financial resources, quality of life, culture and symbolic environment and legacies. To challenge these differences — through redesigning access and use of urban facilities and public space, as well as including all marginalized groups in planning and political organization — it is essential to re-think the way metropolises are managed. This should not be limited to the women's collective, but should also include all other 'invisible' groups of today's cities for example LGBTQIA+ communities, ethnic and religious minorities and age groups.⁵⁰


To sum up, there are a number of different metropolitan governance mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs. However, a fair and sustainable metropolitan governance system ultimately should observe several key principles: **empowered local governments** with elected metropolitan authorities that are **accountable** to their citizens; **subsidiarity**, with a clear definition of roles and powers between different levels of governments and among local governments; and **adequate resources and financial instruments** to incentivize and encourage local government cooperation. ☺

2.3 Metropolitan areas and the Voluntary National Reports

An analysis of the VNRs for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 shows that a growing number refer to the contribution of sub-national governments and, in particular, big cities in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs have begun to address the metropolitan dimension as well, although it does not attract sufficient coverage and specific related challenges are not clearly addressed. Only some countries (e.g. Poland, 2018) recognize the identity of metropolitan areas and involve them in the multi-level governance system for SDG implementation. Australia (2018) relied on the country's LGAs, major cities and the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council (Perth) in drafting the VNR. These three tiers of government are also involved in the City Deals programmes to deliver long-term outcomes for large cities and regions and the 2030 Agenda, further underlining the leading roles played by Perth Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council and Melbourne City Council.⁵¹ Mexico's 2018 VNR acknowledges that 'although they do not have metropolitan governments, metropolitan areas — as large population centres — also play an important role [and] have the potential to impact national achievements',⁵² thus recognizing the need to localize the SDGs to reduce important differences between metropolitan areas as highlighted by the Sustainable Cities Index created by Citibanamex.

Significant opportunities have been missed, for example in Italy where, despite having a specific national operational programme for metropolitan areas characterized by economic and social marginalization, urban decay and lack of services (PON Metro), the 2017 VNR was not able to assess the status and performance of each of these metropolitan areas in terms of their achievement of the SDGs. In contrast in Brazil, where a 2015 federal law set out requirements for the institutionalization of metropolitan areas as well as guidelines for planning and multilevel governance,⁵³ the federal government recognizes the importance of such institutions in the 2017

VNR by underlining the awareness-raising initiatives that have been undertaken, specifically targeted at metropolitan areas (dissemination of a localization manual for SDG 11). In other VNRs, metropolitan areas (or large cities) are analysed from a substantive perspective — as in the Colombian 2016 VNR — or introduced as examples of good practice together with those of other local and regional governments (Ecuador 2018 VNR presents the experiences of Quito; whilst the Japan 2018 VNR does the same with Kitakyushu Metropolitan Area). Some VNRs analyse key metropolitan challenges: the national governments' new regulatory benchmarking, structural plans, urban policies and management plans within the cities (e.g. Saudi Arabia 2018 for Riyadh); the creation of new urban centres to stop the growth of non-sustainable practices in the principal ones (e.g. Qatar 2018 for Doha, and Egypt 2018 for Cairo); urban planning, health, housing and security (e.g. Uruguay 2017); exclusion and social vulnerability, and coastal management (e.g. Brazil 2017); environment (e.g. South Korea 2016, which includes two metropolitan indicators, namely metropolitan air quality and size of park areas in metropolitan cities); and transport (e.g. Sri Lanka 2018, Belgium 2017 for Antwerp and Brussels). The Greek VNR 2018 outlines the roles played by Athens and Thessaloniki, giving them a high profile in the report with abundant references to their achievements with regards to a number of metropolitan challenges. Additionally, the drafting of regulatory plans for their territories is the fourth pillar of the Integrated Spatial Planning Strategy (together with the national document, the twelve regional documents and other specific frameworks).

In spite of the fact that many successful local initiatives have been used as examples in the national VNRs, the space given to metropolitan areas, their problems and specificities is insufficient, clearly demonstrating that work with these institutions is not considered strategic by national authorities globally. More joint work with, and greater visibility of, metropolitan areas will be needed in the years to come. 

3. Metropolitan actions for the implementation of the SDGs

Cities and thus metropolitan areas are among the frontrunners as far as the 2030 Agenda localization process is concerned, and this is demonstrated throughout the different regions in the world. Previous chapters in the report have shown that metropolitan areas such as Buenos Aires, Barcelona, Berlin, Copenhagen, Durban, Los Angeles, Madrid, Mexico City, Medellin, New York, Quito, Paris, Shenzhen and Seoul amongst others, have taken the lead, often ahead of their national governments. They have committed to achieving the 2030 Agenda by aligning their development agendas and public policies to implement the SDGs; by making institutional arrangements to facilitate coordinated implementation; by engaging citizens and metropolitan stakeholders with the SDGs; and by sharing experiences and dealing with metropolitan challenges such as transport, climate change and social inclusion. However, metropolitan areas must manage significant obstacles in this process. The next section analyses different metropolitan experiences to understand how big cities are addressing the 2030 Agenda, both directly and indirectly, through their sustainable development strategies and policies.

3.1 Metropolitan contributions to the achievement of the SDGs

Metropolitan areas and big cities have been among the most committed actors worldwide to address the 2030 Agenda and to align their development strategies, plans and public policies with the SDGs. Many have acknowledged that the challenges they face can be addressed by the Agenda and that they are already contributing to the SDGs through a wide range of innovative solutions and practices. They see the 2030 Agenda as an opportunity to improve their policy-making processes, addressing sustainable development in a more integral manner, involving citizens and metropolitan stakeholders, focusing on the most vulnerable and being more transparent and accountable.

Many metropolitan cities have made important progress in the alignment of their strategies and local development plans with the SDGs, as well as with the other global agendas (Paris Climate Agreement, New Urban Agenda, Sendai Framework). However, metropolises in most contexts face important institutional constraints. Together with the inherent weaknesses in governance, the challenges faced by metropolitan areas are often under-reported in the global, regional and national agendas, as has already been discussed in this chapter. The New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change, for example, give insufficient recognition to the metropolitan dimension. And this, despite the strong presence of the top mayors in Habitat III, in the COP 21 and, annually, in the HLPF in New York.

Despite this complex reality, the 2030 Agenda, as well as other global agendas, have served as leverage to **improve the policy-making process** at metropolitan level. The process of aligning sustainable development plans with the 2030 Agenda has led to concerted efforts by metropolises to involve teams, citizens and metropolitan stakeholders. Mexico City, for example, launched a training and awareness-

raising workshop for members of the government, officials and representatives of the main institutions of the city to introduce the SDGs as the roadmap for the new planning process to begin after the 2018 elections.⁵⁴ Bogotá used the SDGs to open new platforms for citizen participation, in partnership with the UN. Buenos Aires and Quito have also led the alignment process in their countries (see Box 2). Amsterdam through its MediaLab launched the so-called Global Goals Jam 2017, a two-day event consisting of short design sprints, which brought together local

Box 2

The case of Buenos Aires (Argentina)

The Participative Strategic Plan Buenos Aires 2035 (PEP BA 2035) is the result of joint work with 183 civil society organizations (CSOs). Organized into working groups, the selected local stakeholders defined from scratch the goals, vision, strategic axes, guidelines, proposals and projects. PEP BA 2035 defined five strategic axes related to the SDGs (31 out of 96 proposals are aligned), one of them being the metropolitan axis which includes all competences related to sustainable mobility, infrastructures, services, waste management, basins, ports and airports, and metropolitan information systems. Special mention is also made of metropolitan resilience, including prevention and early warning of the different phenomena associated with climate change. One of the biggest challenges is establishing a metropolitan institution. The city is promoting a gender indicator system, in line with SDG 5; a specific sustainable mobility initiative complying with SDGs 11 and 13; and a cross-sectoral project - the Urbanization and Urban Integration Plan - which contributes to SDGs 11, 6, 7 and the rest of the SDGs to a lesser extent. Specific work is also being carried out to align the city council's performance to SDG 16.

Source: <https://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/noticias/plan-estrategico-participativo-buenos-aires-2035-pep-ba-2035>.



Box 3

SDG alignment and localization in eThekweni-Durban

In South Africa, the municipality of eThekweni-Durban has aligned its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) with the SDGs. For the last two fiscal years, eThekweni has incorporated the SDG targets and indicators into its local government responsibilities and municipal budget using a bottom-up approach as part of the city's strategic approach to sustainability. This alignment has focused on four main pillars: human rights, people, the planet and prosperity. This exercise has allowed the city's metropolitan area to introduce a system of benchmarking that permits more robust monitoring and a better reporting framework. In 2017, 66 out of 98 SDG indicators had been aligned with investment projects; in 2018, this number increased to 75. With support from local government affiliated organizations such as the eThekweni Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE), eThekweni Municipal Academy (EMA), and UCLG, the city has been able to improve its capacity and understanding of the SDGs. By providing input into SDG Toolkit developments and assisting in the training of trainers on SDGs, the city is enabling advocacy, learning and institutionalization of the SDGs amongst its own officials as well as those from other cities.

Source: Puvendra Akkiah, 'Unpacking the global agenda: implementation in eThekweni'. Unpublished powerpoint presentation (contribution to UCLG GOLD V).

creative teams of designers, developers and jammers as well as the council's technical staff to work up innovative ideas to contribute to the five SDGs prioritized by the council (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 11).⁵⁵ The Berlin Strategy/Urban Development Concept Berlin 2030 provides an inter-agency model for the long-term sustainable development of the capital and was developed following the participative process 'Shaping the City Together'. This was open not only to the citizens of Berlin and Senate representatives but also more than 100 associations, local authorities and institutions from across the region of Berlin-Brandenburg.⁵⁶ In other regions, eThekweni-Durban led the alignment of the 2030 Agenda with the metropolitan plan in South Africa (see Box 3).⁵⁷

Involving metropolitan stakeholders is key as they bring knowledge, creativity, resources and technology, amongst other assets. Articulating mechanisms that foster **public and private coresponsibility** for a shared development is not an easy task, but the 2030 Agenda — and SDG 17.17 in particular — offers a unique opportunity to do so. Metropolitan areas such as Tshwane, San Francisco and Seoul have already oriented their sustainable development strategies together with their local partners — business and civil society — thanks to the Global Compact Cities Programme.⁵⁸ Other cities, such as Paris, London, Lagos, Greater New York, São Paulo, Shanghai, and Stuttgart, have fostered PPPs to complement the government's resources and institutional capacities.⁵⁹ In the same vein, relating



The harbour of eThekweni-Durban, Kwazulu Natal, South Africa (photo: South African Tourism, bit.ly/2Mx7VD4).

local sustainable development strategies to the capabilities of **knowledge-based institutions** can achieve more efficient and innovative public policies, as demonstrated by a number of good practices being implemented around the globe. For example, Los Angeles City Council's partnership with Occidental College relies on the latter's knowledge base, research, and data collection skills to accelerate pursuit of the SDGs. The city presented its Voluntary Local Review (VLR) to the UN in July 2019.⁶⁰ Its memorandum with the World Council on City Data (WCCD) will turn Los Angeles into one of eight local data hubs for sharing information related to the SDG indicators.

In addition to involving citizens and key stakeholders in the policy-making process, other metropolitan areas have also shifted towards more **transparent and accountable mechanisms**. New York has linked transparency and accountability efforts with the SDGs by being the first metropolitan area in the world to report to the UN on the status of efforts to achieve the global benchmarks to address poverty, inequality and climate change by the year 2030.⁶¹


However, robust accountability requires **data**. Transposing the 2030 Agenda's **indicators** into a metropolitan reality is a major challenge. Initial efforts have been developed in partnership with specialized institutions such as Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN),⁶² the World Council on City Data,⁶³ the research group Mistra Urban Futures⁶⁴ and LSE Cities (see Box 4). In fact, the role played by several knowledge-based

Box 4

Metropolitan indicators

In 2019, Metropolis, in partnership with the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, commissioned the London School of Economics and Political Science to develop a set of 38 metropolitan indicators, based on the analysis of 69 metropolitan areas and a standard methodology to collect information from all members of the Metropolis network. The indicators are divided into six groups in accordance with Metropolis' strategic vision: context and governance, economic development, social cohesion, gender equality, environmental sustainability and quality of life. Including new and existing metrics, the indicators are based on an exhaustive review of the academic and grey literature, and of existing global datasets and data collection initiatives from international bodies/observatories; national statistic offices; local and regional authorities' data; academic references, and NGOs and other associations.

Source: <https://indicators.metropolis.org>.

platforms in capitalizing on the initiatives launched by large cities and underlining the obstacles and risks faced by them, is making a significant contribution to visualizing the potential of local governments in the achievement of the SDGs. Beyond these international approaches, efforts should be made to reinforce data and information systems owned by metropolises worldwide. 

3.2 Addressing the main metropolitan challenges in line with the 2030 Agenda

Large cities and metropolitan areas are today the backdrop for some of the world's main global challenges, as discussed in the introduction of the chapter. At the same time, they have by and large been proactive in the search for innovative solutions to these challenges affecting all spheres of sustainable development in a cross-sectoral manner and, whether directly or indirectly, have moved their territories closer to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. However, they face important contradictions in trying to foster a more inclusive and sustainable development. They promote growth, jobs and competitiveness whilst at the same time they are exposed to increasing urban inequalities and social fragmentation.

Speculative investments, the introduction of new technologies in the market and the concentration of highly qualified employees with high rates of income have produced gentrified areas and resulted in the expulsion of part of the population towards the outskirts and marginalized areas, with a subsequent increase in social exclusion. Current economic models and growth clash with the urgent need to reduce the environmental footprint of large cities and metropolitan areas and transform production and consumption patterns with a clear environmental impact. The absence of gender mainstreaming strategies; of participatory mechanisms that include an array of diverse voices; the weakness of internal coordination mechanisms; deficient multilevel cooperation and the lack of resources, powers and capabilities all act as an additional

hindrance to change. However, metropolitan areas still strive to come up with new solutions that could be replicated in other territories. The following section gives examples of actions taken by metropolitan cities, adding to the examples described in previous chapters.

Relentless growth does not mean sustainability; new economic initiatives offer slow but steady progress

As mentioned above, metropolitan areas are important generators of employment, wealth and productivity growth to the extent that many of them are the main economic engines of their country.⁶⁵ However, there is an urgent need to foster a more inclusive and sustainable economic development that minimizes the current negative externalities of uncontrolled growth and investment such as territorial segregation and polarization, unemployment and other deficient labour conditions, and environmental degradation. Nascent initiatives such as the sharing economy, control of the use of technologies and data and programmes to support innovation and small enterprises could offer solutions to counterbalance such externalities.

The 300 largest metropolitan economies in the world account for almost 50% of the global output.⁶⁶ The GDP of some cities is higher than that of many countries in the world. However, different patterns can be observed across regions: in European OECD countries, capital metropolitan areas represent 48% of national GDP (with the exception of Paris, with a much higher contribution), while in Asia and Northern America this figure rises to 66%.⁶⁷ Kinshasa represents 13% of the population of DRC but accounts for 85% of the country's GDP, while Metro Manila is 12% of the population of Philippines and represents 47% of the national GDP.⁶⁸ These figures would surely grow if we took into account the extensive nodes that form megacities, urban corridors and city-regions characterized by unprecedented geographical extension and demographic volume.⁶⁹

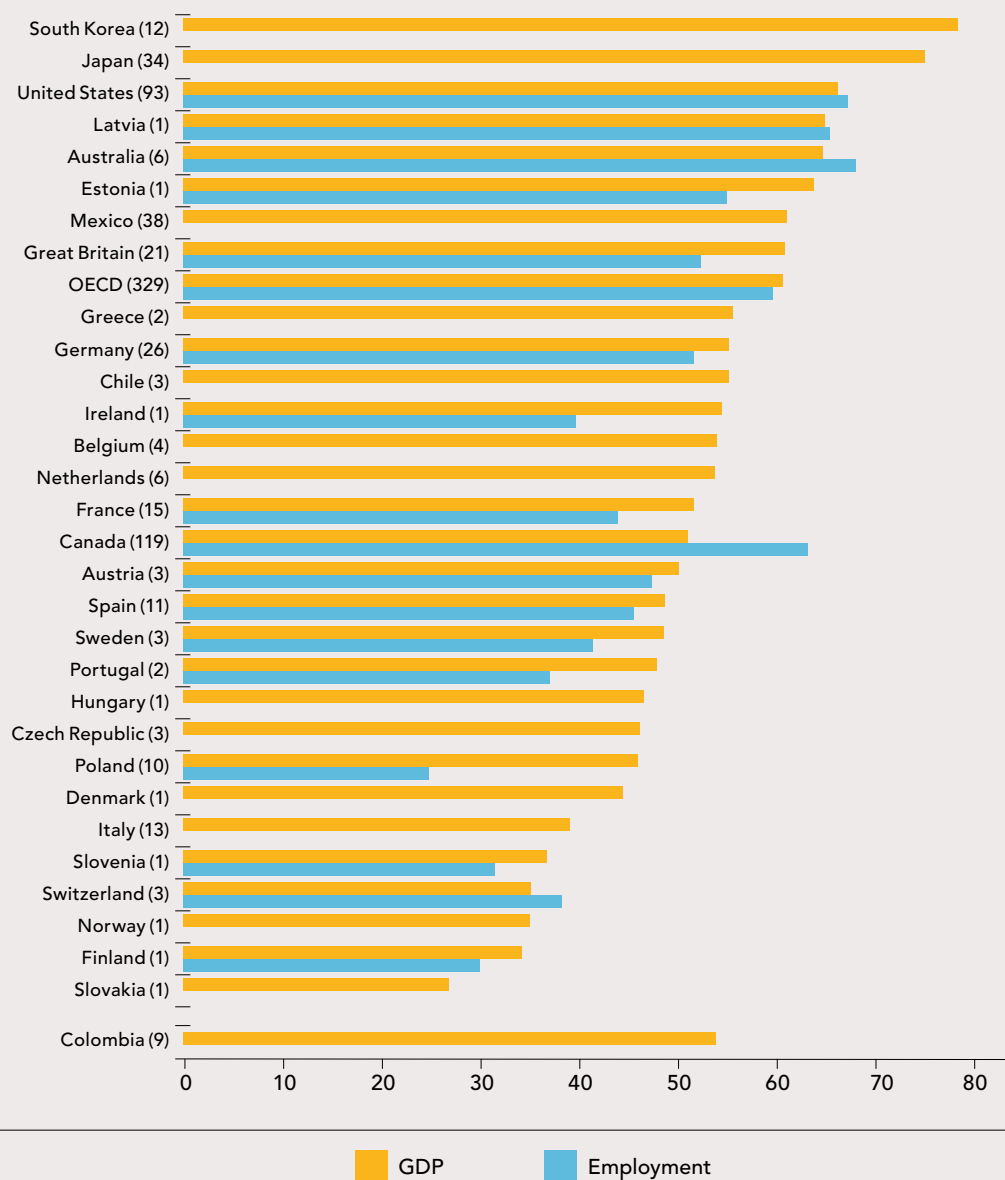
Nascent initiatives such as the sharing economy, control of the use of technologies and data can minimize the current negative externalities of uncontrolled growth and investment.

Cities are responsible for the creation of a large share of new jobs (SDG 8): between 2006 and 2012, 87.7 million private sector jobs were created in the 750 largest cities in the world, accounting for 58% of all new private sector jobs in the 140 countries to which they belong.⁷⁰ For example in the United States, metropolitan areas account for 84% of total employment and 88% of labour income. Production, services, capital and infrastructures, governments, companies, CSOs, universities and research centres are all located in these cities.⁷¹

New technologies have played a major role in improving and innovating territorial competitiveness and growth. Most research and innovation takes place in large cities, and technological clusters and new economic models flourish there. In India, it has been calculated that 49 metropolitan clusters will account for 77% of incremental GDP between 2012 and 2025.⁷² New technologies have also rendered cities smarter and more adapted to citizens' needs (SDG 8.2), offering them public and private services and goods at an affordable price. Singapore has

Figure 2

GDP and employment in metropolitan areas as a % of the national values, 2016



Notes: Employment for the OECD includes 226 metropolitan areas.
Source: OECD (2018), Metropolitan areas,, OECD Regional Statistics, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00531-en>.

The financialization of urban economies has turned the concept of 'cities for living' into 'cities for investing'.

digitalized many services for citizens' daily lives (registering children for school, obtaining tax incentives, reporting on a cardiac arrest of anyone within 500 feet), eliminating red tape and ensuring data privacy.⁷³ In Chicago, the rodent population is being controlled by using predictive analytics to determine which trash dumpsters are most likely to be full and thus attract more rats.⁷⁴ The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board's real-time feedback on the status of the water supply enables the institution to make timely modifications to the water distribution patterns; reduce energy costs related to water transmission through more efficient pumping and delivery; and mitigate water loss due to theft, leakage and malfunction, potentially conserving as much as 40% of the water supply.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the economic model that increasingly dominates these global cities has wide and complex externalities for the economy, the environment and social cohesion, and this varies in its intensity and effects across regions. Globalization phenomena are particularly concentrated in

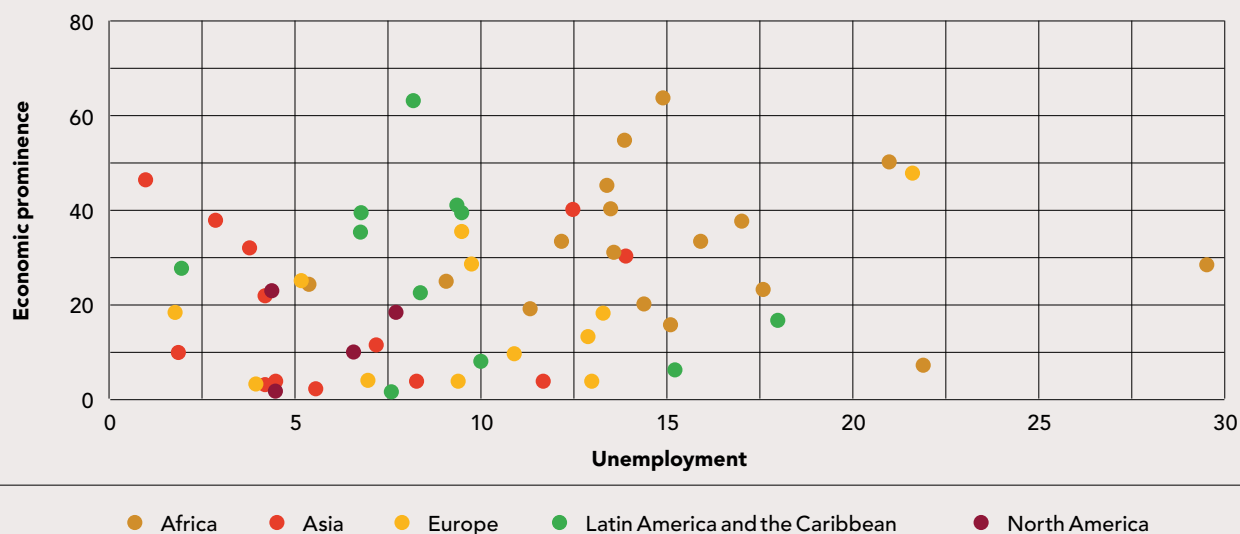
big cities, where the financialization of urban economies has turned the concept of 'cities for living' into 'cities for investing'. One manifestation of this is the rise in property rents and sales prices, often driven by growing investments by big private equity and hedge funds to control the real estate in most major cities.⁷⁶ The reshaping of the urban landscapes in big cities (fragmentation of the urban space through privately financed 'mega projects', increasing gaps in labour markets, commodification of public services) is contributing to urban segregation and polarization, pushing the traditional middle and working classes to the outermost peripheries or, in many developing countries, to expanding marginal neighbourhoods or slums. In many countries, young people, women and migrants are particularly hit by difficulties accessing jobs and decent shelters, which has led to the expansion of informal economies and settlements.⁷⁷

In some cities, specific sectors such as **tourism** can also contribute to social polarization, pushing traditional residents out of the core town areas and resulting in precarious employment conditions, seasonal contracts, low added-value jobs, rising commodity prices and even social conflict,⁷⁸ all of which are a far cry from the sustainable tourism fostered by the 2030 Agenda (SDG 8.9).⁷⁹

Moreover, new business models based on digital platforms using new technologies (such as Airbnb, Uber, Cabify, Amazon and Deliveroo, amongst others) create new opportunities, but

Figure 3

Unemployment and economic prominence in metropolitan cities by region



Source: Metropolitan indicators. Metropolis and LSE Cities, available online at <https://secities.net/objects/research-projects/metropolitan-indicators>.

also have a potentially negative impact on people's privacy, traditional local small businesses and public transportation systems, as well as creating poor working conditions, encouraging tax evasion etc. In this sense, understanding new technologies and the **use of big data for public services as common goods** that need to be protected is an important challenge currently facing many cities. The city of Barcelona, for example, has created the first municipal office that aims for security, privacy and the ethical management of information through a more efficient, transparent and democratic system. It includes the Housing Observatory, which is in charge of tracking the housing market, gentrification, forcing out of local residents and commerce towards the suburbs etc.⁸⁰ A global Coalition of Cities for Digital Rights has been created to ensure freedom of expression, protect privacy and personal information, promote transparency, accountability and non-discrimination of data and democratic processes in order to respect public opinion, diversity and inclusion, ensuring open and ethical standards in digital services.⁸¹

Alternative economic initiatives to develop cultural and creative industries and promote circular and shared/collaborative economies are flourishing. Territories act as laboratories for experimentation and citizens become active drivers of change. As gathered by the C40 initiative, an online sharing market and other supporting initiatives have been launched in New York; new laws in Quezon regulate the use of plastic bags to help curb ocean plastics; Sydney is co-creating industry guidelines for circular office refurbishments, and cities such as Berlin, Paris, Tokyo and Toronto are embedding social, ecological and human rights criteria into public procurement processes.⁸² Different global networks of big cities, such as Shared Cities Alliance and the Global Social Economy Forum, are supporting shared economy approaches, linking their initiatives to the SDGs.⁸³ Finding solutions to challenges is crucial if cities want to continue to offer decent work and generate wellbeing. Although these initiatives are usually at an early stage of development, they show the path towards a more sustainable, shared future.

Metropolitan areas are also developing policies to support and assist **small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) throughout the business life cycle, in addition to supporting citizens less likely to start up a business (youth, women etc.). For example Dakar relies on a business incubator for youth-led and women-led micro-enterprises to address this issue;⁸⁵ a programme launched by Addis Ababa uses micro-credit loans and provides business training;⁸⁶ Barcelona offers technical coaching, feasibility assessment, tailor-made training and incubation programmes, with one particular strand targeting youth which has

Box 5

Transition to a circular economy in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area

The Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (a partnership between the provinces of Noord-Holland and Flevoland, one transport region and 32 municipalities) is accelerating through the Amsterdam Economic Board⁸⁴ the transition to a circular economy by stimulating cooperation between business, government and knowledge institutes both in the region and internationally. The aim by 2025 is to become a leader in Europe in the area of smart solutions for the conservation of raw materials, so that valuable materials can be used more efficiently and for longer (SDGs 8, 9, 12). Additionally, by 2025 Amsterdam also aims to overcome existing challenges and become the most important place in Europe for data-driven innovation; offer citizens two additional healthy life years; have in place zero-emissions urban transport; and be the most successful region in Europe in terms of utilizing, retaining and attracting talent.

Source: <https://www.amsterdameconomicboard.com/en>.

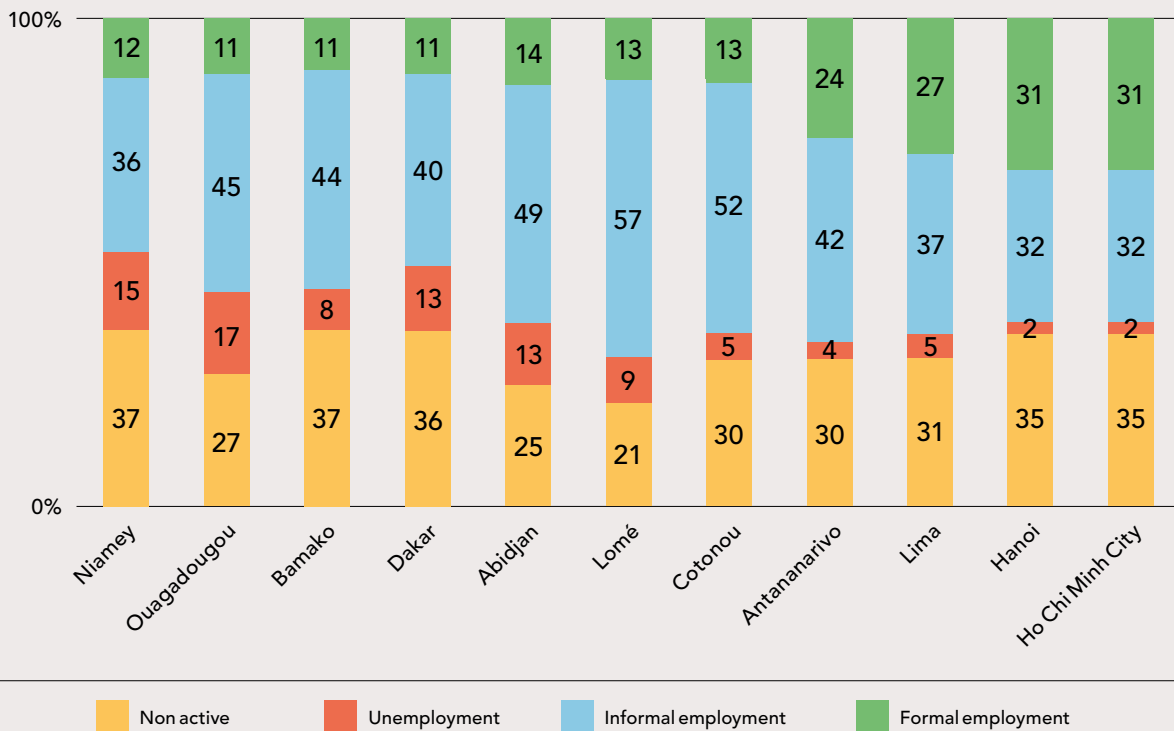
helped to foster a more diversified economy;⁸⁷ and Brussels-Capital Region offers special support for the growth of green businesses in disadvantaged areas and encourages new and aspiring entrepreneurs.⁸⁸

At the same time, in various cities in developing countries, the **informal economy** is the main source of employment and income generation, from street vendors and waste pickers to workers manufacturing goods at home. It accounts for between 25%–40% of GDP in developing economies in Asia and Africa, with a share in non-agricultural employment of between 20-80%⁸⁹ (around 80% in Abidjan, Dakar, Niamey and Bamako, 59% in Lima, 54% in Ho Chi Minh City, and 45% in Buenos Aires).⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the informal economy poses major problems for the promotion of inclusive cities, and metropolitan areas have started to look for solutions. For example, the implementation of the delegated management of markets approach in the Commune I of Bamako in Mali led to increased tax collection and established a dynamic and fruitful partnership between informal traders and the municipality. The success of eThekwini's Informal

Territories act as laboratories for experimentation and citizens become active drivers of change.

Figure 4

Working age population by formal employment, informal employment and unemployment



Source: Informal Sector and Informal Employment: Overview of Data for 11 Cities in 10 Developing Countries, WIEGO.

Economy Policy gave rise to the South African National Informal Economy Forum, a strong sign that local municipalities can influence national policies.⁹¹

Solutions that acknowledge and use the economic and social capital of the informal economy, the use of research and technology to diversify the economy and bring basic services and goods closer to the citizenship, and facilitating the social inclusion of women and youth through stable employment frameworks are still needed in metropolitan areas, which can take advantage of the economies of agglomeration.

Metropolitan areas as an important causal factor of environmental degradation, but also contributors to innovation and solutions

The IPCC Special Report on 1.5 Degrees of Global Warming⁹² (October 2018) sent a strong message: either essential changes to energy, land, urban infrastructure (including aging transport and buildings) and industrial systems are made, or it will be impossible to tackle the

catastrophic climate change impacts of global warming such as sea-level rises, increases in natural disasters, worsening health, livelihood and food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth. Big cities are part of the problem in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, energy consumption, waste generation, water consumption and food waste. A number of metropolitan cities have been at the forefront of climate action and risk prevention. At the Global Climate Action Summit in September 2018, 27 major cities announced that their carbon emissions had already peaked, and 72 cities committed to carbon neutrality by 2050 through zero-emission transport, the use of 100% renewable energy, net-zero carbon buildings, and zero-waste by 2030, while also pledging to implement these goals in an equitable and inclusive manner.⁹³ Key cities and their networks have been pushing for change in global negotiations over the past two decades. However, as highlighted by IPCC, a much greater collective effort is needed.

The **Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy**, including all the mayor LRG networks,

have gathered many examples from metropolitan areas such as Seoul,⁹⁴ Tokyo,⁹⁵ Bogotá,⁹⁶ Hong Kong,⁹⁷ Lima,⁹⁸ London,⁹⁹ New York,¹⁰⁰ Mexico City,¹⁰¹ and Rio de Janeiro¹⁰² that have already developed initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change, whilst Istanbul,¹⁰³ Jakarta,¹⁰⁴ Karachi,¹⁰⁵ Moscow,¹⁰⁶ Sao Paulo,¹⁰⁷ Lagos¹⁰⁸ and Kinshasa¹⁰⁹ have taken the first necessary steps and committed to it.

In their **resilience strategies**, many metropolitan cities have adopted a more integrated approach.¹¹¹ Not only are they focused on mitigating the effects of natural disasters and climate change, but they also tackle food security, social inclusion, economic revitalization, urban brownfield rehabilitation, the fight against poverty, inequalities and exclusion.¹¹² Boston's first ever Resilience Strategy focuses particularly on confronting racial divisions, bias, and other issues that cause inequity;¹¹³ Mexico City builds water resilience as well as community resilience through citizen participation, strategic communication, and education;¹¹⁴ and Bangkok's strategy balances environmental resilience with an improvement in citizens' quality of life and the development of a strong competitive economy.¹¹⁵ Dakar's 2017 Resilience Strategy, the first to be adopted in Africa with the support of 100 Resilient Cities, relies on strong cooperation with the citizenship and local stakeholders to build resilience in the face of shocks and stresses and to improve the well-being of vulnerable people.¹¹⁶ Work in Dar es Salaam has shown that investing in resilient infrastructure, with proper servicing of informal

Box 6

Barcelona: measures to fight climate change

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area has taken several measures in line with the SDGs, including working for the improvement of air quality in its territory. The metropolitan programme of measures to tackle environmental pollution includes the creation of low-emission areas in pollution episodes and the promotion of sustainable mobility (bicycles, electric vehicles etc.) which directly contribute to SDG 13. The new Urban Planning Master Plan, measures on spatial planning, improvement of the rivers Llobregat and Besòs, and the coastline strategy also contribute to SDGs 15 and 17. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area is also in charge of waste management (SDG 12) and water supply and sanitation (SDG 6), the promotion of renewable energies through the establishment of a network of stations to charge electric cars with solar power and the installation of photovoltaic rooves in public buildings (SDG 7).

Source: Area Metropolitana de Barcelona, Programa Metropolità de Mesures contra la Contaminació Atmosfèrica, Memòria.¹¹⁰

settlements and the introduction of regulatory reforms (for instance on waste dumping), may prove more beneficial in the long term than the use of palliative measures during outbreaks.¹¹⁷

Sustainable transport is another field where the metropolitan impact on the environment is



The Workshop on SDG Localization tools and resources held by the Barcelona Provincial Council to raise awareness among staffers of its own departments (photo: © UCLG Learning).

considerable. Metropolitan areas, particularly in the Global North, have long been developing intermodal transportation and integrated public transport systems that combine several modalities and transit to renewable energies: bus, metro, tramway, rail, soft mobility (i.e. bicycles). Copenhagen, for example, has the ambition to be

Box 7

Lagos Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System

To address the traffic congestion in Lagos, the national government established the Lagos Metropolitan Transport Authority (LMTA)¹²⁸ in 2002. It became fully operational in 2008. The LMTA established the Lagos BRT Lite system, Africa's first bus rapid transit scheme. The project was funded by the World Bank, Lagos state government, and private sector operators. This is a high capacity bus service which runs in dedicated lanes. The system consists of 22 km of bus lanes with 220 buses which run on a 16-hour service, transporting over 200,000 people daily. In its initial six months of operation, the service had carried over 29 million people, journey time was reduced by an average of 25 minutes and fares were reduced to less than half of what passengers had been paying to private operators. CO₂ and GHGs have been reduced by 13% and 20% respectively. The experience of Lagos shows that improvements made in the field of sustainable transport have an impact beyond the provision of basic services (crucial for the population and especially for those living on the outskirts of big cities), affecting other fields such as economic development (productivity improvements and job creation).

Source: <https://lamata.lagosstate.gov.ng/>.

carbon neutral by 2025 and has taken important action in the field of transport by creating corridors for designated types of mobility such as cyclists (cycling accounts for 41% of all trips to work), buses and cars.¹¹⁸ Milan is continually improving the new technologies applied to the city's successful bike and car sharing initiatives.¹¹⁹ In the Global South, particularly in Africa, formal transport systems are unable to compete in terms of cost and speed with (often unsafe) private sector and informal sector transport initiatives. However, good practice can be found in better public transport (e.g. Bus Rapid Transit systems, developed in Bogotá,¹²⁰ but which have spread to many other cities such as Jakarta¹²¹ and Istanbul¹²² amongst others) and the use of more sustainable public transport modes (conversion of buses to biogas in Johannesburg,¹²³ investment in the metro lines in Hanoi,¹²⁴ promotion of bike lanes and bike sharing systems in Buenos Aires¹²⁵ and Chennai,¹²⁶ and electric urban cleaning vehicles in Rio de Janeiro).¹²⁷ In Brazil, through the Restructuring Plan for Public Transport in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte, the city opted to establish of an intermodal and integrated urban transport system that combines buses, underground trains and an interneighbourhood system with direct, circular and peripheral lines.

As the main energy consumers, metropolitan areas around the world have developed plans and projects to reduce energy consumption in **buildings and infrastructures**. In the Tokyo Green Building Programme, for example, buildings are rated on environmental performance and, since 2002, this has contributed to improved public health and increased the economic viability of environmentally-friendly design by altering the way buildings are valued.¹²⁹ Energy emissions reductions have also been a priority for Vancouver¹³⁰ and Chicago.¹³¹ In Hanoi, the council has fostered the conversion of beehive stoves into advanced clean cook stoves that contribute to GHG reductions by burning biomass instead of fossil fuels.¹³²

Water (SDG 6) is an essential and scarce resource whose provision is considered a human right. The 'water footprint' of cities – the area covered by their water sources – accounts for 41% of the earth's land surface. Water is crucial for metropolises, not just for human consumption but also for the functioning of the economy, which leaves metropolitan cities in a difficult position with regards to river basins and the environment as a whole. Policies oriented towards rationalizing water consumption and reutilization, especially for industrial or ornamental uses, are vital since water supply is a growing concern in many metropolitan cities. While cities such as Amsterdam, Dubai, London and Los Angeles ensure 100% service provision to the population, in Johannesburg only 65% of the population have a potable water supply service. Bangalore, Beijing, Cairo, Cape Town, Chennai, Jakarta, Melbourne, Mexico and Sao Paulo are some of the main cities

Box 8

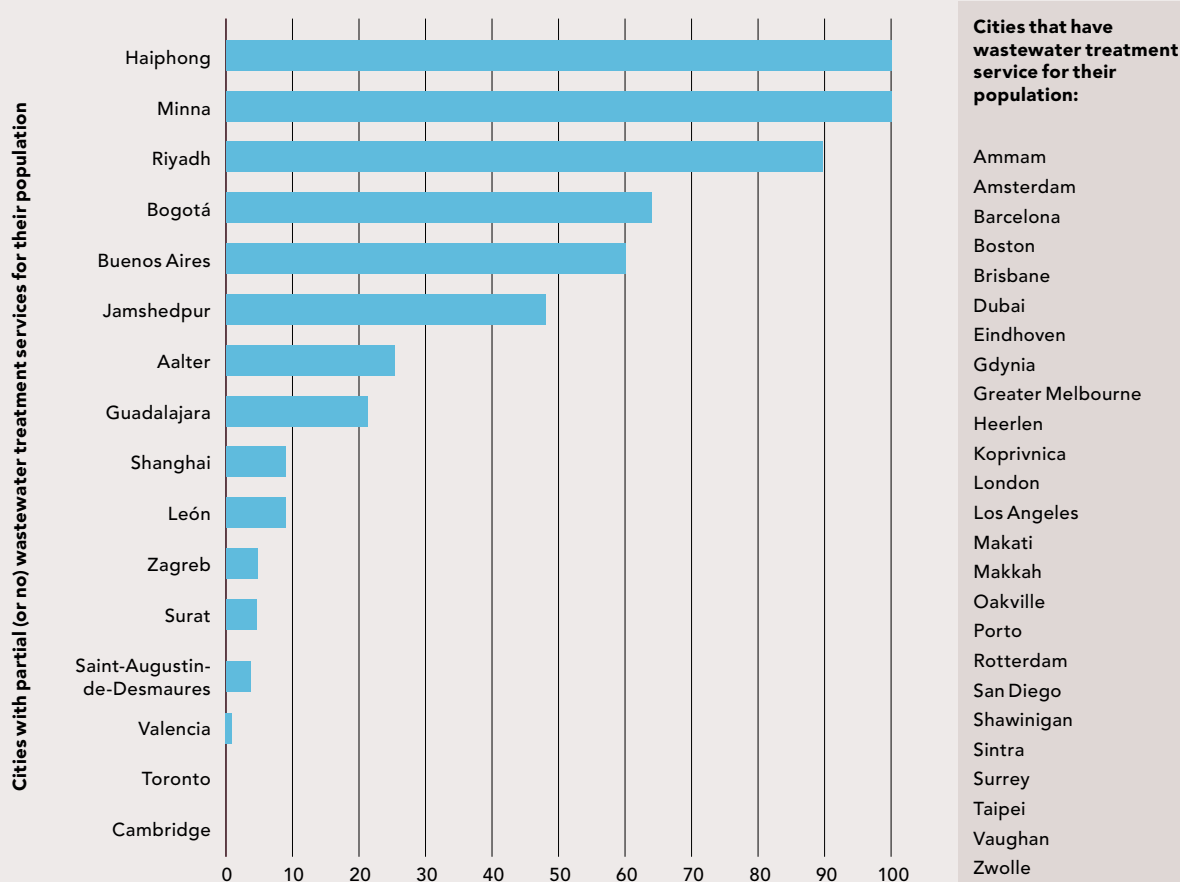
Energy efficiency in Beijing's buildings

Beijing is promoting the adoption of ultra-low energy new building constructions, utilizing innovative design standards and technologies to dramatically improve energy performance. The city aims to construct 300,000 m² of ultra-low energy demonstration building projects by the end of 2020; refine ultra-low energy building standards and guidance; provide training to support coordinated development across the wider Beijing-Tianjin Hebei Region; enhance and implement financial incentive policies; and develop future policy recommendations and strategy based on international experience.

Source: <https://www.c40.org/researches/constructing-a-new-low-carbon-future-china>.

Figure 5

Percentage of the city's wastewater that has received no treatment



Source: WCCD City Data for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals report 2017.

affected by water supply problems. With respect to sanitation, according to the World Council on City Data (WCCD), whilst metropolitan areas such as Dubai, Greater Melbourne, London, Taipei and Toronto have populations with 100% access to an improved sanitation source, high percentages of non-treated wastewater are to be found in Riyadh (around 90%), Bogotá and Buenos Aires (around 60%, see Figure 5).

Effective **waste** treatment (SDG 12.5) is also crucial for the environment and can contribute significantly to energy generation, ensuring energy security, reducing environmental pollution, and contributing to efficient land use and green sustainable economic development. This is seen in the action taken by Hanoi and Quezon City on their largest landfill,¹³³ while Istanbul's circular design approach to waste management allows the city to produce electricity and compost from different waste streams, as well as divert excess heat to greenhouses for greater productivity.¹³⁴

Johannesburg has tackled waste management in a cross-sectoral manner involving informal waste pickers in the value chain.¹³⁵

While metropolitan areas continue to be at the forefront of climate action through sustainable practices in the fields of transport, food security, buildings and infrastructures and the provision of basic services (water, sanitation, waste management, energy), climate-resilient strategies foster mitigation and adaptation in line with poverty eradication and the reduction of inequalities. Overcoming current constraints (legal and regulatory barriers, information asymmetries, insufficient expertise, lack of resources and access to borrowing, and inadequate stakeholder coordination,¹³⁶ especially when no clear internal mechanisms exist) is absolutely essential if metropolitan areas are to continue to lead the way in more sustainable, environmentally friendly actions.

Demonstration on the International Day of Working Women, Santiago de Chile (photo: Fran[zi]s[ko]Vicencio, t.ly/PB6g8)-



Persisting inequalities but growing strategies for social inclusion, equity and coexistence

Metropolitan areas around the world are promoting important policies and initiatives to foster social inclusion, equity and coexistence within their territories. However, they still have significant poverty rates and inequalities (in OECD countries, metropolitan income inequality is 3.3% higher than the national average).¹³⁷ The levels of metropolitan income segregation vary hugely between countries: in South African and Brazilian metropolitan areas it is much more evident than in New Zealand or Denmark,¹³⁸ but at the same time large metropolitan areas such as Atlanta, New Orleans, Washington DC, Miami and New York experience similar levels of inequality to developing cities such as Abidjan, Nairobi, Buenos Aires and Santiago, all with Gini coefficients of around 0.50.¹³⁹

Exclusion and inequalities are both the cause and the result of metropolitan areas being scattered and fragmented. While centres attract business headquarters, talent and knowledge, they also expel middle class and low-income groups to the outskirts and poorer neighbourhoods.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, as metropolitan areas continue to grow at a dizzying rate, particularly in Africa and Asia, the most vulnerable citizens cannot afford decent houses and have no alternative but to move to crowded **slums and informal settlements**. Figures for the percentage of the population living in slums is around 14% in Johannesburg, 10% in Amman and Buenos Aires, and over 5% in Bogotá.¹⁴¹ The 2030 Agenda urgently calls for upgrading of slums through integral actions to ensure decent housing and access to services.

It is important that slum upgrading processes are carried out with the involvement of the people that live there and stakeholders (see Box 9) and that there is a move away from forced evictions with no provision for alternative accommodation (as occurred in Badia East within the framework of the Lagos Metropolitan Development and Governance Project).¹⁴² Articulating citizen participation mechanisms that include the most vulnerable groups is strongly in line with the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, blockchain has proved a powerful tool: in Moscow, a blockchain-based platform allows citizens to make decisions on how urban spaces

can be improved; and in Buenos Aires, the Waba project has developed an application that encourages the social, civic and economic integration of the inhabitants of irregular settlements through communities that self-manage the governance of their own alternative currencies in their local markets.¹⁴³

Ensuring **access to adequate and affordable housing** (SDG 11) is one of the most significant challenges for metropolitan areas in all regions. As outlined in previous sub-sections, market deregulation and skyrocketing prices of land and housing are some of the issues that cities need to address. Many metropolises have therefore endorsed the declaration Cities for Adequate Housing, launched by Barcelona and UCLG as a call to acknowledge housing as a right rather than a commodity. In the declaration, the cities of Lisbon, eThekweni, Mexico City, Montevideo, Taipei, Berlin and Montreal and the metropolitan bodies of Barcelona, Greater Manchester and Seoul have committed to support the right to housing in order to implement SDG 11 to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.¹⁴⁵

To strengthen the management of metropolitan areas, big cities need to adopt **strategic and integral planning approaches to better articulate service provision, urban development and land management** (SDG 11.3) to ensure economic development and social inclusion. This is already being implemented in cities such as Auckland, Barcelona, Lima, New York, Riyadh, Shanghai and Tokyo, for example.¹⁴⁷ In other cases, integral planning has been carried out in specific sectors, taking into account the needs and priorities of the whole metropolitan area, for example in Montreal with the Namur-de la Savanne sector;¹⁴⁸ Berlin's District Waterkant which aims to build new housing units (with essential services such as kindergartens, pharmacies, playgrounds etc.) and develop specific traffic and mobility measures;¹⁴⁹ Brussels' conversion of a former army barrack (U square) into an inclusive district comprising families and students which combines efficiency, heritage, circular economy, sustainable development and knowledge;¹⁵⁰ and Sydney's Green Square, which has undergone a large-scale transformation into a place with a minimal environmental footprint and a vibrant and well-connected community enjoying sustainable facilities, transport networks, public spaces, high-quality housing, commerce, services and jobs.¹⁵¹ In developing countries, this strategic approach is still limited.

Almost all metropolitan areas are hosting an increasing number of **migrants**, whether internal or international. Migrants are one of the most vulnerable groups referred to in the 2030 Agenda, with women being particularly vulnerable because their quality of life is strongly dependent on local policies. Cities are important for guaranteeing

Migrant's quality of life is strongly dependent on local policies. Metropolitan areas can facilitate access to housing, jobs, education and health.

Box 9

Planning development in Eastern Africa: Mukuru's Special Planning Area

Significant efforts have been made in Nairobi's slum upgrading programmes, which differ both in size and scale.¹⁴⁴ In one, the government built around 4,000 housing units in Soweto (Kibera) to be sold at subsidized rates, but many residents cannot even afford such subsidized prices. In the other in Mukuru in the east of Nairobi, the government created a Special Planning Area with significant involvement of the social movement Muungano wa Wanavijiji, which has long collected data through member savings groups and lobbied for investment in basic services. The upgrading process will involve a number of thematic consortiums covering water, sanitation and energy; finance; land and institutional arrangements; health services; education, youth and culture; environment and natural resources; housing, infrastructure and commerce; and community organization, coordination and communication.

Source: https://wrirosscities.org/sites/default/files/WRR_Case-Study_Kampala_final.pdf; <https://www.iied.org/special-approach-slum-upgrading-special-planning-area-mukuru-nairobi>.

Box 10

eThekweni poverty package

The South African city of eThekweni¹⁴⁶ has a comprehensive package of measures for poor and vulnerable people, including indigenous communities (SDGs 1, 6, 10, 11). With regard to basic services, rates are not levied on properties under a certain amount, with preferential treatment for pensioners and social grant recipients; and the use of water, sanitation, electricity and waste is free up to specific limits.

With respect to housing, a new programme will deliver over 150,000 housing units to poor people free of charge over a ten-year period. To improve the quality of life in informal settlements and transit camps, short-term emergency/interim services have been provided in the form of washing blocks, refuse removal, storm water ditching, fire breaks, etc. In addition, innovative new housing forms and urban design solutions are being implemented with the aim of promoting densification, social cohesion, and a more sustainable urban form.

Source: http://www.durban.gov.za/City_Services/Community_Participation/Pages/Poverty-Alleviation-Programme.aspx.

migrant social integration and facilitating access to housing, jobs, education and health. However, the increase in migrant numbers is not specific to metropolitan areas but also applies to smaller cities, migrant diversity.¹⁵² Chengdu has fostered a platform for internal migrants to express their concerns at the community level, including about public resource allocation.¹⁵³ The greater Amman municipality is developing policies to reduce socio-cultural tensions and spatial segregation between host and refugee communities living in the the Badr Nazzai district in the south of the city.¹⁵⁴

In order to promote social inclusion, combat poverty and foster employment, metropolitan areas also need to deal with **security matters** (SDG 11.7), particularly in Latin America but also in South Africa and in the United States. According to the annual report on the 50 most dangerous cities, 43 of them are found in Latin America, four in the United States and three in South Africa.¹⁵⁵ In Africa, civil unrest, political instability and terrorism are a source of concern in metropolises such as Addis Ababa, Johannesburg and Nairobi,¹⁵⁶ while in Latin America insecurity revolves around drug trafficking related crimes, youth gangs and institutionalized violence amongst other things.¹⁵⁷ In order to combat insecurity, many cities have successfully developed strategies through participatory approaches (e.g. Medellin and Seoul), targeting troubled neighbourhoods, involving communities, schools, the police and district sectors, and securing public spaces through policies for vulnerable groups such as youth, women and the elderly.¹⁵⁸

Since the CEDAW agreements (1979) and the Convention of Belém do Pará (1994), global agendas have ratified the need to monitor,

prevent and punish violence against women, treating it as a public issue that erodes female autonomy.¹⁵⁹ Women's bodies are the starting point for domination and subjugation, which is then replicated at home, in the street, in neighbourhoods, municipalities and the metropolitan area as a whole. Besides robberies, assaults and the illegitimate use of force by criminals, women are exposed to attacks, verbal harassment, sexual harassment and abuse, rape and even murder, simply because of being women. While this violence is often confined to their homes, it also occurs in the public space: squares, parks, in the street and on public transport. Women are even more vulnerable, then, if the city and the territory are not planned in a way that acknowledges these challenges and uses public spaces and infrastructure to combat this phenomenon. Women today are admittedly more afraid to travel around the city than men: this fear curbs their freedom, limits their rightful enjoyment and ownership of public spaces and public life, and hinders their development as workers, citizens and active participants, able to benefit from all the opportunities provided by the metropolitan environment.¹⁶⁰

Many actions have flourished in the world's metropolitan areas to reduce violence against **women**, protect their rights and empower them to participate in public life. Mainstreaming a gender-specific approach in public policies and actions is paramount to achieving equal rights. In this respect, actions have been implemented in the field of urban spaces (e.g. New Delhi's free SafetiPin app with interactive maps of places where women feel unsafe, including an alarm service — now also available in Bangalore, Bogotá and Jakarta amongst other cities);¹⁶¹ public transportation (Quito's 'Down with Harassment' project to stop harassment on public transport, implemented thanks to the UN Women's Global Flagship Initiative Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces,¹⁶² and Toronto's buses stopping at the request of women between 9pm and 5am to shorten walking distance);¹⁶³ and awareness raising (more than 100 youth agents of change in Cairo are leading transformative activities in schools and other settings to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality, and safety in public spaces, and similar actions have been implemented in Seoul, Montreal and Barcelona).¹⁶⁴

Metropolitan areas should also take into account other **vulnerable groups** such as disabled people, who account for 15% of the world's population. Big cities are amongst the most difficult to navigate for the blind, deaf and physically disabled, and there are rising levels of mental illness.¹⁶⁵ Metropolises are implementing a range of policies to foster their inclusion, for example micro gardening in Dakar for vulnerable people including the disabled, women, the elderly, youth and children,¹⁶⁶ or

Box 11

The Goes neighbourhood in Montevideo

Once a deprived neighbourhood in Montevideo, Goes has undergone comprehensive socio-urban revitalization, transforming it into a welcoming, cohesive and touristic place. The integral regeneration of the neighbourhood has brought with it new public open spaces, greater housing choice, increased social integration and new economic opportunities. At the outset, participative processes were employed that allowed for the creation of a new governance model that underlines the role of local identity and the joint management of public facilities between the council and the community, such as the *Centro Cultural Terminal Goes*.

Source: <http://culturalgoes.montevideo.gub.uy/centro-cultural-terminal-goes/gestion>.



Mural art for the second edition of the Wall Art Festival in Grigny, a city part of the Greater Paris metropolitan area (photo: © Amanda Fléty Martínez).

involving them in participative and inclusive strategic planning, for example, as part of the Guadalajara Future Metropolitan Development Programme.¹⁶⁷ As the metropolitan population ages (57% of people aged 60 years and older are urban and the total number of people over 60 is set to double by 2050),¹⁶⁸ taking into account the elderly has become crucial for developing balanced, sustainable policies that tackle, amongst other things, the incidence of elderly poverty, working in low-wage work (as in Singapore),¹⁶⁹ the feeling of loneliness (35% of people over 75 in Stockholm feel this),¹⁷⁰ adaptation of housing and public spaces, and reform of the health and care system including the gap between public and private. Metropolitan areas are responding to these challenges by bringing older people and students together through cohabitation schemes (Milan);¹⁷¹ fostering volunteering programmes, offering older job seekers access to health, skills and employability support, promoting extra care apartments for older people alongside a library and health services, teaching digital skills in an informal environment (Greater Manchester),¹⁷² and campaigning to change people's perceptions of older people in order to reduce prejudice and discrimination (Guadalajara).¹⁷³ In this sense, promoting people's values, a sense of identity and accessible **culture** (not just the heritage

dimension but also creativity, diversity and cultural participation in the broadest sense of SDG 11.4)¹⁷⁴ will be key to re-humanizing metropolitan areas and making them more resilient, inclusive and participative.

Incorporating the 2030 Agenda into policies and practices and using it to tackle the challenges discussed above will highlight how different metropolitan areas can contribute to sustainable development and unlock their full potential by implementing innovative and efficient solutions. However, institutional fragmentation in many metropolitan areas is a major obstacle to citizens accessing their full rights and to the universalization of basic services (transport, housing, water, sanitation, etc.), particularly for women and the most vulnerable groups (the poor, youth, disabled people, the elderly and migrants) and those who live on the periphery, whether territorial or social. There is still much to be done to create legal and institutional enabling environments, as well as new governance mechanisms, that allow for the growth of high quality metropolitan public policies. ◉

4. Conclusions

This chapter — and previous chapters — has shown that metropolitan cities have been among the most active actors to integrate the 2030 Agenda and other related agendas into their development strategies, plans and policies. Frontrunner cities have deployed integrated development strategies as well as highly innovative solutions to address their most pressing problems. Managing the policy-making process at metropolitan level through integrated and inclusive approaches, ensuring adequate coordination between the different spheres of government and involving citizens as well as metropolitan stakeholders are all needed to implement the 2030 Agenda in an effective manner, in addition to ensuring transparency and accountability in order to bring public policies closer to citizens, especially the most vulnerable. In this regard, the metropolitan model is critical. This is a strategy that has clearly been adopted by some metropolitan areas and which, ideally, should be followed by others.

Globally, metropolitan areas are recognized as engines of growth, functioning as drivers of national and even international economies, leading investment and competitiveness. However, metropolitan areas are also the source of major contradictions: rising level of wealth coupled with problems of exclusion; economic growth but with precarious labour conditions and extended informalization in the cities of the Global South; hopes for a better quality of life but also deterioration in health as a consequence of pollution, environmental degradation and natural resource depletion. Most metropolitan cities are faced with a pressing need to foster new patterns of economic and social development to better control their growth and minimize the negative externalities created by current unsustainable patterns of development.

In July 2018, mayors from metropolitan cities from different regions who were concerned about the global housing crises that has hit major urban areas and, advocating better cities and respect of the rights to the city for all, requested at the UN more legal and fiscal powers to tackle speculation and guarantee the social function of the city; more funds to invest in public housing and neighbourhoods; the co-production with communities of alternative solutions; better planning to contribute to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the urban fabric; and enhanced cooperation between cities to boost long-term strategies on a metropolitan scale.¹⁷⁵

At the same time metropolitan governments around the world are leading the fight against climate change strengthening the resiliency of cities as demonstrated by major cities in the Global Climate Action Summit in September 2018, investing in urban de-carbonization, fostering the transition to renewable energies, greening public buildings and services, promoting circular and sharing economies, supporting innovation and better control of the use of technologies and data — all with a view to tackling challenging externalities. Key cities are claiming a major role in large fora such as the yearly COP conferences, where they are active participants. However, as highlighted by IPCC, a much greater collective effort at all levels is needed to stop climate change.

Capitalizing on the innovation and solutions provided by metropolitan areas to tackle the challenges discussed above is crucial. It will build gateways to share knowledge and experiences that help improve public policies. However, current governance models are undermining the potential of metropolitan areas to provide effective solutions to the problems they are facing. Unlocking the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda should serve to improve the policy-making process at the metropolitan level. The following recommendations are based on the analysis of previous pages, on the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas for Habitat III (October 2015) and the key messages of GOLD IV:

Metropolitan governance systems are, in fact, being reformed and upgraded around the world. **New, more inclusive governance models are indispensable for dealing with the increasing complexity of metropolitan areas.** As stressed in previous pages, although there is no 'one-size-fits-all', some basic principles should be acknowledged to bolster **collaborative and effective metropolitan governance: local democracy as the basis of the legitimacy of metropolitan institutions, empowered local governments** (effective decentralization), **multilevel cooperation based on the respect of the subsidiarity principles, enhanced gender-aware participatory mechanisms, adequate resources and financing instruments.** The gender perspective must also be integrated into the design, execution and evaluation of public policies. A fair metropolitan governance system should encourage polycentric and balanced development to ensure inclusion of the full metropolitan region, core and peripheral cities.

Metropolitan spaces should also take into account the impact that they may have not only on peripheral cities, but also the surrounding territories, their hinterland or territorial approaches at a larger, national level. Because of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, it is essential to redefine these relationships and their interdependence within a systemic territorial and urban approach.

A deep rethinking of traditional financing approaches is needed to empower metropolitan authorities in the context of widespread financialization and commodification of urban public goods and property markets. Metropolitan finances need adequate powers to mobilize local resources, receive sufficient transfers and be able to access borrowing in national and international markets to invest in major infrastructures and services and to respond to social inclusion and climate change challenges. This would make it possible for metropolitan areas to reconcile financial constraints with long-term sustainable development and counterbalance the growing wealth inequalities both between and within cities.

To better respond to the 2030 Agenda, Paris Climate Agreement and other related agendas, Metropolitan areas should **strengthen their capacity to develop integrated and participatory strategic plans aligned with SDG targets that link the different dimensions of urban sustainable development to build inclusive, resilient and safer cities**. Metropolitan governments should move from fragmented sector-specific decision-making to a strategic planning approach for the whole metropolitan area that takes into account the systemic tensions between inclusion, environmental policies, economic development and resilience. They should strengthen collaboration within metropolitan areas, as well as with their peri-urban areas and hinterlands, to build stronger synergies, relieve urbanization pressures and reduce environmental impacts.


As requested by the New Urban Agenda, **inclusive urban planning should pursue universal access to basic services and adequate housing, compactness, multi-functionality and socially-mixed neighbourhoods** with a good quality of life, shorter travelling distances and improved public transport, accessible and safer public spaces, fairer access to basic services and infrastructures, and cultural amenities for all. In developing countries, informal settlements must be recognized and integrated into the urban fabric, with adequate policies for land tenure recognition and slum upgrading. Cultural policies (including the protection of heritage, diversity and creativity) also act as a lever for flourishing metropolitan areas.

The achievement of the global agendas needs **stronger partnerships for the co-production of the city. To enhance and empower citizen**

participation, metropolitan leaders should combine the support of a well-organized civil society with autonomous spaces and diversified mechanisms to participate in local decision-making, acknowledging **the protection of human rights as defined by the UN** — the right to access basic services, gender equality, adequate shelter and secure tenure, social protection, respect for migrants, refugees, minorities, communities safe from violence, and defence of digital rights — and putting the principles of the ‘Right to the city’ at the heart of the urban agenda.

To strengthen the capacity of co-production through participative planning, reporting and monitoring, local governments should **strengthen metropolitan systems to gather and process data with indicators aligned to those of the SDGs**. Different levels of government, as well as universities, knowledge centres, CSOs and the private sector should all contribute to this effort.

Despite the importance of their role and the challenges they face, metropolitan areas enjoy limited political recognition. The metropolitan dimension appears diluted or alluded to only briefly in most of the global agendas i.e. the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Plan. The 2030 Agenda could serve as leverage, allowing the environment in which metropolitan areas operate to foster the metropolitan dimension of the different political agendas. **Metropolitan leaders must redouble their efforts to engage on the global stage, particularly in the reporting process to the UN through the Voluntary National Reviews and, where possible, develop Voluntary Local Reviews to make their voices heard**. They need to enhance cooperation and promote knowledge-sharing between themselves and with networks of peripheral cities in order **to foster innovation and encourage positive action**.

The current patterns of development embedded in our aspiration for continuous growth are responsible for some of the most critical challenges faced by metropolitan cities worldwide. Many metropolitan cities lack the resources and the full competences to address the very complex challenges they face. Beyond the current ad hoc innovative and effective solutions that cities are developing to respond to these challenges, the transition towards a more sustainable development model will require redefining the prevailing economic and social patterns of development so that they are compatible with the limits of our planet. **Metropolitan cities should lead a global dialogue to rethink these patterns of development and establish shared action plans with concrete measures to move towards a more sustainable and inclusive development that aligns with the 2030 Agenda.** 



Conclusions



The possibilities are endless. Localized development strategies, developed from and suited to local realities, transform global sustainable model

Group work at UCLG Learning activities in the 2017 Retreat and Campus, Barcelona (photo: UCLG-CGLU/Mark Schardan, bit.ly/2oqhSu3).

The 2030 Agenda calls for the eradication of poverty, the promotion of human prosperity, a reduction in inequalities, the fostering of peace, reversing the degradation of the planet, and the strengthening of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. Its adoption, together with the adoption between 2015 and 2016 of the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the New Urban Agenda, represented a moment of great hope that multilateral cooperation could herald more inclusive and environmentally sound models of development. Local and regional governments (LRGs) have demonstrated their firm commitment to the realization of these agendas by widely embracing their objectives and becoming actively involved in their implementation.

At the end of the first quadrennial cycle, the agreed period for evaluating progress, the first global assessments are emerging and show mixed results. Multilateral approaches to development are currently under threat from the polarization of national politics as the world economy experiences another global slowdown. Growing economic inequalities and global tensions are increasing people's concern about the future and their mistrust in policy systems and institutions, while a larger number of military conflicts and natural disasters are pushing people to migrate on a massive scale.

These Conclusions start with a recapitulation of the report's main findings with respect to the progress made on the implementation of

the global agendas. Following an analysis of how global trends have changed the context of SDG implementation, Section 1 finds that the importance of urban and territorial management is only set to increase, and with it the importance of the role of LRGs in achieving the SDGs. The discussion continues in Section 2 with an overview of the progress made in the localization of the global agendas. This highlights how the territorialized policies of LRGs (which involve alignment efforts, the protection of universal access to public goods, and the promotion of local data for SDG monitoring and evaluation, amongst others), are fundamental steps towards the achievement of the SDGs. Section 3 concludes with an analysis of the evolution of institutional environments for SDG localization, taking a pioneering global approach that together examines decentralization, multilevel governance mechanisms and the means available to finance the shift toward sustainable development patterns. Section 3 further raises the point that to achieve the SDGs, institutional environments need to improve multilevel coordination to ensure policy coherence and become conducive to local action. At the same time, it opens up the discussion about how to do this in each specific context. Finally, Section 4 advances several policy recommendations to develop an LRG roadmap to accelerate and scale-up local action for the implementation of the SDGs. 🌐

1. Global trends affecting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

1.1 Insufficient progress: several red flags

The UN Secretary-General's 2019 report to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) acknowledges that 'progress is being made and some favourable trends on SDG implementation are evident', but the 'global response has not been ambitious enough'.¹ Extreme poverty and child mortality rates continue to fall, as does the incidence of diseases, while there has also been progress on some gender equality targets, access to electricity, labour productivity and unemployment. Moreover, the proportion of urban population living in slums has fallen, marine-protected areas have expanded and progress on some means of implementation is moving rapidly.

Overall, national governments have shown a high level of commitment to the achievement of the SDGs: 142 countries have presented their VNRs since 2016. Taken together, they represent 86% of the global population. The majority of countries have incorporated the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into their national development plans and strategies or have developed specific roadmaps. Almost all countries have set up coordination structures at higher levels of government to ensure more coherent implementation. Many are adapting their institutional frameworks to support the interlinkages between sectoral policies, and they are involving civil society, the business sector, academia and social partners.

However, assessments of the global progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the UN and international agencies remain pessimistic. The UN Secretary-General's report underlines that at the current pace, many of the goals and targets will probably not be achieved. For example, the extreme poverty rate

is projected to be 6% in 2030, thus missing the global target to eradicate extreme poverty; while hunger is on the rise for the third consecutive year. In Africa, 'more people are entering poverty than escaping it'.² At the same time, the majority of indicators measuring ecosystems show a rapid decline and biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate. Economic growth has exacerbated inequalities between and within countries, while formal markets are not capable of absorbing informal work and high youth unemployment. Half of humanity – women and girls – continue to experience violence, unfair social norms and unequal treatment at home and work. Furthermore, available sustainable development financing is below the levels required to achieve the SDGs. Other means of implementation are not yet mainstreamed, and nor are institutions robust enough to adequately respond to these massive interrelated and cross-border challenges.

Others reports reach similar — or even more pessimistic — conclusions.³ Several institutions and social movements point out that there is an increasing 'gap between rhetoric and action', which is evident for instance when analysing the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted to the UN.⁴

Gaps between commitments and actions are also noticeable with regard to the Paris Agreement on climate change and the New Urban Agenda.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), were communicated by 190 parties (97% of the parties of the UNFCCC) for the first round (2015-2020). The analysis of these shows that the objective of the Paris Climate Agreement to keep the global temperature below

Floods in East Jakarta in February 2017 as the Sunte River overflow covered the city with up to 150cm of water (photo: Kompas/Hendra A Setyawan, bit.ly/31V7pFI).



2°C will not be reached unless countries make more ambitious commitments for the next round (2020).⁵ However, reduction of climate change impacts is also closely linked to the achievement of sustainable development pathways, the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities.⁶

The implementation of the National Urban Agenda at the national level is making progress at an even slower pace. Around 92 countries are already implementing some form of national urban policy (NUP), but only 13 have reached the monitoring and evaluation stage.⁷ At the regional level, in 2016, European Union (EU) Member States adopted the Pact of Amsterdam, which situates the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda in the European context. In Latin America, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (UNECLAC), in cooperation with the Forum of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Housing and Urban Development Sector (MINURVI) and UN-Habitat, adopted the Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and created a regional platform to facilitate the follow-up and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda. African countries are exploring the development of a harmonized regional framework

for implementing the National Urban Agenda. However in most countries, NDCs and NUPs often remain disconnected from the SDGs.

As illustrated in this brief introduction, there is a general acknowledgment that **the shift towards a new sustainability paradigm envisioned by the 2015 commitments is not taking place at the pace and scale required and, in some territories, it is even reversing. As stated by the UN Secretary-General, the ambitions and efforts towards the implementation of the global agendas need to be upscaled and accelerated if the world is to achieve the transformations needed to preserve our future. ☉**

1.2 New roles for local and regional governments in the face of major global transformation

The world is experiencing major transformations that are undermining the achievement of the global agendas, changing the structure of our societies, their economic and governance models, and affecting the role and capacities of institutions and actors. The UN Secretary-General identifies five such transformations or 'megatrends', namely urbanization, demographic and climate changes, protracted crises and frontier technologies.⁸

The world population is expected to reach 9.7 billion people by 2050, of which 70% will live in urban settlements. Ensuring the sustainability of such **demographic change** and urbanization rates 'will depend on the successful management of urban growth in low-income and lower middle-income countries, where the most rapid urbanization is expected to happen'.⁹ In fact, only three countries will account for 35% of the world's urban population growth between 2018 and 2050 (India, China and Nigeria).¹⁰ At the same time, 55% of the population growth will concentrate in Africa, whose urban population is projected to grow three-fold by 2050. The continent will also have the highest percentage of youth population. In contrast, in all regions except Africa, one quarter or more of the population will be people aged 60 years or above. These demographic changes will have a large impact on urbanization patterns and, while today three out of five (57%) urban dwellers live in cities with less than one million inhabitants, in 2035 this number will reach two and a half in five (53%). The number of megacities in the world (cities with more than 10 million inhabitants) will increase from 33 to 48, and these will host 16% of the world urban population. Forty-three of these megacities will be in the Global South, of which 32 will be in Asia.¹¹ However, it is not only megacities and metropolitan areas that are likely to grow: intermediary cities, with populations ranging from 500,000 to one million inhabitants, are also expanding rapidly. They encompass more than 8,900 cities and are home to nearly 36% of the world's urban population, and many of them are facing significant urbanization and growth management issues.

As emphasized in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 special report, if global warming exceeds 1.5°C, the world will be pushed towards a highly uncertain scenario in which the magnitude of climate-related risks will depend on the rate, peak and duration of warming. In order to achieve development pathways that are consistent with the commitment to limit climate change to 1.5°C, enabling conditions must be created that allow for transformational and systemic change with respect to the management of energy, land and ecosystems, urban infrastructure and industrial systems. Established patterns of urbanization are highly reliant on fossil fuels and the complexity of the global circuits of production and consumption mean GHG emissions are highly concentrated in cities, which account for two-thirds of global GHG emissions and energy consumption, and which more and more are suffering the worst effects of **climate change**. The number and impact of natural disasters have multiplied during the last decade and are increasingly urban in nature.¹² Heat waves, terrestrial and coastal flooding, new disease vectors, air pollution and water scarcity will continue to converge and largely impact cities, unless adaptation and mitigation efforts are designed to decarbonize urban societies. Many cities situated in low-lying coastal areas will be exposed to sea-level rise (estimated at 570 cities, home to over 800 million people), as well as other risks associated with the degradation of ecological systems, such as saltwater intrusion, flooding, and infrastructure damage.

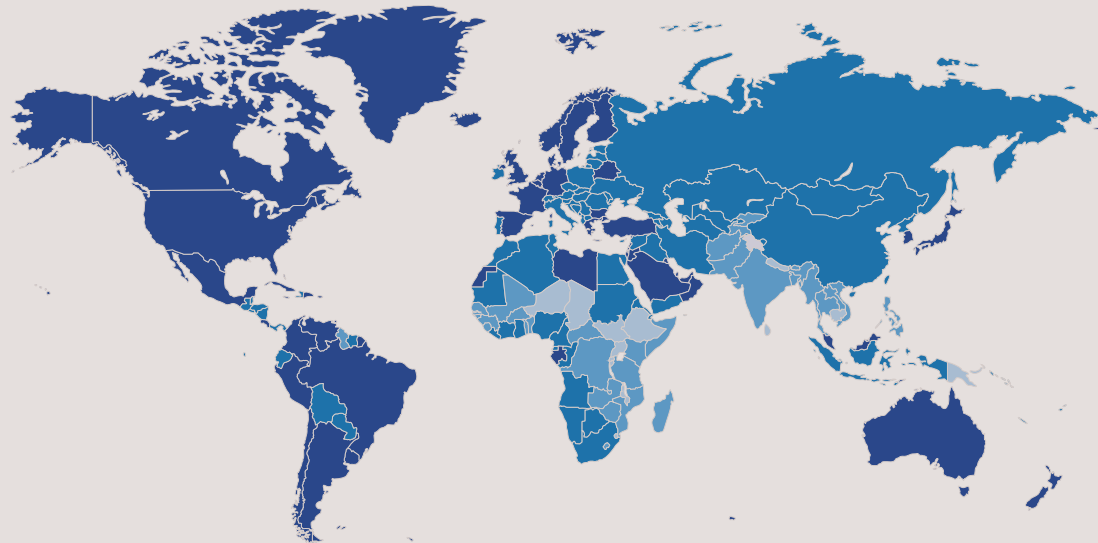
Moreover, **armed conflicts** are expanding in many parts of the world posing a huge challenge to the achievement of the SDGs. Eight hundred

Systemic changes are necessary to manage better energy, land and ecosystems, urban infrastructure and industries.

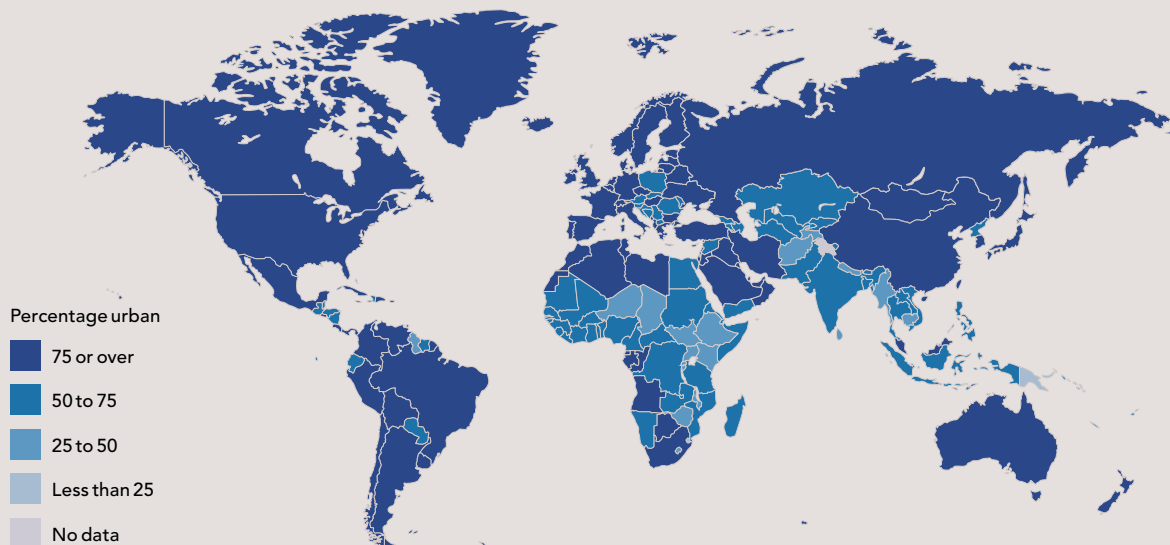
Figure 1

Percentage of population residing in urban areas, 2018 and 2050

2018



2050



Source: UNDESA, 'World Urbanization Prospects, The 2018 Revision', p. 36.

and thirty-six million people are estimated to live in extreme poverty in fragile or conflict-ridden contexts. Moreover, the number of globally displaced people – because of conflict or climate change-related disaster – had risen above 65 million by the end of 2017, almost twice the number of displaced people 20 years ago.¹³ According to recent data, however, 82% of violent deaths also occur in 'non-conflict zones', and particularly in urban centres.¹⁴ These include violence from exclusionary processes, interpersonal violence, hate crimes and organized crime. Meanwhile,

corruption, threats to the freedom of the press or to the rights and freedoms of civil society organizations (CSOs) are worsening worldwide, leading to declining social trust, polarization and unrest. Thus, 'local institutions have an even more important role in managing vulnerability and providing incentives to enhance resilience'.¹⁵

Frontier technologies create immense possibilities to improve human wellbeing, environmental management and boost economic prosperity. They are already influencing city management, optimizing public service delivery

(e.g. smart grids) and improving access to basic services of populations living in remote or marginalized areas through, for instance, decentralized renewable energy and sanitation options. Technologies are also being used to facilitate access to better data and improve accountability and citizen participation, as well as contributing to reducing carbon-intensive energy consumption patterns and helping to monitor urban and natural systems and their interactions. The 'Internet of Things' and Artificial Intelligence will also accelerate these changes. Nevertheless, despite the opportunities they present, the use of new technologies and big data to optimize the management of public goods also gives rise to tensions since public goods are by their nature common goods to which all populations must be ensured — yet do not always have — access. Moreover, ICT and the data it generates often leads to sensitivities around population privacy and monitoring which, together with the effects of the 'gig economy' — facilitated by ICT — on housing and labour rights, are increasingly important issues on local agendas. Many LRGs are trying to address these issues (e.g. the Global Coalition of Cities for Digital Rights, Declaration of Cities for Affordable Housing). A further challenge is the increasing technological divide between more and less economically developed countries, as well as between urban and rural areas. This, technological gap, needs urgently to be tackled to ensure the opportunities brought about by new technologies are accessible to all.

Recent global assessments explore different levers and 'entry points' that could entail the adoption of the systemic approaches needed to accelerate the implementation of the global agendas. '**Sustainable urbanization**' is considered one of the key 'entry points', since it embodies the interlinkages and interactions between the different dimensions of the SDGs and the other agendas.¹⁶ Other reports, such as the 2019 Quadrennial UN Global Sustainable Report and the IPCC 2018 Report, adopt similar approaches in relation to urbanization.¹⁷ Urbanization and territorial development are becoming more and more central to sustainable development strategies. As our societies become increasingly urban, the transformative impact of cities and their interactions with peri-urban and rural areas — the so-called 'rural-urban continuum' — are more and more a focus of the global and national agendas. As such, the initiatives of LRGs are increasingly recognized as central to the progress of these agendas.

Existing analysis considers that, with their concentration of people and economies of scale, their propensity to innovate and their capacity to bring together local stakeholders, local authorities and cities have a privileged position to elaborate development strategies that are more sustainable.

Some reports emphasize that the cumulative benefits of integrated approaches fostered by urban systems can bring as much as 20-fold improvements in resource and energy efficiency.¹⁸ Well-managed cities can accelerate the transition towards low-carbon societies, strengthen resilience strategies and reduce the impact of the urban carbon footprint, while also facilitating access to sustainable economic alternatives, improving social inclusion and advancing rights-based agendas that put people at their centre.¹⁹ Well-planned territories equally can contribute to reshaping urban and territorial systems, adopting a more balanced approach to territorial development that tackles growing territorial inequalities by fostering collaboration between towns, intermediary cities and metropolitan areas and their hinterlands, and better managing the development of urban corridors and clusters as well as optimizing urban-rural interactions.²⁰

Nevertheless, without definite policy interventions, the population increases expected to take place in urban areas over the next 30 years and the consequent impact on GHG emissions and depletion of natural resources will be greater than any seen before in human history. Forecasted urban growth translates into 85 million more urban dwellers per year. Thus, the New Urban Agenda must be understood as a 'catalyser' for the implementation of the SDGs, one that fills in the urban dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, it is important to remember that the multiple trade-offs between the two agendas could also limit the combined potential for scaling up local policies. Urban densification, for example, could support climate mitigation strategies by reducing emissions, while simultaneously increasing adaptation challenges by intensifying heat island effects and inhibiting restoration of local ecosystems.²¹

As shown in the aforementioned UN reports, structural transformations are putting increased pressure on the implementers of the global agendas. The progress cities and territories make towards the execution of the global agendas will be determinant in transitioning towards the sustainable development pathways necessitated by these agendas. This requires not only strengthening of the governance of territories and cities but also coordination with national sustainable development (NDSs) strategies to ensure that LRGs play a greater role incrementally in the transition towards a sustainable future.

The following section summarizes the growing role of LRGs in the achievement of the global agendas and illustrates through different examples how they contribute to developing more sustainable and inclusive development patterns. 🕒

2. How LRGs are taking the lead in the achievement of the global agendas

2.1 A worldwide LRG movement committed to the global agendas

Since 2016, the local and regional movement for the localization of the SDGs has been progressively expanding to all parts of the world, albeit at a different pace within and between regions. Progress is more noticeable in some regions, for example Europe, and particularly Northern and Western European countries, where a remarkable number of LRGs are reported to be involved in the localization process. In Southern Europe and the Baltic countries, mobilization around the SDGs is growing, while it remains more limited in Central Europe and is still incipient in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. In North America, an increasing number of pioneering high-profile cities and states are demonstrating their commitment to achieving the global agendas, with the support of their local government associations (LGAs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations, private sector and grassroots organizations. Caribbean LRGs, with the support of international LRG networks, are also increasingly engaged in the localization process, most notably in Jamaica

and Trinidad and Tobago and, to a lesser extent, Dominica and Saint Lucia.

Progress has been more varied in **Latin America**. This has been driven mainly by LRGs and LGAs in Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and by regional governments and large cities in Argentina and Mexico. Elsewhere, mobilization around SDG localization is slowly growing (Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala and Honduras). In **Asia-Pacific**, a number of LGAs at the national and regional level have made substantial efforts to disseminate the global agendas and mobilize their members, while promoting knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer exchange (e.g. UCLG ASPAC). Many LRGs are making progress in the alignment with the SDGs of their policies and plans (Japan, South Korea, China and Indonesia, followed by Australia, Philippines and New Zealand). In federal countries, such as India and Pakistan, alignment efforts remain more concentrated at the state or provincial level. Initiatives are expanding at different rates in the other countries of the region, as well as in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific. In **Africa**, significant efforts have been made developing local and regional plans and strategies aligned with the SDGs, thanks to the support of national and regional LGAs. LRGs in Benin, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Togo are among the frontrunners, followed by Burundi, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. Meanwhile, progress in **Eurasian and Middle Eastern and**

At the global level, LRG networks encourage and support more systematic local and regional implementation of the global agendas.

West Asian countries remains slow (with the notable exception of Turkey) in environments dominated by centralized governance systems and, in the case of MEWA, by the persistence of severe conflicts.

At the global level, LRG networks have played a key role in encouraging and supporting more systematic local and regional implementation of the global agendas. Indeed, since the end of 2012, UCLG has been actively involved in the preparation of the post-2015 agenda. Following the participation of its President, the Mayor of Istanbul, in the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Agenda, UCLG created the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, bringing together the world's main global and regional organizations of LRGs. The advocacy work of UCLG, in partnership with the other LRG networks and partners, has been instrumental in strengthening the dialogue with the UN and international and regional institutions, at the same time mobilizing their members for the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the other global sustainable agendas. In this sense, 2015 represented a tipping point in UCLG advocacy, with the recognition of LRGs' role in the SDGs, particularly SDG 11, as well as in the Paris

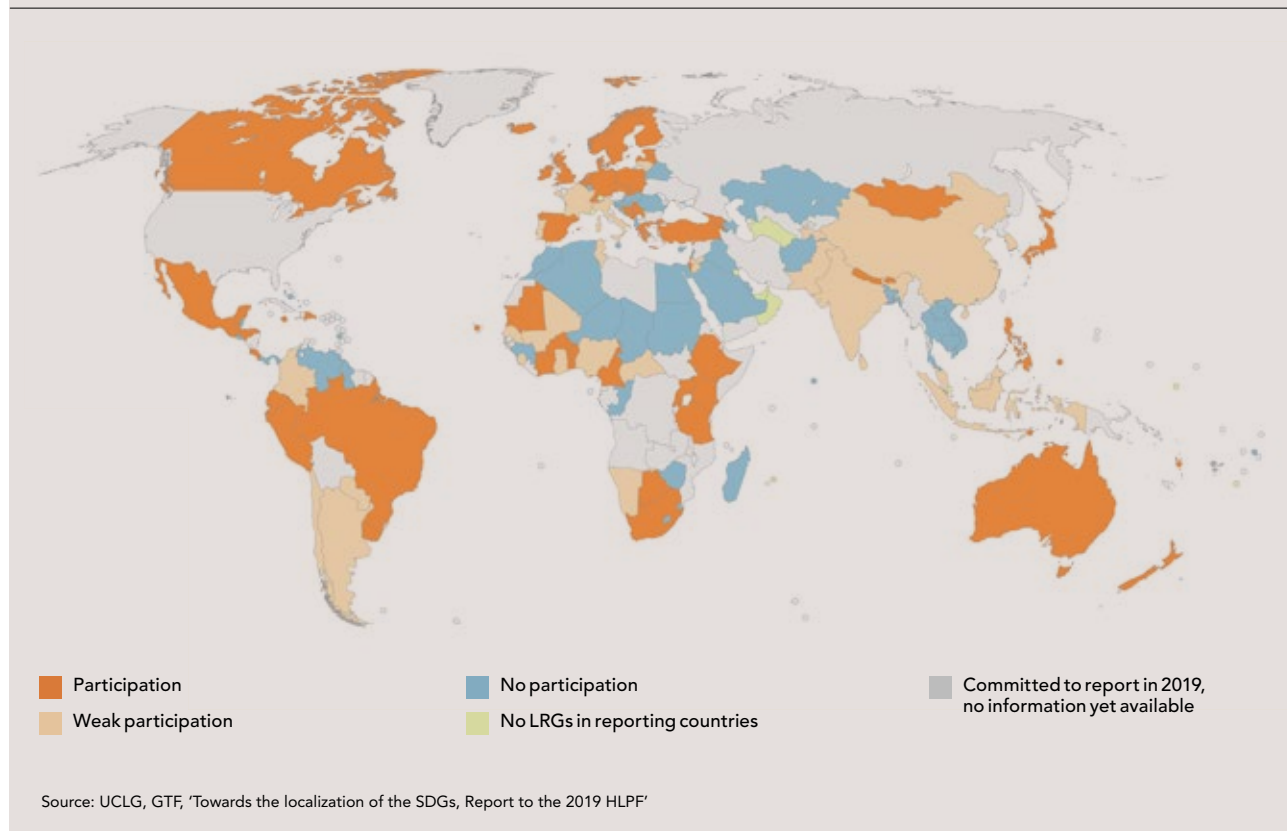
Climate Agreement, and later in the New Urban Agenda, when the representation of Mayors became the symbol of the UN Summit in Quito. Since that time, 'localization' has been recognized as a critical dimension in the achievement of the global agendas.

Furthermore, regional and national LGAs are actively contributing to the localization of the SDGs in most regions. Their actions range from mobilizing their members to the organization of hundreds of conferences, workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building, provision of technical support and implementation of pilot projects; to actively fostering dialogue and exchanges with regional and international organizations through their advocacy work with national governments. Another common feature is that many **regions, metropolitan areas** and large cities across the world have successfully managed to raise the profile of their innovative actions and best practices for the localization of the SDGs. However, while these are all positive trends, outreach is still limited to 'frontrunners' and mobilized cities, regions and their associations, and not across the board.

Finally, several LRGs and their organizations are placing a strong emphasis on mobilizing

Figure 2

Involvement of LRGs in VNR process (2016-2019)





A sticker for the joint booth of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights and Slum/Shack Dweller International at the World Urban Poor Forum in Naples, 2011 (photo: SDI, t.ly/RDWnD).

and building alliances with local stakeholders as part of SDG localization processes, in particular with NGOs, CSOs, private sector, academia and knowledge-based organizations. Examples of multi-stakeholder platforms and campaigns to support SDG localization are abundant in Europe (e.g. SDG charters and forums) and in North America, as well as in Latin America, the Asia-Pacific region (e.g. Local Sustainability Alliance of Korea) and Africa (e.g. 'Know your City').

National governments and international institutions should take greater advantage of the current mobilization trends to develop real 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approaches, as required by the 2030 Agenda. The mobilization of civil society and NGOs in sustainable development is reaching an unprecedented scale. Worldwide social movements have recently emerged, mainly led by young people, women and indigenous people. Within the private sector, some leading enterprises have also begun to move away from 'business-as-usual' approaches, for instance by adopting and reporting on sustainability standards.²²

However, the openness of the governance systems and follow-up mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs do not necessarily reflect the degree of mobilization of LRGs and

their networks. Institutional arrangements for SDG implementation in each country were reviewed for this report with the aim of assessing the involvement of LRGs in mechanisms set up for the coordination of implementation processes. The analysis thereof concludes that the involvement of LRGs is still globally unsatisfactory. As reported by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments to the UN, LRGs were consulted (in some way) during the reporting process, albeit cursorily in some instances, in only 42% of the countries that reported to the HLPF between 2016 and 2019. Moreover, LRGs were involved (in some way) in the national coordination mechanism in only 33% of these countries.²³ This has had a direct impact on the degree of mobilization and engagement of LRGs in the different countries.

Nonetheless, formal participation in itself will not create the desired and necessary transparency and openness of governance of the SDGs. To leverage the positive actions of LRGs, civil society and partners, the objectives and modalities of the HLPF, as well as other regional and global forums, need to be revised. The world needs to **transform the HLPF into an effective multilateral and multi-stakeholder space for dialogue, to foster exchange of experiences and knowledge-sharing, to strengthen collaboration and partnership, and to ensure real oversight of commitments and policy implementation.** Without a revamped mechanism for stronger institutional and stakeholder engagement that promotes coordination and greater accountability to ensure that initiatives perform in a resource-efficient and effective manner, the SDGs will remain aspirational goals. ☉

²² The Global Compact registers the commitment of 9900 leading companies. See: <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>; Sustainable Development Network Solutions, "Quadrennial Global Sustainable Development Report"; The business sector is increasingly worried about environmental policy failure. World Economic Forum, "The Global Risk Report," 2019.

²³ UCLG and GTF, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs 2019."

Regional and national LGAs are actively contributing to the localization of the SDGs in all regions.

2.2 Mapping LRG efforts to align local and global agendas

As summarized in the different regional chapters, LRGs find themselves at different stages of the SDG implementation process. Table 1 proposes a scheme to identify the different stages of this process.

Although with important differences, committed LRGs in the majority of the regions are mostly in the preparatory phase of the process: moving from commitments to alignment with the SDGs of their urban development plans, policies or territorial strategies, raising awareness between local stakeholders and involving local partners, and defining coordination or follow-up mechanisms. Only those LRGs that are more

advanced are in the operationalization phase, linking SDG priorities and budgets, retrofitting the SDGs within existing programmes and projects and launching new initiatives. Moreover, a limited number of LRGs have defined systems of indicators supported by monitoring and evaluation mechanisms aligned with the SDGs. In general, these tend to use regular follow-up mechanisms, such as budget tools and regular reporting systems. Meanwhile, some LRGs have decided to go a step further and are developing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to measure their contributions to the achievement of the SDGs.

Table 1 Stages of SDG implementation process

Stage	Focus	Activities
1	PREPARATION National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of national strategies (integration/alignment of the SDGs within national development strategies (NDSs) or development of a 2030 Agenda plan). • Appointment of a responsible national coordination body and building an inclusive governance arrangement to promote a 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach to SDG implementation. • National monitoring and evaluation framework and indicators. • Information and consultation (national and local). • Localization strategy for implementation of SDGs: vertical and horizontal alignment of policies. • Dedicated means of implementation: technical assistance and training programmes, financing mechanisms. • National reporting system for the preparation of the VNR with a multi-stakeholder participatory approach.
	PREPARATION Local/regional level(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of local development plans (LDPs) with the SDGs and/or national development plans (NDPs) that have already integrated with the SDGs. • Local/regional coordination body: building governance arrangements. • Strengthening local information and consultation. • Setting priorities and targets for implementing local 2030 Agenda plans.
2	OPERATIONALIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting priority targets, involving local stakeholders, preparing investment plans and budgets for projects and programmes. • Operationalizing SDG monitoring and evaluation of performance targets and indicators. • Collaborative multilevel governance and coordination arrangements established to support co-funded local SDG initiatives. • National and local retrofitting of SDGs to existing projects and programme activities.
3	SCALING-UP/ MAINSTREAMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term plans, budgets and funding models for scaling-up to long-term programmatic and bundled programme activities. • Mainstreaming and tailoring to context and scale. • Knowledge transfer involving continuous open learning.
4	ADAPTING/ GLOCALIZING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glocalization of good practices. • Customization and adaption of learning and good practices. • Value-adding through innovation and creativity. • Developing learning systems and technologies.

Source: Brian Roberts for the 'GOLD V Report'.

However, it is not easy to establish a strict separation between the different stages. De facto, as underlined in the regional chapters, local-level sustainable development initiatives were already in existence before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and, although not branded SDG efforts as such, many contribute directly to the realization of the Goals.

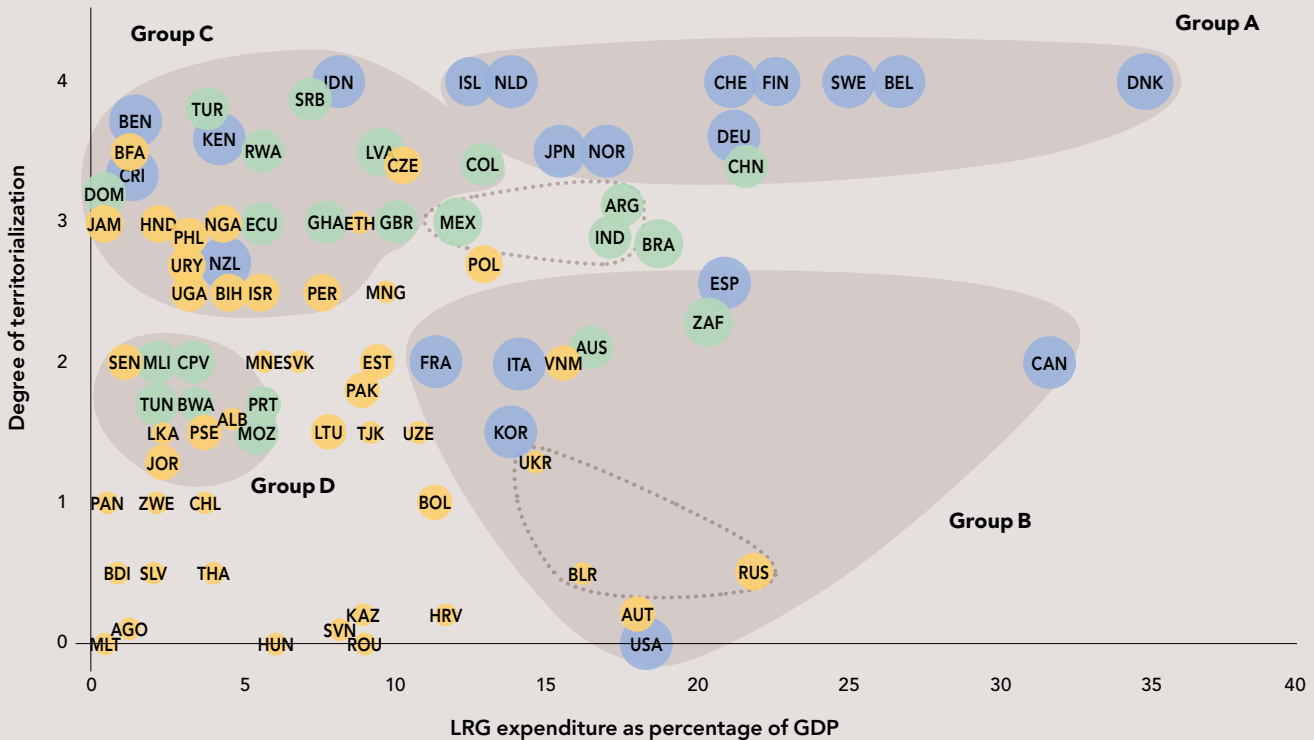
Several variables have been identified as levers that contribute to some LRGs being more advanced in their alignment and operationalization processes than others. These are: 1) the existence of robust national SDG localizing strategies; 2) institutional environments conducive to LRG actions; 3) adequate technical and financing support; and 4) political will and engaged local communities. Based on the analysis provided in the regional chapters, the following patterns can be elucidated to map those countries where LRGs appear to be more advanced in the SDG

localization process, and those where they are lagging behind. The following figure identifies 31 countries out of the 88 that were reviewed, where 'territorialization' strategies have been strongly promoted to support LRG involvement in the localization of NDPs and their contributions to the implementation of the Global Goals (e.g. Benin, Costa Rica, Iceland, Indonesia and Serbia, among others).

Countries in **Group A** stand out for having a significant number of their **LRGs contributing to SDG localization through bottom-up initiatives**. These frontrunner countries have national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs) or policies for the implementation of the SDGs, many of which have been developed through a consultative process involving their LRGs. They include Northern and Western European countries (e.g. Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway,

Figure 3

Correlation between the degree of decentralization and territorialization of the SDGs and the extent of localization in 88 countries



Note: The x-axis refers to the level of decentralization in the 88 countries reviewed, calculated on the basis of 'LRG expenditure as percentage of GDP' as provided by the OECD/ UCLG, 2019 Report of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment. Nevertheless, this ratio gives a partial picture of the state of decentralization and should be interpreted with caution. The y-axis indicates the policies for the territorialization of the SDGs included in the NSDSs, based on the information collected for this report and the participation of LRGs in coordination and reporting mechanisms as an indicator of level of importance given to LRGs in the implementation strategies, the latter data being extracted from 2019 Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' Report, 'Towards the Localization of the SDGs'. 0 has been assigned to countries where there is no LRG involvement in national coordination and reporting mechanisms; 1 to countries that mentioned LRGs in their VNRs, even if LRGs did not participate in national mechanisms; 2 to countries where LRGs participate either in coordination or reporting mechanisms; 3 to countries where LRGs participate in both coordination and reporting mechanisms (advisory role); and 4 to countries where LRGs fully participate in both national mechanisms (in the reporting unit). The size and colour of bubbles reflects the extent of localization, with large blue bubbles and middle-sized green bubbles indicating a stronger degree of LRG mobilization, while small green/yellow bubbles show countries where localization is still in its infancy.

Sweden and Switzerland), as well as Japan. They benefit from a strong legacy of local autonomy and multilevel governance. National strategies for sustainable development policies and existing coordination mechanisms facilitate collaboration between national and sub-national levels. In many cases, LRGs are moving even faster than their national governments and engage in broader national and local alliances with civil society and social partners. China appears to be an exception in this group, since although its LRG spending accounts for a substantial share of GDP, in all other aforementioned criteria it accords with Group C.

Group B comprises those countries with a tradition of local autonomy and in which **localization is mainly a bottom-up process**. Despite limited (or non-existent) national strategies for SDG localization or insufficient coordination, the actions of LRGs to align their plans or initiatives with sustainable policies are in many cases remarkable. In some cases, LRGs build on previous experiences with Local Agenda 21 (e.g. in South Korea) or refer to other commitments such as the Paris Climate Agreement (e.g. the United States), often in partnership with different stakeholders (NGOs, CSOs, business sector, philanthropy). In other cases, LRGs and their associations play an active role in shaping the national strategy or localization roadmap, while at the same time, striving to increase the number of LRGs involved in the process (e.g. Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Italy and Spain). South Africa is also included in this group, because of its relatively high level of local spending as a percentage of GDP, yet according to the other criteria, it too should be included in Group C. Conversely, New Zealand, which is in Group C, should be included in Group B for the same reasons. It is in Group C due to a lower level of local expenditures as a percentage of GDP, although this low level of fiscal decentralization does not necessarily reflect its level of decentralization overall.

Three Eurasian countries (Belarus, Russia and Ukraine), with small bubbles (showing an incipient level of localization), are part of this group because they have a relatively high level of LRG expenditure as a proportion of GDP. However, the characteristics of these countries do not correspond to those of the other countries included in the second group. They have de facto more centralized planning and low decentralization. The same applies for Viet Nam.

A smaller group placed between Groups A and B, includes federal countries (e.g. Argentina, India and Mexico). While progress aligning SDGs with strategic plans at intermediate levels (states and provinces) has been made at the municipal level, decentralization processes are more limited and remain sluggish. Brazil is close to this group, but both federated states and municipalities are taking actions to localize the SDGs. However, the

national government in power since January 2019 is retreating from its commitments thus weakening the localization approach.

Group C consists of countries that are **mixing top-down localization strategies and bottom-up actions through normative and incentive policies**. In all regions, countries engaged in decentralization processes and that have integrated the SDGs in their development strategies are fostering LRG involvement – some of them through robust localization policies. In these countries, LRGs are requested by national governments to align their plans with NDSs, but are also encouraged and supported to undertake their own initiatives. In many of these countries, LRGs and their LGAs are making significant efforts, sometimes in the face of institutional obstacles, to engage in the localization process. In countries with favourable institutional environments, LRG participation can be better facilitated and more innovative and dynamic (e.g. Colombia and Ecuador). As already mentioned, China should be included in this group. Other countries also belonging to this group are Benin, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Indonesia (where 52% of provincial governments have already mapped their plans against the SDGs), Kenya (where the country's 47 counties have aligned their plans with the SDGs), Latvia, Peru, Rwanda, Serbia, Turkey and Uruguay.

Conversely, when strong vertical implementation of national strategies is not matched with adequate support to ensure real buy-in at the sub-national level, progress in SDG localization is limited or uneven. Even with a relatively favourable institutional framework for LRGs, without well-structured support, the localization process and LRG involvement may be patchy (e.g. the Philippines, which is included in this group but with a smaller yellow bubble). In some federal countries with a strong top-down approach (e.g. Ethiopia and Nigeria), and where local governments are particularly weak, the alignment process can become locked at the state or regional level, thus increasing the gap with local governments.

Group D represents those countries in which, although the LRG institutional environment is more constrained (or the decentralization process is only just underway), national leadership,

Even with a relatively favourable institutional framework for LRGs, without well structured support, the localization process and LRG involvement may be patchy.

combined with strong support from international agencies, provides a strong incentive for LRGs to develop pilot projects at the local level (e.g. Botswana, Cape Verde, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal and Tunisia). In these countries, the national associations of LRGs also play a key role in promoting SDG localization.

In addition, the lack of decentralization in the majority of MEWA countries (excluding Turkey) also hinders the localization process. **Overall, LRGs are unlikely to develop initiatives in countries facing adverse institutional environments and significant political uncertainties.**

Although not represented in Figure 3, a handful of globalized metropolitan cities, led by committed mayors, are also leading their **own bottom-up initiatives to articulate the different agendas**. As mentioned in the Metropolitan Areas Chapter, 27 large cities announced that they had already peaked their carbon emissions, and 72 cities committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 through zero-emission transport, the use of 100% renewable energy, net-zero carbon buildings and zero-waste by 2030, and doing so in an equitable and inclusive way.²⁴ More than 35 cities have announced their pledges to the right to housing.

Despite the aforementioned progress, the localization process is still incipient in the majority of countries. To make this process more effective, countries will have to rethink their governance

systems to create strong incentives for LRGs to galvanize bottom-up action and participate in the achievement of the global agendas. **Overall, national leadership and the institutional framework for multilevel collaboration, as well as the enabling institutional environments for LRGs to act, are identified as the main levers — and main concerns — from the perspective of LRGs, in facilitating the localization process.**

As emphasized throughout the report, there is an increasing acknowledgement by the international community of the need to harness the potential of sustainable urbanization and territorial development as a transformative force to achieve sustainable socio-economic and environmental dynamics. **To the extent that their national and local realities will allow, LRGs are stepping up to the task, emerging as key institutional drivers of change, and progressively mobilizing to achieve that change and take concrete actions towards the localization of the SDGs.²⁵ Committed LRGs are approaching the targets of the SDGs and related agendas as a catalyst for transformation, building on local action, multilevel coordination and decentralized cooperation to advance people-centred agendas for sustainable prosperity.** The following section provides an overview of localization efforts in relation to the different dimensions of development. ☉



Power generation plant in the Navajo Reservation of Page, Arizona, United States (photo: Alex Proimos, bit.ly/35hAzRh).

2.3 Local regional governments initiatives and challenges approaching sustainable development

Local and regional governments (LRGs) hold a key position as the level of government that is closest to the needs of the population. Yet, as has already been discussed, institutional development, in terms of decentralization, the establishment of adequate multilevel governance mechanisms and the availability of adequate means of implementation, creates different environments that enable (or hinder) the local transformative action that stems from the territories. Thus, the ways in which local action steers urbanization and territorial development will largely be determined by the institutional contexts and particular realities of communities and territories. Bearing in mind this contextual relevance, this report aims to contrast whether and how the potential of local action is being harnessed to positively impact development dimensions such as ensuring populations' access to basic public services and co-creating more inclusive, prosperous and environmentally conscious settlements and communities. **Are the world's cities and regions (re-)urbanizing in ways that realize their transformative potential to confront the challenges that our societies are facing? And if so, how exactly is such transformation taking place and is it happening fast enough?**

The report has provided a compilation of urban, territorial, social, economic and human policy innovations that seek to build people-centred and prosperous communities and territories while guaranteeing the planet's preservation. **Cities and territories are the backbone of social, economic, environmental and cultural development in the majority of regions.** However, socially and environmentally unsustainable production and consumption patterns tend to underpin economic development, in turn giving rise to dynamics of inequality and aggravating climate change. As a response, frontrunner LRGs have put forward a wide range of initiatives to address the many dimensions of sustainable development, focusing

mostly on the interlinkages between poverty, access to public services, social inclusion, economic development and environmental protection.

The scale and urgency of the aforementioned challenges and the complex web of shared responsibilities require commitments from all levels of government. However, as the level of government closest to the citizens, LRGs are often the first responders to people's demands for basic public services and community protection with a direct or indirect impact on the safeguarding of many common goods (e.g. drinkable water, land degradation, air and ocean pollution, and their impact on biodiversity).

Indeed, an significant number of **LRGs have been at the forefront of climate action, taking the lead with respect to the preservation and restoration of ecosystems across all regions.** In 2019, more than 10,000 cities from 129 countries made a commitment to take measurable climate action through the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. The most ambitious LRGs committed to implement these goals in an equitable and inclusive way. In order to achieve these goals, LRGs are gradually taking actions to **accelerate the concerted transition towards clean and affordable energy**, for example increasing the energy efficiency of local government equipment, as well as of buildings, heating and transport systems through urban renewal programmes. Many cities are developing different renewable energies, divesting from fossil fuels, or supporting the transition towards renewable electricity by 2020. Many LRGs are also making **efforts to develop cleaner and more inclusive public mobility systems.** Low-emission mobility strategies are becoming increasingly widespread, and tend to include supporting electric vehicles, reducing automobile travel, and promoting active mobility to decarbonize transportation. In all regions, LRGs are rethinking

and expanding public transport networks, and formulating local development plans to create multimodal transport systems, reducing commuting times and including distant and deprived neighbourhoods in the formal economic fabric.

Waste management strategies also rank high on local agendas. In 2018, many leading cities and regions stepped up their actions towards achieving zero waste. This involved a commitment to significantly reduce waste generation and increase move-away from landfill and incineration practices to instead promote the capture and use of landfill gases, transforming waste to energy and adopting zero-plastic policies, taxes and fees (usually based on the 'polluter pays' principle). As part of their waste management strategies, many cities in developing countries are more and more integrating informal waste-workers and communities into the mainstream, in an effort to adopt a holistic approach to development that promotes inclusiveness in access to economic opportunities.

Moreover, LRGs are increasingly **mainstreaming disaster risk prevention** and climate change adaptation programmes within their urban and territorial planning. In partnership with international organizations (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], UN-Habitat) and city networks, many LRGs are designing and implementing more innovative and comprehensive resilience strategies. LRGs are increasingly making use of new technologies, promoting the involvement of communities and the most vulnerable populations through comprehensive bottom-up asset planning processes and mainstreaming resilience into neighbourhood upgrading plans.

In response to the increasing inequality brought about by unsustainable economic development, LRGs around the world are promoting innovative policy approaches. These are **exploring alternative economic models**, such as the social and collaborative economy, circular and green economy, creative and cultural economy, smart specialization and technological clusters. Moreover, they are fostering small, medium and micro enterprises that are a greater source of employment in almost all regions. At the same time, many cities in developing countries are promoting the integration of informal

workers (transport, street vendors, craftspeople), to improve labour conditions and public space use. LRGs are also important local employers, responsible for the respect of decent work and the application of sustainable procurement policies.

Inequalities are also growing both within and between regions and cities (for example between metropolitan areas and peripheral cities and growing and shrinking cities), **and between urban and rural territories.** These territorial inequalities constitute a major modern challenge, and will need to be addressed if the objective of 'leaving no one and no place behind' is to be achieved. In some regions, promoting territorial cohesion and achieving a more balanced territorial development are at the centre of territorial sustainable agendas (e.g. Europe) or part of the regional agendas (as is the case with the African Agenda 2063). For their part, LRGs are advancing initiatives to reinforce cooperation between territories through inter-municipal cooperation and partnerships, and fostering smart specialization that promotes the sustainable development of rural and peri-urban areas located on the urban fringes. Key components usually include shared land planning and economic development strategies, including access to social services for peri-urban areas, supporting territorial food systems and the protection of environmental resources that are critical for urban systems (e.g. watershed management, wetland and coastal areas protections, reforestation, etc.). Nevertheless, it is still necessary to adopt a more proactive approach to the articulation of urban areas into the wider territory they belong to, explicitly acknowledging the fundamental importance of understanding and promoting sustainable development across the whole urban-rural continuum. The adoption at the national level of a territorial approach to local development remains pivotal for scaling-up the reach and impact of such initiatives.

The aforementioned inequalities continue to feed **urban poverty**, posing huge challenges to the governance of cities and territories. Although extreme poverty has decreased in past years, urban poverty has persisted and even worsened in poor territories and large urban agglomerations. Given its multi-dimensional nature, poverty in cities and territories relates to a number of the SDGs, and efforts to combat it are ultimately enshrined in the key principle of the SDGs of 'leaving no one behind'. The urban poor are also particularly exposed to urban violence, which is on the rise in many cities and becoming a key determinant in the governance of cities and metropolises in Latin America, North America and Africa. The fight against poverty remains inextricably linked with access to basic services, food and nutrition, health and education, economic opportunities, adequate housing and disaster risk prevention for the most vulnerable. Consequently, many LRGs are fostering

Territorial inequalities are a major modern challenge. LRGs are advancing initiatives to reinforce cooperation between territories.

inclusive social policies to support the access of the most vulnerable populations to these basic goods.

Informality and the expansion of informal settlements are two of the more salient issues related to urban poverty, as well as prominent characteristics of urban settlements, particularly in African, Latin-American and Asian countries. Informality and unplanned urbanization hinder LRGs' capacity to steer sustainable local development. As informal settlements continue to spread, LRGs face daunting challenges in providing their populations with urban utilities and basic services. In many cases, the lack of resources and inadequate legal frameworks (e.g. regarding the status of land, property and tenancy) do not allow LRGs to develop urban infrastructure. When it is possible and safe, LRGs are implementing incremental upgrading programmes with the participation of civil society, as well as revisiting land-titling procedures to overcome these challenges and develop the necessary infrastructure to provide citizens with basic services. Although the tendency regarding LRGs' responses to informal settlements increasingly leans towards in-situ upgrading, there are still cases where settlements are evicted. LRGs are assigned the responsibility to relocate the settlements' inhabitants, a highly complex task requiring forward-thinking policy innovation.

The expansion of informal settlements is linked **to the right affordable and adequate housing**, which in the framework of the global housing crisis, is becoming more and more prominent in LRG agendas. Local leaders of the largest cities, both in developing and developed countries, are using their planning and land-use powers to advance their populations' right to housing, in an effort to overcome the effects of the commodification of housing, the lack of national funding and the deregulation of housing markets. They are proposing inclusionary housing policies, regulation of rental urban markets, increasing taxation for vacant housing, designating particular areas within conurbations as destinations for the production of social housing, and establishing affordable housing quotas as mandatory for newly built developments. Moreover, some LRGs, particularly those in less economically advanced territories, are promoting incremental housing production and self-production, as well as supporting their populations with technical and financial assistance, within the framework of slum upgrading initiatives. Nevertheless, action stemming from the territories in this particular field is still far from the scale that is needed, given the magnitude of the housing crisis. Increased housing demand for use, investment and speculative purposes is putting some communities into 'housing bubbles' that unequivocally require bold and integrated policy responses from all levels of government, including supranational, as well as

a strong partnership with communities, NGOs, financial institutions and private sector.

In spite of the challenges posed by informality, **access to basic services** and particularly to piped water and sanitation, have overall improved at the global level, although to a lesser extent in Sub-Saharan Africa. The supply of drinking water and sanitation are usually local competences that LRGs are undertaking in progressively more sustainable and inclusive ways. Nevertheless, the growth of urban agglomerations is putting growing pressure on increasingly scarce water resources, for instance in metropolises such as Bangalore, Cairo, Cape Town, Melbourne or Mexico City. Thus, fragmented urban governance becomes a major challenge with regard to establishing sustainable use patterns and ensuring the preservation of water basins, which oftentimes extend beyond political jurisdictions and serve a number of territories simultaneously. In developed countries, in response to the privatization of water provision and public services that occurred in many cities and regions in the past couple of decades, some LRGs are pushing for the remunicipalization of services (water, energy, transport). Moreover, they are at the forefront of initiatives aimed at increasing affordability and inclusivity of services for the most vulnerable populations, such as the modification of fee structures (introducing progressive fees according to income levels or special tariffs for particular populations), the provision of economic support, and the prohibition of water supply disconnection.

LRGs and their networks are **strongly committed to the protection of human rights** and, on the 65th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, took the opportunity to renew their commitments. Moreover, LRGs are harnessing the conceptual tool of the 'Right to the City' to formulate policy responses and concrete solutions that directly connect with the Human Rights Charters. Poverty contributes to and compounds discrimination, interacting with the discrimination that groups may already face in society and making it even harder for those groups to have access to a dignified life. It disproportionately affects women, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ populations, the elderly, the youth, migrants and people with mental and physical disabilities. As part of their daily actions and responsibilities, LRGs contribute in a multiplicity of ways to tackling the discrimination faced by these populations, such as through initiatives aimed at ending violence and promoting lifelong educational opportunities and local culture.

LRGs are at forefront of promoting **culture** as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development and their commitment to adopting a multilateral approach to the promotion of culture is crystallized in their endorsement of initiatives such as the Agenda 21 for Culture.

The political leadership of cities is key in drafting human rights-based agendas relating to migration and refugees and reconstruction processes.

Local agendas are increasingly cognizant of gender-based discriminations and working with female leadership to promote their role in SDG localization. Alongside the albeit varied progress of female representation in local governments, LRGs, with the support of their organizations, are mainstreaming gender-specific approaches to urban management and policy-making, through programmes ranging from those aimed at addressing gender violence to those acknowledging women's role in the informal economy, developing targeted initiatives to promote equality for women and girls.

Migration is becoming one of the most concerning phenomena of our time, putting more and more pressure on political systems. The political leadership of cities is increasingly central in drafting human rights-based agendas to do with migration and refugees, usually against backdrops of mounting national tension (e.g. solidarity cities, sanctuary cities, cities and regions for integration). LRGs in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, municipalities such as Teheran, Isfahan or Athens among others, are raising awareness, providing accommodation, and implementing capacity-building strategies, as well as working on the inclusion of refugees. Other LRGs have also taken the lead regarding the establishment and strengthening of decentralized cooperation networks for the integration of migrants. However, despite these efforts, the magnitude of migratory crises, such as those currently taking place in the Mediterranean or the Venezuelan crisis, mean that cooperative efforts still need be greatly strengthened at all levels.

The design of cities and territories has a direct impact on climate change adaptation and urban resilience as well as on social inclusion. **Linking urban planning to regional development and citizen participation**, through integrated urban and territorial planning, is increasingly contributing to these systemic changes. This is through more integrated approaches, fostering more compact cities that promote social integration by reducing barriers in the access to economic opportunities and life quality (such as those related to access to basic services and mobility, which particularly affect populations living in peripheral or poorly served areas). LRGs, and metropolises in particular, are increasingly emphasizing the importance of strategic planning as a cornerstone of sustainable

development. Furthermore, they are highlighting the significance of addressing the fragmentation of service delivery, as well as harnessing the potential of public space design to reduce urban segregation and enhance social inclusion and gender equality through the reappropriation of public space. **Participatory planning and participatory budgeting**, among other modalities of citizen participation (referendums, open councils, e-participation, etc.) are becoming essential practices for thousands of LRGs to adapt decisions to their populations' needs, enhancing ownership and accountability. Participatory processes allow **citizens and stakeholders to co-create their cities and regions**. LRGs even become experimental laboratories to test new strategies, approaches and services. The localization of the SDGs and the strengthening of the quality of local democracy by supporting citizens' ownership of policies require the permanent update of the tools and mechanisms that are used to involve citizens in decision-making processes.

LRGs also play a key role in the reconstruction processes in cities and territories that are affected by the destruction caused by conflicts and disasters, for example in Asia, the Caribbean or the MEWA regions, by restoring basic services and planning urban reconstruction using a more sustainable approach.

While many of the initiatives discussed here are often limited in scale and scope, they could nevertheless be replicated and expanded to drive the transformation of our cities and territories towards a more sustainable future. **It is critical to disseminate local information and facilitate direct exchanges and collaboration between LRGs to multiply and upscale policy lessons learnt, including both those that have yielded positive outcomes and those that have not, and always taking into account the realities of local contexts. National governments and international institutions have an important responsibility to support and assist LRGs and their networks to multiply these exchanges and expand the localization process worldwide.** The consolidation and upscaling of local initiatives are fundamental contributions to develop more sustainable patterns of development. ⑥

2.4 Monitoring and reporting on the SDGs at the local level

LRGs also have a direct responsibility to monitor the impact of the global agendas on the (daily) lives and policies that affect their populations, and to monitor how much is being achieved at the local and regional level. Global monitoring and reporting on SDG implementation, however, has hardly included the actions of LRGs. The main issue concerns the methods and tools that are being used to measure progress. The adoption of the 232 indicators of the SDGs is a highly complex and as yet unfinished process. Beyond this, most indicators designed from an intergovernmental standpoint are not designed to capture the reality, diversity and complexity of local contexts, resulting in a significant loss of knowledge and explanatory detail. This, combined with the difficulties that most LRGs in all regions have encountered in being included in reporting processes at the national level, makes monitoring and reporting one of the core issues for LRGs and their participation in the localization process, and one that urgently needs solutions and initiatives to overcome it.

At the global level, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, with the support of UCLG, has helped highlight the role of LRGs in the monitoring process through its presentation since 2017 of their global annual report to the HLPF: 'Towards the Localization of the SDGs', summarizing the involvement of LRGs in all the regions and their contributions to each Goal.

However, the unavailability of disaggregated and localized data, as well as the lack of technical and human resources, have significantly affected the ability of LRGs to contribute to monitoring and reporting at national and regional levels. The response of LRGs to these challenges varies in each region, depending on the support of LRGs' associations, partners and collaboration with national or regional governments.

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, has developed a system of 100 indicators,

but has not yet taken on the challenge of monitoring SDG implementation at the local level. Several countries (e.g. Belgium, Sweden) have developed national SDG statistical platforms with the involvement of LRGs, even though most countries are still in the process of constructing an effective way to localize indicators while not abandoning those already proposed by the UN system. LGAs often collaborate with national statistical offices (e.g. the Netherlands) or with their members to define localized sets of indicators (e.g. the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities – VWSG in Flanders). In Germany, LRGs, with the support of various partners, have created a national platform to collect SDG data from municipalities. Other positive examples can be found in Northern European municipalities. At regional level, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) also contributed to the development of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC), with 30 'objectives' applicable to all municipalities. The international survey conducted by CEMR and Platforma, in collaboration with UCLG, shows that 64% of European LGAs have had some contact with national or local initiatives on indicators.

In **Asia-Pacific**, many countries are trying to adapt their own national statistical system resources to the SDG framework. In Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, LRGs are struggling to adapt national indicators to local plans. In Indonesia, provincial data hubs are using the OneData portal (*Satu Data Indonesia*) to support follow-up. In the Philippines, different score cards systems have also been used to evaluate progress, linking performance to access to specific funds. China has developed a pilot system of SDG localized indicators in the Deqing County (Zhejiang Province) that will be adapted and upscaled. In New Zealand, finally, the Society of Local Government Managers has already developed a national set of indicators that aligns

closely to the SDGs. Some areas have invested in ‘localizing’ the SDG indicators by tailoring them to their local contexts, for example Delhi (India), and several municipalities and provinces in South Korea.

In **Latin America**, countries are also using national systems to help LRGs participate in monitoring and evaluation, e.g. the Performance Evaluation Information System (SINERGIA) and *Terridata* in Colombia, the Sustainable Development Goal Information System (SIODS) in Mexico, and similar examples in Ecuador, Peru or Guatemala. Localized data, however, have not necessarily been aligned with the SDGs. In Brazil, the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) has developed an SDG dashboard — the *Mandala*— accessible to all Brazilian municipalities in order to assess compliance with the core pillars of the 2030 Agenda. To ensure follow-up of their development plans, different regions and cities have developed their own systems of indicators (e.g. Buenos Aires, Medellín, the province of Santa Fe in Argentina, the state of Paraná in Brazil, Oaxaca in Mexico). In partnership with the private sector and civil society, 36 Colombian cities use civil society observatories on quality of life to oversee development plans (e.g. Bogota: ‘How are we doing?’).

In **Africa**, the situation for LRGs and their participation in monitoring has been complicated. UNECA has warned specifically that in the region as a whole, over 60% of current SDG indicators cannot be tracked because of unavailability of data. The relevance of informality makes it even more difficult to collect reliable data in a standardized and systematic way. These challenges notwithstanding, many countries have progressed. Rwanda has used various systems to collect localized data (e.g. performance contracting, citizen report cards, etc.). Ghana’s Statistical Service has conducted a review of data availability for SDG indicators production at all levels. Kenya has established the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System, while Zimbabwe has created focal points — appointed by local authorities — to support the work of the national State Statistical Committee. Only a few of the largest and best-equipped African cities or regions have managed to access place-based data (eThekweni-Durban and

the Gauteng region in South Africa). Data and information management innovation in Africa shows the significant involvement of slum dwellers institutions and federations, in partnership with UCLG Africa and Cities Alliance, in data collection across informal settlements, especially through the ‘Know Your City’ initiative.²⁶ The involvement of local communities and their contribution to data collection has the potential to significantly enhance the information and knowledge available to LRGs, and to improve the impact and effectiveness of localized policies, in Africa and elsewhere.

In other regions, advances have been slower or had less impact. In **Eurasia**, countries have created de jure mechanisms that should incentivize LRGs to collaborate actively with national statistical offices or competent ministries to collect and elaborate data from the local level. In Ukraine, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has worked on the ground with local authorities to develop a monitoring framework. In **Middle East and West Asia (MEWA)**, conversely, there are no local initiatives for monitoring and evaluation. In Turkey, the National Association of Municipalities (UTM) was mobilized during the preparation of the VNR to collect local experiences. In countries where a monitoring system with indicators is in place, this is only defined for and at national level.

Other initiatives have been successfully promoted by international networks. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) has developed dashboards based on city-level indicators for the United States, a number of European cities and Brazil. A similar methodology was applied to assess local performance in India, Italy and Spain. The World Council of City Data has developed metrics (and an ISO certification) to assess performance and compliance with the goals and targets of the global agendas: more than 100 cities in different continents have already filed for certification. Research institutions have been working with LRGs on monitoring systems in cities such as Cape Town and Kisumu (Kenya). Metropolis, UCLG’s metropolitan section, has worked with the London School of Economics and Political Science and the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona to define specific metropolitan indicators and facilitate comparable assessments of metropolitan performance around the world.

Generally, lack of representation and the need for adequate tools to explain local diversity and take advantage of the wealth of information available at the local level, have pushed LRGs to develop more initiatives and seek greater visibility in monitoring and reporting on localization. Many local governments have devised their own **Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)**, documents that mirror their countries’ VNRs and complement this level of knowledge with local on-the-ground information. Three Japanese municipalities and

In Africa and elsewhere, the involvement of local communities in data collection can enhance the knowledge available to LRGs and improve the effectiveness of localized policies.



Kitakyushu, Japan
(photo: Pedro Serapio, bit.ly/2Mqghwi).

the city of New York were the pathbreakers in this regard, and their example has elicited a number of initiatives from cities, large and small, states, provinces and regions, creating a community of aware and accountable authorities calling for better, accessible and disaggregated data. The United Nations has already acknowledged 21 examples of VLRs in a dedicated online database. UCLG has collected and revised in particular the local reports of Barcelona, the Basque Country, Bristol, Buenos Aires, Canterbury, Helsinki, La Paz, Los Angeles, Mannheim, Mexico City, Sydney, Taipei and Vienna. In 2018, UCLG hosted the Local and Regional Authorities Forum in New York, in parallel with the HLPF, wherein the very first VLRs from New York, Toyama, Kitakyushu and Shimokawa were presented. In 2019, UCLG's Learning and Research Department collaborated on a training module to teach local authorities how to design their own VLR and maximize their contribution to the global monitoring effort.²⁷

LRGs' involvement in monitoring and reporting is an issue of **transparency** and **accountability**, as well as **knowledge**. Local and regional governance is a potential source of unique experiences, data, indicators, good and bad practices, innovative and trailblazing initiatives, as well as a litmus test for problems, bottlenecks and ongoing issues. LRGs' **engagement in the process of monitoring the implementation of the agendas**

and reporting on their achievement must be at the core of any localization strategy to achieve the global agendas. The collaboration between LRGs, national governments and statistical offices, as well as the international community, will be essential to improve monitoring at the local level and use the unique knowledge of communities and territories to localize and implement the SDGs and the global agendas more effectively.

Based on the experiences summarized in the report, there can be little doubt that, despite the obstacles and often adverse institutional frameworks, urbanization and LRGs are a central element of the execution of the SDGs and the other development agendas. Increasingly, committed LRGs are undertaking initiatives to implement the SDGs and global development agendas, yet the scale and scope of their actions, as well as the development of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the local level, still need to be strengthened. However, as this section has highlighted, the spread and acceleration of local action are conditional on the institutional contexts and policies in place to support the LRGs. The next section analyses the evolution of these contexts over time and provides an overview of the extent to which the world's territories currently have institutional environments that are conducive to local action. ☉

3. How 'enabling environments' for LRGs facilitate the localization of the SDGs

3.1 A global view of the evolution of decentralization, 12 years after GOLD I

Empowering LRGs is a key pillar of SDG localization: it promotes devolution of powers and resources, ensures subsidiarity and local self-government, and makes LRGs more accountable and responsible. The constitutions of 103 countries (out of 153 reviewed) acknowledge LRGs as a fully-fledged level of government.²⁸ This kind of recognition does not always translate into de facto decentralization or LRGs being well-equipped to play a role in the localization process. There are many ways, however, in which decentralization can be effective: regular local elections, clearly assigned functions and responsibilities, adequate human and financial resources empower LRGs and make them more accountable to their communities.

As shown in the previous chapters, since the 1980s at least, **decentralization trends have spread globally, but decentralized systems are still vastly diverse.** Major reforms of LRG legal, fiscal and administrative frameworks have been high on the national policy agendas of a majority of countries over the past decade. Globally, LRGs make up 24.6% of total public spending and 25.7% of total public revenue, and 36% of total public investment, although the latter accounts for a small share of global GDP (1.3%).²⁹ Decentralization reforms also incentivized the establishment of

intermediate levels of government (e.g. regions, counties, departments, etc.) in many countries, as well as the reforms of the governance of larger metropolitan areas to address the challenges of complex, diverse and vast urban areas. Generally, the analysis of decentralization shows impressive progress, but also serious concerns about the ambitions of LRGs in the localization of the global agendas and the actual context in which they are expected to act.

Most **European** and **North American** countries, for example, already have a long-established tradition of local self-government. LRGs are pivotal in delivering public and social services and key infrastructures, and promoting local economic development (LED) and territorial cohesion. European local governments typically account for a significant share of public revenue and expenditure (25% on average but up to 52% in Northern countries) and play a crucial role in public investment (40%). According to the Local Autonomy Index (LAI),³⁰ Northern and Western European countries have the highest levels of decentralization. In the other countries of Central Europe, most of them also EU Member States, the decentralization process is more recent, with high legal and (to some extent) administrative autonomy, with the exception tellingly of Hungary, whose functions and powers have

been recentralized since 2012. In South-Eastern European non-EU countries, decentralization is still at an early stage, with the exception of Serbia (high-ranked in the LAI) and Croatia. Generally, however, local financing in Europe as a whole has been affected by fiscal austerity measures following the global economic crisis of 2008-2009, leading to an overall decline in local government expenditure relative to general government expenditure (down from 27.3% to 25%). Combined with the EU's fiscal constraints on its Member States, many European sub-national governments (SNGs) are facing restrictions that may affect the investments necessary to prepare a sustainable future for the region.

In **Asia-Pacific**, the decentralization process is more recent and dates back to the 1990s. LRGs represent about 33% of public expenditure and revenue and 40.6% of public investment. However, there are huge differences between Asian-Pacific LRGs according to each country's development levels, and the 'enabling environment' for LRGs in that region is very different to that of Europe. In most countries of the Asia-Pacific region, local governments operate within constrained institutional frameworks, ambiguous and overlapping power allocations, or under restrictive oversight. In terms of development level, according to the 2018 UCLG ASPAC Assessment on LRG institutional frameworks, the most effective enabling environments for LRGs (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea) correlate with higher economic development, high quality of local public services and a good standard of wellbeing. This group of countries is followed by Indonesia and the Philippines, while China — in spite of a highly centralized political system — also ranks high in the assessment. Over the past few years, LRGs have used their relative autonomy to mobilize land revenues and borrow to ensure urban development and deliver key infrastructure and services. A second group of intermediate scores for decentralization includes Thailand, Viet Nam, India, and some Pacific Islands (e.g. Vanuatu). Most of these countries' scores are affected by poor fiscal decentralization. A third group includes five countries where LRG reforms are still at an early stage, or where local administration is effectively more deconcentrated than decentralized (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka). Finally, the last group includes countries in which decentralization policy has either stagnated or regressed altogether (Bangladesh, Pakistan and Timor-Leste).

In **Latin America**, decentralization has made significant progress since the 1980s. LRGs represent 19% of public expenditure and 23% of public revenues on average and play an important role in public investment (39%, although with large variations between countries and cities). In almost all countries in the region, local authorities

are democratically elected. However, the process has not been linear: in many countries, decentralization has experienced periods of stagnation and setbacks, while in others its evolution has been slow. LRGs in most Latin American countries face considerable challenges. Inequalities among territories and within cities have either persisted or have worsened, which has had an impact on access and quality of local services. Vertical budgetary imbalances make LRGs increasingly dependent on transfers from central governments. Since grants in many countries are heavily earmarked, local autonomy is likely to be restricted. The report identifies Brazil and Colombia as the two countries showing the greatest progress in decentralization, followed by Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. The federal countries of Argentina and Mexico are generally considered to be decentralized, since federated states and provinces are granted significant powers and resources, but the autonomy of municipalities is more limited. Decentralization in the remaining three Southern Cone countries, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, is more restricted, although Uruguay has made progress in recent years. In Central America and the Caribbean sub-region, municipalities have more limited competences and resources. Decentralization leads to greater administrative, financial and socio-economic interdependence between the central level and

Streets of Arequipa, Peru
(photo: Phil Robinson, bit.ly/35jbndt).



Globally, LRGs make up 24.6% of total public spending and 25.7% of total public revenue, and 36% of total public investment.

sub-national governments (SNGs) in the region, but multilevel governance mechanisms should evolve to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of public policies.

In **Africa**, the commitment to and outcomes of decentralization have been very varied. LRGs in Africa represent on average 15% and 17% of public expenditure and revenue respectively, and only 19.4% of public investment, the lowest levels among all regions. As of 2019, 17 countries had signed – and only four ratified – the 2014 African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development, but there is a significant gap between de jure decentralization and the reality of decentralization on the ground. While waves of decentralization have periodically swept Africa since the 1990s, the level of decentralization varies between as well as within countries. The 2018 UCLG Africa assessment shows that South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania and Morocco have a more stable ‘enabling institutional environment’ for their LRGs. A second group of approximately ten countries enjoys a ‘rather enabling’ environment (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The last two groups (20 and 13 countries respectively) either still require significant reform efforts to move towards a favourable environment for LRGs or show stagnating or regressive reform policy. There is room for optimism: Mali and Tunisia have progressed in local self-government as a result of recent peaceful and democratic transition. Togo held its first local election in 30 years in June 2019. However, LRGs face growing financial pressure: poverty and informality affect the revenue base of most LRGs and vertical intergovernmental transfers have been insufficient, compromising the delivery of effective basic services. Decentralization is only one part of the localization challenge in Africa, albeit a crucial axis for the delivery of the SDGs.

In **Eurasia**, all countries reviewed in this report appear to be at different stages of decentralization. Since the end of the Soviet Union, several reforms have either strengthened or reduced LRG autonomy, leading to strong spatial inequalities and an uneven development of regions. The level of decentralization varies from highly centralized systems in Belarus and

Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), to relatively autonomous local self-government in Armenia and Georgia (at the municipal or district level), to a two-tiered system of local self-government in Russia. In other countries, such as Ukraine and Azerbaijan, local self-government bodies co-exist alongside the deconcentrated bodies of central government. SNGs in the region have quite substantial budgets and investment capacities (41.9% of public investment on average and more than 60% in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia). However, in practice, LRGs in most Eurasian countries have rather limited control over their expenditure policy.

The countries of the **Middle East and West Asia** (MEWA) region are also characterized by a high degree of centralization, except Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Palestine (where LRGs account for 10.1% and 10.8% of total public spending respectively, and 18% of public investment). Countries such as Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon are lagging behind, while local administrations in Gulf countries are dependent on national decision-making.

To complete this overview, given that the implementation of the SDGs requires greater demand for public investment at the local level, which plays a vital role in catalysing other sources of resources, access to borrowing for LRGs is critical in all regions. Access to borrowing is summarized in Section 3.3.

The exact implications and consequences of decentralization for the localization of the SDGs are as varied as the processes themselves. There are several factors weakening or subverting the incentives for LRGs to adopt proactive policies to localize the SDGs. These include weak or partial implementation of the decentralization process; lack of clarity regarding legal frameworks; insufficient sharing of responsibilities; duplication or fragmentation of jurisdictions and functions; insufficient resources; unfunded mandates, and weak mechanisms for reconciling conflicting priorities. Political instability and undetermined electoral cycles add an extra layer of complexity to localization processes. **An enabling legal and institutional environment in which LRGs can fulfil their responsibilities, innovate and capitalize on their resources, is imperative for a strong territorial development that will catalyse sustainable national development processes for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. ☉**

3.2 Making multilevel governance work to improve localization and policy coherence

Given the holistic, interlinked and transversal nature of the 2030 Agenda and the other development agendas, the SDGs call on all countries to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development as a cross-cutting means of implementation. Enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development, as called for by SDG 17.14, entails strong political commitment, a shared long-term strategy, institutional mechanisms for coordination and policy interactions to involve all levels of government and stakeholders, as well as adapted financing mechanisms and inclusive monitoring and reporting.³¹ Multilevel governance arrangements are instrumental for policy coherence and effective localization, with the aim to create synergies, reduce overlapping and critical gaps between institutions, contributing to trade-offs and integrated approaches. The progress seen in the different regions over the past few decades in the decentralization processes, have led to a more complex political institutional landscape and the need to enhance multilevel collaboration. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda undoubtedly represents an opportunity to extend the processes of change and tackle many of the existing challenges in strengthening and expanding institutional collaboration.

As defined in the introduction of the report, **multilevel governance** includes at least two dimensions: vertical and horizontal collaboration — between different levels of government and between governments and institutions at the same level of governance (e.g. inter-municipal cooperation). Better coordination can contribute to create trust and accountability that enhances policy coherence. It can nevertheless increase the complexity of policy decision-making and consensus-building, as more actors and processes become part of the SDG implementation process. On the other hand, well-tailored multilevel governance arrangements facilitate local ownership and the involvement of local institutions and actors while fostering innovation and experimentation

that allows for the adaptation of strategies to local realities. Moreover, effective multilevel governance mechanisms also contribute to regional and national development objectives.³²

At local levels, the adoption of an integrated territorial approach for sustainable development is a lever to foster policy coherence and multilevel governance in the territories. This brings together the main local actors — institutions and stakeholders — and supports the emergence of a strategic vision, coordinated action and a better articulation of local and regional priorities with NDPs. To be effective, **multilevel governance should be instrumental to reinforce dialogue and accountability based on the principle of subsidiarity and respect for local autonomy.**

The different regional chapters in this report make the case for the need to reform the institutional environment to be able to activate the ‘whole-of-government’ approach to coordination required by the 2030 Agenda and the other global commitments, as well as to ensure the engagement of local stakeholders.

Indeed, countries either establishing new or reinforcing existing coordination mechanisms because of SDG implementation processes have contributed to enhancing multilevel governance frameworks. As already emphasized, many governments have created new national coordination mechanisms (e.g. high-level SDG committees), while others have revamped pre-existing mechanisms (e.g. sustainable development councils). Almost all countries have made efforts to integrate the SDGs in their development strategies or define specific roadmaps for the SDGs. At the same time, **countries are enhancing national development planning systems to better articulate the SDGs, for example with national and local development plans (NDPs and LDPs).** The progress and effectiveness of these efforts, in many cases, still needs to be proven and countries’ experiences show the inherent difficulties and contradictions in the multilevel governance architecture.

In all the regions, different strategies are in place to reform planning systems and ensure the SDGs are implemented in a more coordinated way. Countries mix normative, policy, technical and financial tools and, with different degrees of flexibility, adopt strategies for vertical coordination. The approaches range from countries with strong national leadership that combine central guidelines with flexible policies to engage SNGs, to more rigid top-down policies that require strict vertical coordination. Generally, more flexible policies for SDG localization focus more on the need to reconcile national priorities with local initiatives and, in addition, to promote local development processes to test experiences on a small scale that could potentially be expanded across different levels of governments. On the opposite end of the spectrum, strict vertical hierarchies are by their very nature less flexible and could inhibit the adaptation of lines of planning, implementation strategies and resource allocation to local contexts, as well as local government accountability — which is key to ensuring the involvement of local stakeholders. Some examples in different regions illustrate the different approaches in different continents.

In Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, several national decrees have made it compulsory to mainstream the SDGs into national and sub-national development plans, imposing new deadlines and indicators systems for reporting to all levels of government. Furthermore, they have strengthened the role of national ministries or agencies, regional or provincial councils as intermediate levels of government in coordination and follow-up. Both countries adopted top-down approaches, but differing supporting policies. Indonesia developed broader support initiatives (coordination, guidelines, training and funds), and its outreach is significant (as already mentioned, 52% of provincial governments have developed local action plans in line with the SDGs), although the real impact of implementation needs more assessment. In the Philippines, meanwhile, the country's political context appears to limit the extent to which the SDGs are localized.³³ China, albeit historically adopting a vertical approach to planning (SNGs will follow a five-year NDP), is also closer to the group that applies central guidelines with flexible policies to engage SNGs. To bring LRGs on board, the Chinese government has developed a set of tools with a mix of policy incentives for innovation and experimentation to

be up-scaled if successful (e.g. the Development Plan of China's Innovation Demonstration Zones for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

In Africa, Ghana has taken advantage of its decentralized planning system to ensure better coordination of SDG implementation processes. The national government decided to reinforce the regional and local coordinating councils to ensure vertical (national/local) and horizontal coordination in the territories: to quote the African chapter, 'local governments may choose to prepare local development programmes that are aligned with the national development plan but focus on specific local priorities'.³⁴ Financing mechanisms are being progressively adapted to support regional or local initiatives (e.g. around 10% of GDP are transferred to the District Assemblies' Common Fund). Benin stands out because it has made significant strides in the integration of the SDGs in national and local plans as well as annual investment plans. It has also integrated its national LGA, the National Association of Municipalities of Benin (ANCB), into the National Steering Committee for SDG implementation, chaired by the Minister of State for Planning and Development. A successful example of a top-down approach to SDG multilevel coordination mechanisms can be found in Kenya, where the national government has established SDG focal points in all 47 county governments and, in partnership with the national association of local authorities, the Council of Governors, prepared county integrated development plans (CIDPs) to guide the implementation of the SDGs.

In Latin America, Colombia and Ecuador are two of the countries where decentralization has made the greatest progress in the last few decades. In both, LDPs are mandatorily submitted at the beginning of sub-national authorities' mandates. In Colombia, the national government adopted a flexible approach to promoting the integration of the SDGs into local and departmental development plans and created different stimuli to support local buy-in, using 'contract plans' and grants (royalty funds). However, national governments tried to 'tie' transfers to boost regional projects that followed national priorities and not locally determined ones. In the case of Ecuador, the apparent complexity of the 'nationally decentralized participatory planning system' and contradictions between decentralized and deconcentrated approaches, aggravated by policy tensions, make coordination particularly difficult.

The previous examples underline some of the different approaches and difficulties experienced by countries mixing flexible and more rigid approaches. In other countries in the Asia Pacific region, a more traditional vertical approach dominates and localization processes are more incipient (e.g. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam). Other countries in Africa

The lack of clear mechanisms for the participation of municipalities, private sector and civil society, can jeopardize the horizontal and vertical coordination.

try to find a middle ground between more flexible and rigid approaches, depending on the robustness of national planning systems, which they link to decentralization policies (Chad, Cameroon, Kenya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda). This is also the case in Latin American countries, such as Mexico, Guatemala and Peru. These countries build on their national planning systems, requesting regions and municipalities to integrate the SDGs into their development plans. In Eurasia, LDPs are often regulated by central governments (or regions) and generally developed within the framework of national strategies elaborated by higher government levels. Moreover, the central government coordinates (or gives its final approval to) sub-national development strategies. It also provides grants for strategy implementation. However, more recently cities and towns, particularly in Russia, Armenia and Ukraine, have been more proactive in the design and implementation of their own development plans.

In all these examples, vertical multilevel governance is progressing. Nevertheless, obstacles arise usually because of institutional frameworks. These obstacles include misalignment between national, regional and local plans due to different priorities, unclear share of responsibilities, different timelines, weak budgetary coordination and insufficient funds, as well as weak understanding and capacities and the absence or lack of adaptation of indicators for monitoring. Most countries are dealing with enormous disparities between SNGs in terms of development levels, as well as the capacities and resources available to them for the implementation of the SDGs.

However, horizontal coordination also requires particular attention. In many cases, and especially in federal countries, horizontal coordination at the sub-national level is as complex and problematic as it is at national levels. In India, where the objective of the federal government is the promotion of ‘cooperative and competitive federalism’ to boost performance in each state by moving from a top-down planning approach to a bottom-up approach, the majority of states or union territories have set up special units for guiding and overseeing SDG implementation. However, these units face several problems in facilitating effective inter-departmental or inter-sectoral collaboration and mobilizing rural and urban local governments. In Pakistan, SDG units have been established in planning and development departments (and boards at the provincial level), yet vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms are weak at all levels. In Mexico, special offices to follow-up and implement the 2030 Agenda were established at the state level. Some states have made progress in integrating the 2030 Agenda into their development plans but in other cases, these special offices are disconnected from

state planning committees, thus hindering the integration of the 2030 Agenda in a way that is structurally cross-cutting. Finally, the lack of clear mechanisms for the participation of actors such as municipalities, private sector and civil society, can jeopardize the coordination role of these offices.

Compared with other regions, European countries show a complex multilevel governance framework. Consultative structures for dialogue between central and local/regional government, both permanent and ad hoc, exist in the majority of countries, albeit with varying efficacy. Europe is one of the regions where LRG participation or consultation in national coordination mechanisms is more advanced, yet it is still limited to just 54% of countries. The EU also has a critical impact on multilevel governance arrangements (e.g. under cohesion policies and structural and investments funds). In 2017, the European Commission (EC) launched the European multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs, which includes LRG representatives and advocates for a territorial approach and a ‘two ways dialogue’ that involves local stakeholders at all levels in the implementation of the SDGs in the EU. However, as stated in the European chapter, cohesion policies are under pressure in the region for the next set of multi-year programmes and the involvement of LRGs still needs to be strengthened.

In summary, the involvement of LRGs in the national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation is still insufficient and needs to be strengthened, with, as documented, **only 33% of the 142 countries that reported to the UN HLPF between 2016 and 2019 in some way involving or consulting LRGs through their national coordination mechanisms.**

Multilevel governance arrangements have intensified since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and there is now a wide range of **policies in place although these vary from better integrated planning and national mechanisms to foster harmonized sectoral policies involving different levels of government to weak or incipient national SDG strategies with poor or ill-defined localization policies.** This variation in arrangements reflects the varied quality of national institutional frameworks of SNGs.

Countries will have to rethink their planning arrangements. Where local autonomy is progressing, governments are exploring modalities to promote better articulated national and sub-national initiatives, to ensure local involvement and gradual harmonization of plans and policy coherence. **Multilevel governance calls for a dual approach to SDG implementation that articulates both national strategies and strong local initiatives based on the respect of local autonomy. This dual approach could recalibrate development policies, create space for more bottom-up initiatives, counter institutional inertia and promote institutional innovation. ☉**

3.3 Localizing financing to lock in socio-economic and ecological benefits

Four years after the launch of the SDGs, regional reports show that generally the global community is still blind to the actual cost of implementing the targets of the SDGs in the majority of national and local contexts. The 2030 Agenda brought a considerable change of scale ‘from billions to trillions’ in the financing needs to achieve the global agendas. In 2019, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) revised its estimation of the spending needs for low-income developing countries to deliver the SDGs to approximately USD 0.5 trillion per year. This would require a significant increase in investment as a percentage of GDP. In emerging market economies, the figure is USD 2.1 trillion per year, for which the GDP percentage increase would be lower.³⁵ In cities, the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance, estimated that in 2017 meeting the global demand for low-emission, climate-resilient urban infrastructure would cost on average USD 5 trillion per year.³⁶

The financing challenge comes from a disconnect between the considerable funds ‘available’ at the global level, and the lack of financing reaching those territories and communities most in need. Current strategies fostered by international institutions to deliver the SDGs rely on a blended approach that mobilizes public and private, domestic and international finance. Public actors need to create the fiscal space, via fiscal reforms and better asset management, combatting tax avoidance and

corruption for instance. Traditionally, they will take risks that the profit-driven private sector will not: with newly available funds, public investments should thus reach those left ‘furthest behind’ first. The functioning hypothesis is that depending on the particular financial instrument, each dollar of public funding will leverage additional private funding. However, while many national governments of developing — and especially low-income — countries have yet to implement this approach, and often need support from international financing institutions, Official Development Assistance (ODA) has not reached the expected (or therefore necessary) levels. In fact, recent studies have recommended reframing the policy debate to look at the operational costs of implementing a ‘blended finance’ mechanism to bridge the SDG financing gap. However, such proposals should not undermine the multiple dimensions of poverty eradication and inequalities in the poorest countries.

In all regions, the cumulative shortfall in financing the development of infrastructure, particularly in developing countries, but also that of retrofitting in developed countries to respond to climate change and aging populations, is a critical problem. The challenge is most acute where urbanization is expected to concentrate, as in Sub-Saharan Africa and South/South-Eastern Asian countries. At the local level, from a sustainable development perspective, under the current projections, most cities will not be able to raise the finance required to meet the infrastructure demand.

As mentioned above, the pathways of cities and territories to low-carbon and more resilient societies will be decisive in the achievement of the global agendas and for the protection of our planet. The cross-impact assessment of the SDGs shows that these investments will have a multiplier effect for the SDGs, but also implies that investments should avoid trade-offs with negative impacts, for instance unsustainable

Institutional reforms should be designed to improve the proactive autonomy and responsiveness of LRGs as central components of public finance.

urban GHG emissions, social segregation and pressuring already vulnerable ecosystems. There is an additional time constraint: institutional change does not happen overnight, while socio-economic and environmental costs of laissez-faire rapid urbanization, climate emergency and increasing inequalities are mounting. **Business-as-usual scenarios are 'no longer an option, whether in terms of human dignity, equality and sustainability'**.³⁷

Game-changing strategy: acknowledging LRGs' diversity in an urbanizing world

The overall assessment of this report shows that national development strategies (NDSs) rarely consider explicitly the value of unlocking the diversity of sub-national public finance. Given the challenges of the unprecedented pace of global trends, there is an urgency to design reforms in a more systemic and collaborative way.

Generally speaking, using the SDGs to align national policies with local plans is a necessary but highly demanding process. One of the key take-aways of this report is that there is no single path or fixed blueprint for decentralization and that fiscal autonomy varies immensely across regions, between countries and within countries. A second take-away of the regional chapters is that **fiscal decentralization is not a zero-sum game where national governments lose what local governments gain but rather a win-win for all**. There is the potential for LRGs to raise funds for investment and service delivery through a variety of financial and fiscal mechanisms if they are empowered to do so. The paradox is that cities concentrate around 80% of global GDP, but many

rapidly growing cities fail to capture the wealth created and continue to cumulate insufficient budgets and infrastructure deficits.

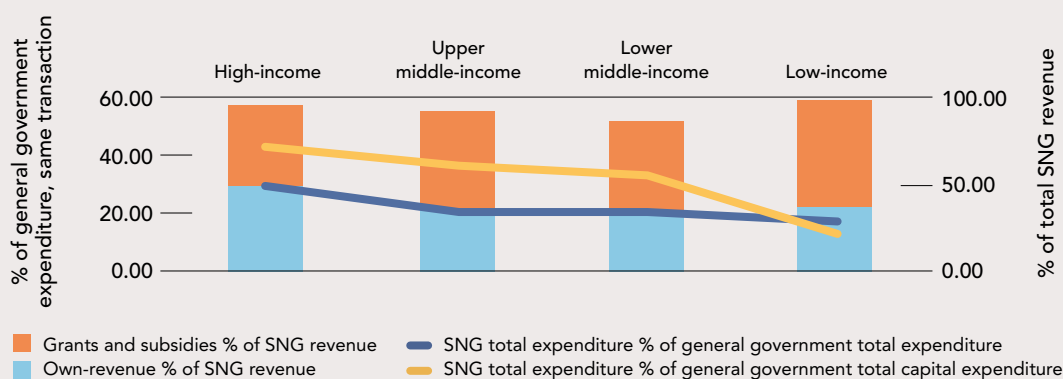
Accordingly, institutional reforms should be designed to improve the proactive autonomy and responsiveness of LRGs as central components of public finance. Currently, reforms tend to be based on simplified principles that do not provide LRGs with flexible tools to address their distinct sustainable development needs, and the adequate powers to mobilize resources from local assets, take advantage of the wealth created in their territories and leverage the full potential of local socio-economic actors in a coordinated manner. For LRGs, this means improving the sources of revenues in their jurisdictions as well as finding more sophisticated options, such as better management of urban assets and improved access to long-term finance.

The previous section used both the volume of sub-national spending and revenue collection as indicative proxies for measuring decentralization. The graph below shows the correlation between the own-revenue/transfer ratio and the volume of expenditure of SNGs by income group. Worldwide, transfers are the primary source of LRG revenue (on average and by income group). This graph also highlights **a positive correlation between the volume of own revenue and capital expenditure**. However, both spending and revenue ratios should be met with a degree of caution and take into account the complex structures at play at sub-national level, and the political context and technical capabilities that either afford or restrict SNGs' flexibility.

On the expenditure side, and particularly capital expenditure, the autonomy of LRGs to manage their own budgets can be in practice restricted.

Figure 4

Sub-national own revenue/transfer ratio compared to the volume of expenditure (total and capital) by income groups



Source: OECD-UCLG, 'World Observatory on Subnational Government Finances and Investments', 2019.

³⁸ Ahmad et al., "Scaling up Investment for Sustainable Urban Infrastructure: A Guide to National and Subnational Reform."

While as a global average, LRGs are responsible for nearly 39% of public investment, capital expenditure in many regions of the world is often tightly controlled by higher tiers of government to respond to national priorities rather than locally defined needs. Yet, one of the main objectives of decentralization is to make LRGs accountable

to the local communities that elected them and adapt development policies and financing to local contexts. Local autonomous self-government to decide in a democratic and participatory way on local priorities is a cornerstone of SDG localization.

On the revenue side, across most regions, there is a mismatch between the transferred responsibilities and revenues allocated to LRGs. The 'finance should follow function' and subsidiarity principles, commitments in paragraph 34 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted by UN Members States, illustrate the critical importance of effective financial empowerment of LRGs in achieving the SDGs. This report's analysis highlights that mandates remain unfunded as many LRGs struggle to pay for the delivery of basic services.

A joined up finance-governance approach must steer innovation to pay for sustainable urban infrastructure and implement the necessary institutional reforms, as recommended by the New Urban Agenda. The current local fiscal systems should be reformed to foster an incremental approach based on a dynamic and buoyant local tax system that should also be inspired by a rights-based approach (see Box 1). Likewise, transfers from the national level to LRGs should redistribute a fairer share of national fiscal revenues to allow LRGs to deliver quality public services, ensuring transparency and accountability. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and local self-government, local fiscal systems should not hinder LRGs' powers of discretion and capacity to set local priorities with their communities.

Equalization grants must be reformed (or created) to support those territories 'furthest behind'. New formulas should include the local context (e.g. infrastructural backlog and access to services; socio-economic indicators etc.) and the different financial capacities of LRGs. **Inter-municipal cooperation, supported by a fair fiscal system, usually allows for financial mechanisms that foster solidarity between territories.** In metropolitan areas particularly, these have proven effective to finance infrastructure development by fostering synergies and reducing persistent inequalities between core and peripheral cities.

LRGs should have greater power and technical capacity to manage urban and territorial assets with adequate land management tools. Based on the experience in developed countries and some pilot cities in developing countries (including China), additional efforts are being promoted to better capture land added-values to reinvest in local infrastructures. Improvements in land management need adequate cadastral tools and different land-based financing mechanisms to charge those who directly benefit from public investment in infrastructure such as developers,

Box 1

The rights-based agenda behind enhanced municipal finance

Providing operational answers to the question, 'How will the world pay for the increasing demand of quality urban services?', is not strictly a technical issue, governed by the mathematical rules of accounting. Sound municipal fiscal management involves more nuanced issues influencing decision-making: the challenge of equitable economic growth to reduce inequalities, and of taking risks that a profit-oriented actor will not take. Moreover, within a new sustainability paradigm, the fair distribution of the cost of the urban infrastructure throughout its lifespan must be considered.

Rethinking LRGs' access to long-term financing is crucial to promote intergenerational equity and to not overburden future generations with debt. How revenues are raised (tax, fees and tariffs) and how expenditure responsibilities are defined and implemented can exacerbate or alleviate socio-economic, gender-based and age-related inequality and access to human rights.

Regardless of citizens' tax literacy, there is a direct link between citizen satisfaction of public services, trust in public management and taxpayer compliance. Hence, awareness campaigns must go hand-in-hand with improving LRGs' responsibilities in transparent financial management and service delivery. LRGs, mostly in developing countries, need to build innovative approaches, together with community-based organizations, to overcome the challenge of a weak fiscal base – due to the importance of informality in the urban economy. In this regard, well-managed municipal finance systems can positively challenge national historic legacies of economic and social exclusion of disadvantaged groups.

Fair and ethical considerations to measure the quality of public service management are also an essential part of local sustainable growth and globalized circuits. LRGs are important public procurement agents and many have been experimenting to bolster social responsibility and environmental impact assessments. The inclusion of environmental clauses and decent work conditions in public procurement tenders, for example, allows LRGs to promote sustainable practices for both short and long supply chains. Further considering the link between the performance of municipal finance and the delivery of the SDGs in a rights-based approach is also instructive. Different LRG networks are increasingly aware of their responsibility towards international human rights obligations and promoting core principles such as 'do no harm' as well as non-discriminatory and participatory decisionmaking processes, of which the participatory budgeting process is the most well-known example.



Market cleaners of a local NGO in Nzérékoré, Guinea, guaranteeing safer health conditions to workers with the support of UNICEF (photo: Julien Harneis, bit.ly/2V113y9).

private persons and the business sector.³⁸ These experiences need to be shared and supported.

Such efforts could only be achieved through stronger multilevel governance collaboration to **shape fiscal policies and embed financial flows in support of the LRGs, as well as to apply incentives or penalties, such as carbon pricing, to foster behaviour change in their populations.** Only then will local traction truly accelerate energy transition. More controversy surrounds other potential sources of LRG revenue in terms of the tax competition and inter-regional equity considerations they imply. In particular, in an era of climate emergency and socio-environmental impact assessment, there needs to be more thorough engagement in the debate over LRGs' fair share of natural resource taxation.

Practical steps to foster investments to localize the SDGs

Having addressed the key strategic fiscal reforms pivotal to the role of LRGs in the localization of the SDGs, we now turn to one of the key challenges in LRG financial capacity, that of **tackling borrowing frameworks and**

regulations to facilitate responsible loans and access to markets for LRGs adapted to their different levels of financial maturity.

One main paradox should be highlighted. As of 2019, LRGs in 113 countries have the formal right to borrow at least on domestic markets, and internationally via loan 'on-lending'.³⁹ In practice however, LRG proposals are often tightly controlled by higher tiers of government. In 2012, another global study identified only 22 countries where municipalities were allowed to borrow without such restrictive controls.⁴⁰ When LRGs intend to borrow directly from financial institutions, their projects often do not match the feasibility, bankability and risk standards imposed by lenders. In fact, in 2013, only 20% of the 500 big cities in developing countries were deemed creditworthy in domestic markets; this percentage dropped to 4% when rated on international markets.⁴¹

This corroborates the view that the capacity of LRGs to access long-term finance is in fact limited by a combination of policies, restrictive rules and institutional weakness (lack of 'bankable projects' and 'creditworthy institutions'). It is therefore essential that LRGs, together with national governments, enhance their institutional dialogue to revise the rules, and create mechanisms to

Operational answers are not strictly governed by the mathematical rules of accounting. Sound municipal fiscal management involves more nuanced issues influencing decision-making.

strengthen their capacity to better fulfil the conditions requested to access responsible borrowing. At the same time, credit institutions need to better adapt their lending practices to the different levels of financial maturity of LRGs and better understand the context in which LRGs operate, giving them priority towards the localization of the SDGs and the other global agendas. Meanwhile, international institutions should also revise their rules to invest directly in SNGs (e.g. the World Bank). **Where national and local authorities clearly articulate strategies for sustainable financing at sub-national levels, investment flows can be enhanced.**

A fully-fledged fiscal strategy builds on the diversity of debt finance options responding to the different contexts of LRGs: from regions and metropolitan areas to intermediary cities and small towns. Grants and subsidized loans can be designed (according to clear criteria) for poorer LRGs and non-self-financing projects (particularly in less developed countries); various types of loans should be made available for more fiscally sound LRGs and self-financing projects.⁴²

There is a marked split between the preferred tools for borrowing, based on the models developed in different regions. In North America, municipal bonds are preferred while in Europe, bank lending or municipal funds are the traditional approach. In recent years, some European LRGs have also experimented with 'green', 'sustainability', or even 'SDG bonds'. A recent study surveyed more than 70 financing instruments that could be deployed to raise and steer new resources for sustainable urban infrastructure.⁴³ These range from fiscal decentralization to mutually binding contracts, city deals, and performance-based grants. Other examples include 'blended finance', lending in local currencies to improve LRGs' capacity to repay; and 'sub-national or municipal pooled financing mechanisms' with small to large-scale projects. This is generally done through the creation of national investment vehicles, international finance vehicles and renewed Public-Private-People Partnerships (PPPPs).⁴⁴

Municipal development funds have been successful in addressing the needs of intermediary cities and small municipalities in both the developed and, to a lesser extent, the developing world. Examples include the

Colombian Financial Corporation for the Territorial Development S.A. (FINDETER), the Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund, or the Philippines Municipal Development Fund Office. In Africa, this strategic renewal is being discussed by the network of African Financial Institutions for Local Governments (RIAFICO) that brings together the main national development financial institutions (DFIs) from the region.

In recent years, numerous city-focused project preparation facilities have supported cities' climate project pipelines to meet bankability standards. Among these facilities are the Cities Development Initiative for Asia, C40 Cities Finance Facility, and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)'s Transformative Actions Programme. This has resulted in better mapping and matching of projects with financial opportunities. For example, the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have come together to help 'prepare and fast-track financing of urban climate action projects'.⁴⁵ LRG networks together with DFIs are developing strategies to combine the transformative impact of each project preparation facilities. Initiatives such as the Gap Fund or the proposed Green Cities Development Bank, led by the GCoM and C40 respectively, have also taken significant steps to fill the gaps in the sub-national finance architecture.

Other mechanisms to help project preparation and linkages with financing institutions such as the African Territorial Agency championed by UCLG Africa and the International Municipal Investment Fund, set up by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and UCLG, in collaboration with the Global Fund for Cities Development (FMDV), are also in the process of development. Finally, the Malaga Global Coalition for Municipal Finance brings together LRG leaders, UNCDF and international institutions to discuss alternative strategies to foster SNGs' access to finance. There is another return on investment from this modality of development cooperation that should be considered: the possibility for LRGs to exchange knowledge, and acquire and retain local expertise.

Providing a pathway and regularized, predictable processes for LRGs to access long-term finance can have an enormous impact on advancing investments in sustainable infrastructure. This could include improvements in the structuring of intergovernmental transfers between national and local governments, strengthening systems for generating own-source revenues, localized development assistance and access to innovative financing mechanisms. LRGs' unequal access to resources must be high on the agenda at both the international and national level so that it can be discussed and remedied through meaningful change in the financial ecosystem. ©

Observations

This report has provided a global overview of the progress made so far in achieving the SDGs, and analysed the role played by LRGs in steering transformations towards a more sustainable future. Its main conclusion is that the global agendas will only be achieved through a **fully-fledged, co-owned and accountable process of localization**. In short, steering urbanization and its positive interaction with the territories along the path of sustainability will be pivotal to preserving the future of our societies and of our planet.

The actions that stem from cities and territories constitute policy alternatives that are bottom-up have the potential to co-create a sustainable future, and put people at the centre. Achieving the SDGs means creating fair societies capable of providing life opportunities for all in ways that do not entail the destruction of the environment — and thus, self-destruction.

LRGs are taking the lead in promoting actions that have an impact on the many different dimensions of development and have the potential to drive profound and systemic change. As shown in this report, such localized development strategies, stemming from and suited to local realities, also have an effect on the global process of transforming development, which in turn reinforces sustainable local processes. The transformational potential of adopting a **territorial approach to local development (TALD)** is huge. Yet the magnitude of the challenges that the world faces makes it crucial to accelerate and upscale efforts to localize the SDGs. As these challenges become more and more pressing, so enabling institutional environments that empower LRGs, adequately articulated multilevel governance mechanisms, and sufficient mobilization of resources, become more and more essential to accelerate efforts towards sustainable development.

We stand at a critical moment in history: a failure to deliver the 2030 Agenda and to achieve the SDGs goes far beyond failing to reach a political milestone or compromise. It means communities and territories as we know them being pushed into extreme and dangerous environmental and social dynamics, the consequences of which are difficult to predict. Urbanization and harmonized territorial development represents an opportunity to reverse this trend — but it is an opportunity that must be seized now. LRGs are increasingly engaged in and committed to the global agendas. Yet to truly capitalize on the potential of local action and ensure the SDGs and related agendas become a reality on the ground, the key challenges summarized in the recommendations below must urgently be addressed.

4. Policy recommendations: our roadmap to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through the localization of the SDGs

The transformation that needs to be brought about to achieve the global agendas will only occur if our development model responds to the dreams and expectations of communities, and if there is collective responsibility to make the necessary adjustments and sacrifices to achieve more equitable, fair and sustainable societies.

The global agendas must either be local or they simply will not be. The constituency of local and regional governments (LRGs) has a critical role to play to catalyse change and provide the kind of service delivery that will deliver inclusion, efficient use of resources and sustainability. This LRG constituency shares the sense of urgency to scale-up and accelerate such a transformation.

The findings of the GOLD V Report have inspired policy recommendations that build upon the 'Bogota Commitment and Action Agenda' adopted by the World Organization of United

Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in 2016, as well as the annual reports of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) since 2017.

In a context of increasing inequalities, endangerment of ecosystems and tensions that are threatening human solidarity, the GOLD V Report presents the efforts of a key constituency that serves communities responding to their needs and hopes. It is a positive message about the impact that well-resourced localization can have in a new vision for the sustainability of our planet. The recommendations are addressed to local and regional leaders and their organizations, to our partners, national governments, international organizations, civil society and social actors, as well as to the business sector.

Local and regional governments lead the way towards a more equal and sustainable world

In the globalized urbanization era, the actions of cities and LRGs are integral to the global agendas: it is at the local level that the interrelationship between the different agendas most clearly manifests itself. With regard to the global agendas, getting the 2030 Agenda commitments right necessitates the full implementation of the principles of the New Urban Agenda and

the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, that in turn are fundamental to changing the patterns of production and consumption as the basic premise of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The following recommendations situate the LRGs as drivers of an alternative territorial approach to development (TALD).

Actions at local and regional levels

Galvanize forces for the localization of the 2030 Agenda in our cities and territories

LRGs and their global and regional organizations have pioneered the localization of the SDGs. To make the 'quantum leap' currently needed they must:

- Adopt the **SDGs as a reference framework** for LRGs' policies, programming, planning and budgets, ensuring a coherent and integrated approach — mindful of the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Framework and empowered by the principles of the New Urban Agenda.
- Embolden ambitions by fostering **greater ownership** of the communities and attain real **local buy-in** of policies. Co-creation with other local stakeholders will be critical in the definition, implementation and assessment of the localization process.
- Share and learn: Participate in LRG networks and invest in **peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing**, practice exchange and training. Fostering and accessing technical assistance and decentralized cooperation to promote the localization of the SDGs will be key.
- Link with science: Serve as catalyser to foster partnerships with research institutions and promote **'labs' to experiment** with innovative ways to implement, review and follow-up the localization process.

Protect the commons, human rights and culture as foundations of peace

The preservation of the global commons (biodiversity, land, atmosphere, oceans) that determine the survival of all living beings, as well as the protection of peace, cultural diversity and human rights, require strong local action and LRGs' commitment to:

- Foster an **ecological and systemic relationship between people and nature**. LRGs must support cohesion of the 'urban-rural continuum' and strengthen the interconnected policies that halt deforestation and desertification; effectively manage the current network of protected areas, including terrestrial, freshwater (both surface and ground) and marine areas; and improve human wellbeing, particularly of indigenous populations and communities whose livelihoods depend on forests, water and soil conservation and climate change mitigation.
- Achieve **climate neutrality in cities and territories**, taking into account the life-long cycle of GHG emissions to proactively tackle climate emergency. Decoupling socio-economic development from environmental degradation calls for well-planned urban development and land management; responsible and fair management of natural resources and waste; at the same time ensuring reduction of inequalities. It implies divesting from fossil fuels to free up resources. These can be invested to accelerate scaling-up the protection of most vulnerable populations and ecosystems, and offsetting any emissions that cannot be further reduced or avoided.
- Contribute to **holding global warming to 1.5°C** by the end of the 21st century, through the collective definition of Territorially Determined Contributions (TDCs) feeding into the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the implementation of the provisions of the Paris Climate Agreement. Support the post-2020 negotiation of the global biodiversity framework, as well as the Convention on Wetlands of International and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.
- Promote peace and city diplomacy by tackling the roots of local violence, educating for its eradication and to create a mindset that makes it possible to build a culture of dialogue in cities and territories. Foster cities and territories as spaces for **co-existence and peace** through measures that fight interpersonal violence, extremism, racism, xenophobia, gender-based violence and other forms of intolerance, and introduce measures to integrate all citizens.
- Promote **culture as the fourth pillar of development** and as a core component of local identity, a strand of global solidarity, and a vector for peace and human rights. Foster locally relevant cultural policies and programmes on memory, heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge as intrinsic to local sustainable development.

Put human rights and the 'Right to the City' at the core of the local agendas – strengthen inclusive local policies to 'leave no one behind'

Given its multiple dimensions, the eradication of extreme poverty is inextricably linked to the protection of human rights. LRGs should put the 'Right to the City' at the centre of urban and territorial governance to ensure universal access to quality basic services, nutritious food, health and education, economic opportunities, access to adequate housing and disaster risk prevention for the most vulnerable. These are essential components of territorialized pro-poor policies. Partnerships with communities and community-based organisations are instrumental to create alternative solutions, particularly where public services are scarcely delivered. LRGs should commit to:

- **Remove any discriminatory legal and social policy** at the local level to ensure equal opportunities for all, particularly for women, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQIA+ populations, the elderly, the youth, and people with mental and physical disabilities. Facilitate migrants and refugees access to rights and services regardless of their status.
- Tackle **gender-based discrimination and violence** with tailored policies, budgets and legal reforms. LRGs can raise awareness and reinforce education on the changing conception of gender roles. Women must be equally represented and granted equal powers in decision-making forums. It is necessary to enact gender-sensitive policies in territories that promote equal access to health and education and acknowledge the role of women in the domestic and informal economy. Gender equality has a multiplier effect in advancing sustainable development, environmental protection and social justice.
- Support the fulfilment of the **right to adequate housing for all**, which includes affordability, legal security of tenure, habitability, accessibility and cultural adequacy standards and must be understood within the framework of the 'Right to the City'. Promote inclusionary housing policies and slum upgrading initiatives that are undertaken in partnership with the communities and seek to avoid forced evictions.
- Promote the **Principles of Open Government** as a tool for the improvement of policy ownership and accountability. Create spaces and mechanisms that favour citizen participation

in local decision-making, access to information and communities' ownership of the 2030 Agenda and other global agendas.

Harness the co-creation of cities and territories through sustainable participative urban and land planning

Planning needs to be the result of the political, economic and social systems within which it is embedded. Deep reforms on planning regulations and frameworks are a critical part of SDG localization and the New Urban Agenda. This includes the need to produce qualified professional planners and researchers. By renewing participatory urban and spatial planning, LRGs should:

- Adopt an **integrated planning approach**, as reflected in the New Urban Agenda, to strengthen the inclusive dimension of cities, climate adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk prevention strategies, and multiply the benefits of interlinkages between urban and territorial areas. Inclusive and participatory planning are key levers for the co-creation of sustainable and inclusive cities and territories.
- Build capacities and retain **local expertise** to address rapid urbanization with adapted approaches to reduce urban sprawl and avoid costlier retrofitting. Most urgent actions are needed in regions where rapid urban growth will be concentrated (Sub-Saharan Africa and South and South-East Asia).
- Scale-up efforts to build **urban resilience and disaster risk preparation**, involving local communities, particularly vulnerable groups, in particular in coastal cities and Small Developing Island States (SIDS).
- Contribute to promoting **'polycentric' urban development** to reduce core-periphery divides, promote more compact and social-mix neighbourhoods, reduce inequalities and avoid urban segregation.
- Create or preserve **open public spaces** to boost inclusion and protect urban heritage and culture, while also pursuing innovative solutions to foster creativity for sustainable urban development.
- **Curb urban sprawl**, reduce distance between home and work places to reduce commuting times and encourage access to alternative and safe modes of mobility (including walkable cities) to reduce GHG emissions. Urban and

spatial planning can lead to transformative use of renewable energy, and reduce the ecological footprint of cities and territories, greening public infrastructure and spaces, reducing air and waste pollution, and reducing risks such as floods, drought or urban heat island effects.

- Improve relationships with the surrounding peri-urban and rural areas, avoid land degradation, and improve **food security** and farmers' livelihoods.
- Enhance the management of **natural protected areas** and ecosystem services, such as upstream watershed areas that the city relies on for fresh water supply, and support reforestation.

Improve access to sustainable and inclusive public services in cities and territories

LRGs need to develop an integrated and systemic approach that will guarantee universal reach. This includes universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, to quality education and health, to public affordable and sustainable mobility, to integrated waste management and to affordable and clean energy. LRGs need to:

- Develop **infrastructure plans** alongside urban land-use plans, including long-term investment strategies to guide economic and spatial expansion, especially where there are pressures for growth.
- Reduce the **environmental impact** of urban infrastructures and contribute to communities' resilience.
- Support **inter-municipal cooperation** or specific mechanisms that guarantee collaborations to ensure full coverage and adequate quality delivery in territories, be it in metropolitan areas, cities or peri-urban areas, or between neighbouring municipalities in rural areas.
- Guarantee access to affordable services exploring new universal models of service co-production, taking advantage of new decentralized technologies; support small-scale businesses as basic service providers and improve the **quality oversight of services**; and gradually insert the informal economy into the organization of public service delivery.
- Improve the management, delivery and transparency of public basic services, and facilitate innovative **partnerships for co-production and co-management**.

Focus on the future of jobs and local economic development (LED)

It is now urgent to steer a course away from the patterns of economic growth, consumption and production of goods and services that perpetuate deprivations, generate inequalities, deplete the global commons and threaten to cause irreversible damage to the environment. LRGs should therefore:

- Promote LED that helps generate **sustainable socio-economic development tailored** to the particular needs and contexts of cities and territories, and ensure decent work and respect for responsible sustainability standards.
- Prioritize **quality local employment**, as a right, and tailor fully-fledged policies responsive to the barriers faced by and vulnerabilities of specific groups, including women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities or people with disabilities among others; likewise find inclusive solutions to involve migrants regardless of their status; and facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfers to preserve, disseminate and evolve local know-how and crafts.
- Create spaces for **local innovation** in order to nurture and scale-up local capacities, including those enabled by technology and nature-based industries; develop synergies with local initiatives; support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that contribute to sustainable growth and to create employment in their local environments, give impulse to productive clusters and cooperative strategies both within and between sectors and territories.
- Ensure that **new technologies and e-platforms** do not widen the divide that is consolidating poor-quality employment, or privileged extractive systems of production that do not support communities' social cohesion, connectedness and wellbeing. Develop policies to protect people's privacy, and foster traditional local small business.
- Promote **alternative economic models** such as the transition towards a circular and green economy; support the social and collaborative economy and sustainable tourism. Support the transition towards territorialized food systems that foster good health while minimizing environmental impact; and support efforts to reduce the environmental footprint.
- Recognize the critical role that the **informal economy** plays in the urban fabric. Because of this contribution and the growing number of

workers involved in informal economy activities (estimated at over two billion people worldwide, among which women are 'over-represented'), LRGs need to take necessary steps and support and create initiatives to help entrepreneurs in the informal economy. This must support them to evolve their activities towards the social and solidary economy, and promote the creation of mechanisms to facilitate access to social protection.

- Create enabling conditions, capacities and confidence to mobilize the transformative power of **public procurement**, while respecting the autonomy of LRGs to set their own policy priorities. This should be done by mainstreaming and implementing sustainable and decent work policies, and fair, labour-friendly and environmental clauses, and by encouraging a culture of transparent public contracts and disclosure.

At the global and national levels

Foster a global-local movement to localize the SDGs. Localization should be a pillar of national sustainable strategies to implement the SDGs

To achieve the 2030 agendas on time, the pace of change needs to accelerate and ambitions need to be bolder. National governments and international organizations should work in collaboration with LRGs and their networks to increase the outreach and strengthen partnerships of the 'whole-of-government' with the 'whole-of-society' to boost localization. National governments should:

- Integrate (or strengthen) robust **localization strategies** in their sustainable development strategies and action plans to expand the involvement of LRGs and local actors, accelerating and upscaling territorial sustainable development. Localization strategies should be mainstreamed in all plans, programmes and budgets from national to local levels.

- Coordinated strategies for the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement and the New Urban Agenda are an imperative. **No single agenda can be addressed in isolation.** National sustainable development plans (NSDPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Climate Agreement and national urban policies (NUPs), as well as other strategic plans, need to be articulated in order to overcome sectoral fragmented strategies, improve the allocation of resources and boost implementation at all levels, from global to local and vice-versa.

Create an 'enabling institutional environment' for localization – empowered local and regional governments and adequate financing flows to support localization are an imperative

Effective decentralization policies are intrinsic to empowering LRGs and supporting SDG localization. The principles of effective decentralization are defined in the **International Guidelines on Decentralization, adopted by the UN-Habitat Governing Council in 2007.**

- LRGs need the respect of **local autonomy and subsidiarity principles** to be respected in order to respond to the demands of their inhabitants, to innovate and adapt national policies and the SDGs to the local context. Urgent actions are needed to unlock LRGs' potential to localize the SDGs and ensure access to basic services for all.
- Access to **basic social services** is a universal principle acknowledged by the UN and a building block for human development. LRGs need to be empowered and accountable to ensure the delivery of quality basic services for all, defined as direct or shared responsibilities in the legal frameworks of a majority of countries, to achieve the principle to 'leave no one behind' — one of the core objectives of the 2030 Agenda.
- LRGs' adequate **fiscal powers and capacities**, as acknowledged by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (paragraph 34) need strengthened local tax systems, including the power to capture part of land and property added-value; a better allocation of national fiscal revenues through fair, regular and predictable intergovernmental transfers; and access to responsible borrowing to invest in sustainable public services and

infrastructures. Environmental taxes should be considered to advance energy transition and enshrine the ‘polluter pays’ principle into financing frameworks. Equalization funds are also necessary to ensure the adequate redistribution of resources across the whole territory to avoid ‘leaving any territory behind’, paying particular attention to intermediary cities and small towns and promoting more balanced and ‘polycentric’ urban systems.

- To mobilize national and international **sustainable investments** toward cities and territories, national policies and legal frameworks should be revised. An appropriate range of debt finance options needs to be adapted and made accessible to LRGs, one that considers multiple sources of financing and innovative financial instruments. It is also necessary to adopt vertically aligned NDC investment plans and open or facilitate LRGs’ access to climate and green funds.
- Facilities supporting cities in making transformative projects reach **bankability and creditworthiness** standards are essential and require strong backing and leadership to close financing gaps and enhance match-making opportunities, either through specific funds, or connecting cities with potential financiers. The next phase, already in motion, is to support a more diverse set of financial mechanisms that are adapted to the different capacities of cities and territories, such as the upcoming International Municipal Investment Fund, set up by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and UCLG with the support of the Global Fund for Cities Development.
- The promise of ‘blended finance’ can only be fulfilled with the creation of **adequate regulatory frameworks** and with support for LRGs in setting up partnerships with the private sector. These must be mutually beneficial and have clear contractual parameters ensuring that the needs of their citizens come first and that the poor and vulnerable groups are not ‘left behind’.

Effective involvement of all spheres of government, civil society and key stakeholders is imperative to strengthen the governance of the SDGs and the localization process

Strong partnerships and the participation of LRGs, civil society, private sector, social partners and academia in SDG implementation, are

critical to achieve the ‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-society’ approaches called for by the SDGs. It is also crucial to ensure policy and institutional coherence both internally and externally. Without the active and collaborative involvement of all stakeholders, the SDGs will remain aspirational goals.

- At the national level, there is much to do in terms of effectively involving LRGs and stakeholders in the **national coordination mechanisms** for the implementation of the SDGs. Limited consultations and uncoordinated decision-making presently hinder the policy coherence necessary to achieve the SDGs targets and reduce local ownership.
- Integrated national planning systems are at the core of **functional multilevel governance systems** and need to be revamped to enhance the coordination between national governments, LRGs and local stakeholders. A renewed approach to planning that articulates national strategies with strong local initiatives in active collaboration could recalibrate development policies, facilitate burgeoning local actions and promote institutional innovation. This collaboration needs to be founded on the respect of the principle of subsidiarity.
- As decision-makers, LRGs need to be involved in the definition, implementation and follow-up of NDCs and national strategies for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. National urban policies (NUPs), adopted (or in the course of being adopted) by more than 92 countries, need to be integrated in national development strategies (NDSs) to take advantage of the cumulative benefits of urbanization and identify **cross-sector synergies to support SDG implementation**.
- **Horizontal cooperation** at the sub-national level (e.g. intra and inter-municipal cooperation) needs adequate governance mechanisms, tools and fiscal policies to foster urban-rural partnerships and reinforce the management of growing metropolitan areas. Coordination will also strengthen interconnections and cooperation between territories for service delivery and key environmental issues that require reinforced and trans-jurisdictional (and often trans-boundary) actions, such as the management of river catchments and environmental resources.

Support the production and dissemination of disaggregated data for monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement of the localization of the global agendas, including the SDGs

- LRG involvement in the global and **national monitoring and reporting processes** on SDG implementation is crucial and should not be limited to ad hoc consultations. The process of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) needs improvement, to ensure the fully-fledged participation of LRGs that brings the voice of the territories and local actors to the process.
- Fragmented reporting systems hinder ownership and the institutionalization of the SDGs across different spheres of government. Strengthening **local reporting capacities** and closing the data gap require particular attention and support. National and local capacities to define and collect disaggregated and localized data should be part of SDG localization strategies to ensure that planning processes at all levels are founded on realistic targets and that effective implementation can be monitored, as well as to ensure accountability and citizen follow-up.
- Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) contributing to national monitoring and to the global debate, and promoting knowledge-sharing and emulation between LRGs, are opportunities that need specific support and acknowledgment.

A global governance system that brings together local and regional governments and civil society will boost the implementation of the global agendas

- The UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will need to be reshaped to enhance the participation of different stakeholders, as well as facilitate **true innovation and learning**. The HLPF should be an effective multilateral and multi-stakeholder space for dialogue, exchange and knowledge-sharing in order to reinforce multilateral collaboration and partnerships and ensure the real oversight of commitments, policy agreements and implementation.
- The consolidation of the **Local and Regional Governments Forum** is essential as a critical space for interactions between the LRGs, UN Member States, and the UN system. Furthermore, multilevel dialogues need to embolden the local-global leadership, as proposed in the 'Seville Commitment'.

At the continental level, **LRGs' enhanced involvement in the regional forums** (e.g. Regional Forums on Sustainable Development, co-organized by regional UN Commissions), in multi-stakeholder platforms (e.g. the European platform) and spaces (e.g. urban forums) will enhance policy exchange to foster SDG localization and the active involvement of LRGs in the monitoring of the SDGs and related agendas. ☉

The audience at the Local and Regional Governments' Forum, HLPF, 16 July 2018, New York (photo: UCLG-CGLU/Joel Sheakosk, bit.ly/31UjHR).



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- 34 Before the elections, the central government oversaw the activities carried out by local governments through representatives present at each tier. The President appoints a governor for each province. In addition, there are elected provincial councils with a chairman and a vice-chairman elected from among its members by majority vote. Since the 13th amendment to the constitution, the powers of local governments are vested in the Provincial Councils.
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- 36 In Tonga, there is no system of organized local self-government (there is no power to raise tax and define budgets at the local level), but 23 district and 155 town officials are elected by popular vote and report directly to the Prime Minister’s Office. The 14 regions of Nauru are each headed by appointed government representatives. Traditional chiefdoms remain important components of local governance in countries such as Fiji and Palau. In Fiji, traditional leaders head the 14 provincial councils elected by the indigenous Itekei people, while local administrations have been appointed since the military coup in 2006. The 16 states of Palau each have their own local governments, which include local legislators, governors, traditional chiefdoms, elders and clans, in accordance with their respective constitutions.
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- 45 New Zealand: 4.4% and 4.3% for expenditures and revenues of GDP respectively; Philippines, 3.1% and 3.8% and Thailand 4% and 4.1%.
- 46 In China, sub-national governments represent 72% of total public revenues (18.2% of GDP). In Viet Nam, the ratio is 46% of local revenues ensured locally (11% of GDP).

- 47 Japan introduced fiscal rules for local governments in 2015 in order to strengthen local fiscal discipline (Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reforms). In 2016, China announced a major intergovernmental fiscal reform to address the long-standing misalignment of revenue and spending across different levels of government, to be completed by 2020 through an Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Act. In a similar fashion, within the framework of South Korea's 2017-2018 Decentralization Programme, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety announced plans for increasing the ratio of local tax versus national taxes to 40%-60% in the long term. Prior to that, in 2016, the Korean Government launched a performance-based budgeting system. Indonesia transferred key responsibilities to sub-national levels in 2015. In 2016, it created the Village Fund following the approval of the 'Village Law', in which all levels of government must contribute to the Village Fund. In India, the SNG financing system is currently changing, following the reform of the 2017 Goods and Service Tax and the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC - 2015-2020), which recommended an increase in states' share from 32% to 42% of the national tax revenues and an improvement to the grants system to provide more fiscal autonomy and incentives to states.
- 48 In the Philippines within the framework of the federalization debate, the current modalities of grant allocation are under discussion. The amounts to be transferred as defined by law have not been implemented (share of local governments' internal revenue allotment to address inequalities between local governments).
- 49 UN-ESCAP, "Urbanization and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: Linkages and Policy Implications" (Bangkok, 2017), 16.
- 50 In OECD countries, as well as in India and the Philippines, local governments may borrow from banks, raise capital and issue bonds within the limits set by national and/or provincial/state finance ministries in the case of federal countries. In Japan and in federal countries, levels of state debt are rather high (e.g. in Australia and India), while in South Korea, Indonesia and the Philippines municipal indebtedness is more limited. India is revising its sub-sovereign lending policy. Some municipal councils and corporates have managed to raise loans with state government approval.
- 51 In 2017, 94 cities across 14 states received credit ratings from agencies as part of their preparations for issuing municipal bonds.
- 52 To provide guidelines and regulations, in 2010 the China State Council issued the 'Notice of the State Council on Issues concerning Strengthening the Administration of Companies on Local Government Financing Platforms'. In 2014, the China State Council issued Rule N°. 43, which laid out strict guidelines for the supervision of local government debt and operating procedures for the public release of local budgets and final accounts. The amended 2014 Budget Law allowed provinces to issue bonds for investment projects, subject to approval by the central government. A few wealthier municipalities have been allowed direct access to capital markets under central government supervision.
- 53 Genia Kostka and Jonas Nahm, "Central-Local Relations: Recentralization and Environmental Governance in China," *The China Quarterly* 231 (2017): 567-82; Muhammad Alif K. Sahide et al., "Decentralisation Policy as Recentralisation Strategy: Forest Management Units and Community Forestry in Indonesia," *International Forestry Review* 18 (2016): 78-95; Edmun Malesky, Cuong Viet Nguyen, and Anh Tran, "The Impact of Recentralization on Public Services: A Difference-in-Differences Analysis of the Abolition of Elected Councils in Vietnam," *American Political Science Review* 108, n°. 1 (2014): 144-68.
- 54 UN-ESCAP, Asian Development Bank, and UNDP, "Accelerating Progress: An Empowered, Inclusive and Equal Asia and the Pacific."
- 55 Morgan and Trinh, "Frameworks for Central-Local Government Relations and Fiscal Sustainability."
- 56 OECD, "Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development 2018," 2018, 131. See also: https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/sdgs/pdf/about_sdgs.pdf.
- 57 There was a mismatch between the two national approaches: national strategy focused on economic issues and the 3rd Sustainable Development Plan on the environment, but 'the social agenda did not receive sufficient attention and pressing social issues such as housing and welfare (...) are given short shrift in plans', see: Denise Yoon, "Starting Strong on the SDGs in Asia: Readiness in South Korea," 2016, 14.
- 58 Yoon, "Starting Strong on the SDGs in Asia: Readiness in South Korea"; Republic of Korea, "Republic of Korea Voluntary National Review 2016," 2016.
- 59 The following analysis of the case of China is taken from: Bingqin Li and Qian Fang, "Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals by Chinese Cities," 2018; UNDP, "SDG Localization in ASEAN: Experiences in Shaping Policy and Implementation Pathways," 2019.
- 60 According to UNDP's report, "SDG Localization in ASEAN: Experiences in Shaping Policy and Implementation Pathways.", "The city needs to receive official endorsement from the provincial government, integrate a cross departmental steering group to oversee the prospective SDG pilot zone's development, prepare two documents (the city's *Overall SD Planning to 2030* and *Specific Actions Plan on the SDGs Innovation Pilot Zone*) where local bottlenecks are identified and provide a 'theme' for formulating solutions, as well as an indicator system aligned with the SDGs. Policy innovation is mandatory and social and private sector participation encouraged."
- 61 Li, Gong, and Shen, "Mapping Alignment of the 13th FYP (2016-2020) with the SDGs (2016-2030)."
- 62 APAKSI reports having participated in the coordination mechanism, but only at the provincial level. UCLG Surveys.
- 63 The *National Policies and Strategies for Urban Development towards Sustainable and Competitive. Cities for 2045* (KSNPP) was released in 2015; Jasmine Ali and Jago Dodson, "National Urban Policy, Asia and Pacific Region" (Nairobi, Kenya: UN-Habitat, 2015). The information on the participation of LGAs was extracted from UCLG's Questionnaire on NUPs (2016).
- 64 The Joint Memorandum Circular N°. 1 Series of 2018 also encourages local governments to identify and implement programmes, projects and activities that will contribute to the achievement of PDP and SDG targets. Regional NEDA offices in Mindanao also passed a resolution requesting the establishment of an operational and integrated mechanism for the localization of the SDGs within the NEDA.
- 65 Response from the National League of Cities to UCLG survey in 2019 and interview of officers of the League of Cities of the Philippines, 9 May 2019.
- 66 Other examples include the Bottom-Up Budgeting or KALSADA for road maintenance. See: <http://sdg.neda.gov.ph/localization/>. UNDP developed another assessment tool, LoGOD, and a scorecard system (community-based monitoring system), implemented in 77 provinces to complement official data; UNDP, "SDG Localization in ASEAN: Experiences in Shaping Policy and Implementation Pathways," 52-58.
- 67 See ULAP National Executive Board Resolution No. 2018-15: A resolution pursuing Fiscal Federalism and strengthening local autonomy through People's Initiative amending for this purpose Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 of Article X of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Details available at: <https://ulap.net.ph/board-resolutions.html> and <https://ulap.net.ph/ulap-news/news/404-local-government-leagues-push-for-local-government-agenda-in-the-proposed-draft-bayanihan-constitution.html>.

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- 68 Niti Aayog (Government of India) and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) University, "National Workshop on Building Capacity for Localising SDGs Bhubaneswar, 16-17 February 2018," 2018. The National Institution for Transforming India to foster cooperative federalism was created in 2015.
- 69 Niti Aayog and United Nations, "Localising SDGs. Early Lessons from India," 2019.
- 70 Wada Na Todo, "Sustainable Development Goals: Agenda 2030 India. A Civil Society Report," 2017; Shannon Kindornay, "Progressing National SDGs Implementation: An Independent Assessment of the Voluntary National Review Reports Submitted to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017," 2018; Antarin Chakrabarty, "Smart Mischief: An Attempt to Demystify the Smart Cities Craze in India," *Environment & Urbanization* 31, n° 1 (2018): 193–208.
- 71 Government of Australia, City Deals, Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, see: <https://citydeals.infrastructure.gov.au/>.
- 72 Comments made by mayors at the 4th Mayors Forum, Guangzhou, December 2018.
- 73 Pakistan, "Pakistan Voluntary National Review 2019," 2019; Sumra Kalsoon, "Challenges for Localizing the SDGs in Pakistan," 2017, 19. Paper submitted to the 3rd International Conference on Public Policy, Singapore, June 28-30 2017; see also UCLG-GTF 2019 Survey. There is a fear of dissolution of local governments (currently there are provinces where elections have been discontinued).
- 74 A roadmap document and a Cambodian SDG framework was approved in November 2018 by the national government. Sub-national development plans need to be developed. The current national strategy (identifying targets and planning) does not yet involve local governments. LRG inputs are integrated via line ministries (department). The vertical line is respected in all 25 provinces and the Ministry of Planning also requests input from districts (deconcentrated).
- 75 In Lao PDR, the national government is working towards strengthening collaboration with local administrations. Every central and sub-national level sector department and agency (from provincial to district level) has been instructed to integrate SDGs into their socio-economic development plans.
- 76 'SDG implementation is still controlled by highly centralised decisions. The decisions made by national authorities and their State and Regional offices often do not consider the needs of local Development Affairs Offices'. See also: <https://opendevdevelopmentmyanmar.net/topics/sustainable-development-goals/>.
- 77 Although after the adoption of the new constitution in 2015 local governments in Nepal have in principle more autonomy, they still depend on a national budget and 65% of transfers have been targeted at investments in infrastructures.
- 78 In Viet Nam, the Prime Minister issued Decision N°.622/QĐ-TTg on 10 May 2017 on the National Action Plan for implementing Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, outlining the responsibilities and roles of central ministries and civil society. Provincial authorities should submit their development plan aligned with the National Action Plan and the SDGs. Focal points for the 2030 Agenda were assigned at the Provincial Departments of Planning and Investment (DPI).
- 79 UN-Habitat, "National Urban Policy, Asia and Pacific Report," 2015.
- 80 More information available at: <http://msdw.gov.lk/news/a-sustainable-nation-an-inclusive-transformation/>.
- 81 Sri Lanka, "Sri Lanka Voluntary National Review 2018," 2018; UNDP, "MAPS Approach Supporting SDG Implementation in Sri Lanka," 2018.
- 82 A 'Handbook on the Institutional Architecture for Implementing the SDGs' prepared in 2016 by MSDW revealed the deep fragmentation in the public administration system of Sri Lanka. Mandate-based responsibilities of 51 ministries and 425 statutory institutions were identified against implementing the 169 SDG targets.
- 83 As discussed in the GOLD IV report, intermediary cities are cities between 50,000 and 1,000,000 inhabitants.
- 84 UN-ESCAP, "Institutional Mechanisms for SDGs Coordination in Asia and the Pacific Voluntary National Reviews."
- 85 See: <http://www.loginasia.org/>. Local Governance Initiative and Network (LOGIN) is a multi-stakeholder network facilitating knowledge exchange and peer learning on topics related to local governance and decentralization, spanning 12 countries in South and East Asia.
- 86 ASPAC is the regional section of UCLG comprising more than 7,000 local governments in the region. ASPAC has delivered dozens of training sessions on the SDGs, Risk Mitigation, Women Local Leadership, Better Sanitation, Waste and Mobility throughout the region over the past two years (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand); through the Social Media SDG campaign (2016) it has published roadmaps on the localization of the SDGs (in different languages); supported involvement of local governments in the region with Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy; and promoted local cooperation. For the regional assessment, see: UCLG-ASPAC and Cities Alliance, *Cities Enabling Environment Assessment (CEEA)*. For more information, see also: <https://uclg-aspac.org/en/>.
- 87 For the Urban Portal see <http://www.urbansdgplatform.org/>. CityNet is an association of urban stakeholders established in 1987 that includes over 135 municipalities in 23 countries. It organized an 'SDG cluster' to share best practices, and in 2018 delivered 11 capacity-building activities, as well as city-to-city cooperation and decentralized programmes. See: <https://citynet-ap.org/>.
- 88 UN-ESCAP developed an SDG HelpDesk and a Knowledge Platform (in partnership with CityNet and Seoul). It also developed different forums for dialogue with stakeholders. ASEAN launched a SDGs Frontrunner Cities Programme (SDGs-FC) under the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC) funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=29570>.
- 89 UNDP has begun a regional initiative to support the SDG localization and implementation process and the sharing of innovations and lessons learned at multi-government levels to support small Pacific Island states, and is also supporting several initiatives at country level in the majority of countries of the region. For details, see: http://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/sdg-localization.html. In December 2017, the ADB started a programme to support 'strengthening institutions for localizing the Agenda 2030' (USD 1.5 million), see: <https://www.adb.org/projects/50385-001/main>.
- 90 APEKSI has established working groups on climate change and inclusive cities to gather knowledge and generate dialogue.
- 91 Tanoto Foundation, in collaboration with LIPI (Indonesian Knowledge Agency) and UNDP, established an Indonesian Leadership Academy, a capacity development programme to localize SDGs for local government in Indonesia.
- 92 For further details on the programmes of the League of Cities of the Philippines, see: <http://www.lcp.org.ph/22/programs--amp--projects>. For details on EOI becoming a Pilot City on localizing SDGs for Sustainable Urban Resource Management in Asia, see: <http://www.lcp.org.ph/31/246/eoi-to-become-a-pilot-city-on-localizing-sdgs-for-sustainable-urban-resource-management-in-asia>.
- 93 A national workshop was organized by the Ministry of Planning on 'Consultation of the Draft SDGs Implementation Roadmap in Viet Nam' in Hanoi in November 2017. The two workshops on SDGs were related to PMI LED's Objectives (SDGs 5,8,13,16). In March 2018, ACNV hosted the Consultation Workshop for the Action Plan to Viet Nam SDGs by 2030 of Phu Yen Province (with support from GIZ).

- 94 In particular, the Penang Green Initiative, see: <http://www.pgc.com.my/penanggreenofficeproject>.
- 95 LSAK established the Korea Institute Center for Sustainable Development (KICSD) in 2006. See: <http://www.sdkorea.org/>.
- 96 Pakistan, "Pakistan Voluntary National Review 2019."
- 97 Details available at: <https://uclg-aspac.org/en/uclg-aspac-prepares-a-foundation-for-lead-a-flagship-project-to-localise-sdgs-in-pakistan/>.
- 98 UCLG-GTF Surveys 2018 and 2019.
- 99 Narmin, "Role of Local Government Association in Localizing SDGs in Nepal. Presentation in the UCLG ASPAC Retreat, Guangzhou, December 9, 2018," n.d.
- 100 See: <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/>.
- 101 See: www.kilga.org.ki. In June 2018, KiLGA brought together mayors from the 23 Kiribati Councils to organise a forum, using the opportunity to provide capacity building on the SDGs, Paris Climate Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.
- 102 Conclusions of the Joint Workshop on 'Enhancing the Capacity of Local Governments in Localising the Sustainable Development Goals' 8 – 9 April 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.
- 103 See: https://www.japanfs.org/en/projects/future_city/index.html. 11 Future Cities and 19 Eco-cities. The Japanese government committed to select 29 SDG Future Cities.
- 104 This includes solar power, electric vehicles, CEMS (Severe Environmental Memory System), expansion of sewerage technology, renovation of old housing and transportation facilities, and the creation and transmission of culture and art. See also: http://doc.future-city.jp/pdf/torikumi_city/yokohama_pamphlet_en.pdf.
- 105 See the following link: t.ly/Z29pe.
- 106 The following provinces have developed plans aligned with the SDGs: Sumbra, Riau, Bengkulu, Lampung, Jabar, Jateng, Diy, Jatim, Kaltara, Katlim, Sulse, Gorontalo, Bali, NTB and NTT (50% of provinces).
- 107 See: <https://localisedsgs-indonesia.org>. Actions include 16 local training sessions attended by 553 people in 2018; and city diplomacy training (December 2018) with 875 participants from 5 ministries, 239 local governments, 57 national and international organizations, 9 universities and 9 private sector organizations. Partnerships with ministries, non-state actors, NGOs, philanthropy organizations, universities, international institutions and local government - both provincial and regencies. Collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics of Indonesia.
- 108 Teti Armiati Argo and Zuzy Anna, "Empowering Local Government Capacity and Regional Government Association to Strengthen Development Goals," 2019.
- 109 Indonesia, "Indonesia Voluntary National Review 2019"; adopted as Regional Regulation N°. 4 2019 by the regional parliament.
- 110 National Plan on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, p.12. The document, published in September 2016, can be accessed online at this address: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/W020161014332600482185.pdf. The plan mentions that the 31 provinces and autonomous regions were already in the process of alignment.
- 111 UNDP, "SDG Localization in ASEAN: Experiences in Shaping Policy and Implementation Pathways."
- 112 The 'China Sustainable Development Evaluation Index System Research - Provincial and Large and Medium Cities Sustainable Development Ranking 2018 Annual Report' was released in October 2018. 30 provinces (municipalities, autonomous regions) apart from Tibet, and 100 large and medium-sized cities across the country were ranked according to the sustainability performance indicator. The sustainable development indicator has five main categories: economic development, livelihoods, resource and environment, consumption and environmental governance. The five categories at city level have 22 indicators, while the provincial level has 26.
- 113 Provinces are obviously not equal within the five categories of sustainable development. Most provinces have some shortcomings and there is much room for improvement in terms of achieving sustainable development. For example, although Beijing ranks first in economic development and consumption indicators, it is weak in terms of resource and environmental sustainability. As with provincial level sustainable development, urban sustainable development is not balanced. Most cities have both strengths and weaknesses. The coastal city of Zhuhai ranks first once the five categories of sustainable development are balanced out. Beijing and Shenzhen rank second and third respectively, performing less well in terms of social sustainability and people's livelihoods.
- 114 Yoon, "Starting Strong on the SDGs in Asia: Readiness in South Korea."
- 115 Korea Institute Center for Sustainable Development (KICSD), "Status Report of Local Sustainable Development Practices in South Korea 2011-2015," 2016.
- 116 Korea Institute Center for Sustainable Development (KICSD).
- 117 Seoul Metropolitan Government, "Seoul Sustainable Development Goals 2030, 17 Ways to Change Seoul," 2018.
- 118 The 2030 Seoul Plan is available at: <http://english.seoul.go.kr/policy-information/urban-planning/urban-planning/1-2030-seoul-basic-urban-plan/>.
- 119 See: <https://www.ashakayla.com/blog-1/localgovernmentsdgs>; <https://sdgs.org.au/project/city-of-melbourne-desktop-sdg-assessment/>.
- 120 See also: <https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/one-planet/about-one-planet>; <https://www.healthyllawarra.org.au/index.php>.
- 121 More information available at: <https://citiespowerpartnership.org.au/>.
- 122 For details, go to: <https://alga.asn.au/local-government-and-sustainable-development-goals-an-untapped-opportunity/>.
- 123 The Australian government is following the performance of cities within the framework of Smart Cities Plan, see: <https://smart-cities.dashboard.gov.au/all-cities/overview>.
- 124 See: <https://livelightly.nz/>.
- 125 See: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/electric-vehicles/>.
- 126 Since 2015 the city has seen a material increase in native bird life including a 600% in the native Kakariki parrot population. An average of 45,000 native trees is also planted annually. For details, see: <https://www.zerocarboncapital.nz/>.
- 127 More information at: <http://www.rotorualakescouncil.nz/Rotorua2030/portfolios/TeArawaPartnerships/Pages/default.aspx>.
- 128 See: <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/our-work/publications/local-government-leaders-climate-change-declaration-2017/>.
- 129 See also: <https://www.lgnz.co.nz/our-work/publications/vulnerable-the-quantum-of-local-government-infrastructure-exposed-to-sea-level-rise/>.
- 130 New Zealand, "New Zealand Voluntary National Review 2019," 2019.
- 131 Nitti Aayog, "SDG Index India, Baseline Report," 2018.
- 132 The Government has launched five urban missions – Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Smart Cities, Housing for All (Urban), National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) and Swachh Bharat Mission (urban). The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has launched the 'City Liveability Index (CLI)' for measuring the quality of life and SDGs in over 110 major cities; UN-India, "Sustainable Development Goals and Urban Local Bodies - The Future We Want," 2018.
- 133 Grarin Jain et al., "SDGs- Localizing the SDGs for India – Setting the Urban Context" (Bengaluru, 2018). See also Section 2.3.

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- 134 Integrating SDGs in Local Plans (Gram Panchayat Development Plans - GPDP) is mandatory. According to different sources, progress is being made in the development of model GPDP guidelines and planning manuals and state guidelines to integrate SDGs, as well as resource materials for GPs and their role in implementing the different SDGs.
- 135 Including Bac Ninh, Quang Tri, Thanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Vinh Long, Tra Vinh, Tuyen Quang, Hai Phong, Hanoi, Can Tho, Phu Tho, Quang Ninh, Hai Duong, An Giang, Ninh Binh, Dak Nong, Gia Lai, Lao PDR Cai, Phu Yen, Cao Bang, Kien Giang.
- 136 UNDP, "SDG Localization in ASEAN: Experiences in Shaping Policy and Implementation Pathways."
- 137 Oosterhof, "Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals to Accelerate Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Current State of Sustainable Development Goal Localization in Asia and the Pacific."
- 138 See: <http://cloud.neda.gov.ph/index.php/s/Scg6xVV1wXUNPiD/download>. Some of these projects have been developed since 2008.
- 139 Presentation of the Joint Workshop on 'Enhancing the Capacity of Local Governments in Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals', 8 – 9 April 2019 Siem Reap, Cambodia; Sri Lanka Stakeholders SDG Platform, "Sri Lanka Voluntary People Review," 2019.
- 140 UNDP, "Our Perspective: The Ground Is Laid for SDG Achievement in Sindh | UNDP in Pakistan," 2017.
- 141 UN-ESCAP, "Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2019," 10.
- 142 Even those ASEAN cities that are at the forefront of localizing the SDGs are unable to fully align their plans and strategies with the SDGs and invest in data management systems that complement the data from the National Statistics Office; Teoh, "Early Views of ASEAN's 'Frontrunner Cities' on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Local Data Management."
- 143 A set of 102 indicators was selected for Deqing County, which covers 16 SDGs. See: http://218.244.250.80/GLC30Download/Deqing2017Report_EN.pdf and <http://www.deqing-sdgs.net/deqing/en/index.html>.
- 144 UN-ESCAP, "Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2019," 2.
- 145 Cities Alliance, "Sustainable Development Goals and Habitat III: Opportunities for a Successful New Urban Agenda," *Cities Alliance Discussion Paper 3*, n°. 36 (2015).
- 146 Mayoral presentation during the ceremony of the Guangzhou Award (7 December 2018) which outlined a commitment to building a City for All, calling for a shift in the city development paradigm towards one that is more people centred.
- 147 See for example: t.ly/pM0YG.
- 148 See: <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/vision/sustainable-sydney-2030>.
- 149 Citynet, "City Voices," *City Voices* 9, n°. 2 (n.d.). Further details available at: <http://projects.worldbank.org/P123384/danang-sustainable-city-development-project-scdp?lang=en>.
- 150 The city of Naga, Philippines, initiated the process of formulating its new land-use plan in 2013. The 2016-30 Comprehensive Land Use Plan of Naga builds on the concept of a 'compact city' urban development strategy. It will integrate the nexus principles of cross-sectorial coordination. See: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/The%20Urban%20Nexus_Policy%20Brief.pdf.
- 151 Evidence Based, Low-Carbon, Pro-Poor Advocacy on Sustainable Eco-Village Development (EVD) in Bangladesh, India, Nepal. In 2015-2018, Sri Lanka selected national good practices in the SDG Partnership Platform. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=30158>.
- 152 Global Green Growth Institute, "Green City Development Guidelines Seoul" (Seoul, 2016), 32.
- 153 Florian Steinberg and Michael Lindfield, "Inclusive Cities" (Mandaluyong City, 2011), 153.
- 154 Poh Kam Wong and Yuen Ping Ho, "Singapore as an Innovative City in East Asia: An Explorative Study of the Perspectives of Innovative Industries," 2005.
- 155 For more information, visit: <http://www.100resilientcities.org/resources/100>.
- 156 Top 10 Smart Cities in SE Asia, <https://www.cio-asia.com/article/3315258/internet-of-things/top-10-smart-cities-in-southeast-asia.html>.
- 157 Weixi Gong et al., "Cities at a Crossroads: Unlocking the Potential of Industries in Sustainable Urban Development" (Vienna, 2016); David Simon, *Rethinking Sustainable Cities: Accessible, Green and Fair* (Bristol University Press, Policy Press, 2016), 28.
- 158 For example, Yokohama launched in 2015 the Y-Port brand, (Partnership for Resources and Technologies). See also: Hai Phong Green Growth Strategy Action Plan 2014-2020.
- 159 UN-ESCAP, "Urbanization and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: Linkages and Policy Implications."
- 160 Wong and Ho, "Singapore as an Innovative City in East Asia: An Explorative Study of the Perspectives of Innovative Industries."
- 161 UN-ESCAP, "Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2019," 2.
- 162 Particularly small islands in the Pacific, but also Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. UN-ESCAP, 63.
- 163 UN-ESCAP, "Assessment of Progress in the Implementation of SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 at the Regional Level" (Bangkok, 2019); UN-ESCAP, "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2019."
- 164 See: <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/>.
- 165 See: <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/our-cities/>.
- 166 Indonesia, "Indonesia Voluntary National Review 2019," 136.
- 167 World Observatory on Non-State Climate Action, *The Mobilisation of the Local and Sub-National Governments*.
- 168 Other cities include Asan, Changwon, Daegou, Dangjin, Incheon, Jeonju, Suwon. Seoul adopted in 2015 'The Promise of Seoul, Taking Actions against Climate Change', which covers energy, air quality, transport, waste, ecology, urban agriculture, health, safety and urban planning. See: <https://cccoalition.org/en/resources/promise-seoul-taking-action-against-climate-change>.
- 169 See also: http://www.guangzhouaward.org/award_d.aspx?CatId=289&newsid=1409.
- 170 Asian Development Bank, "50 Climate Solutions from Cities in the People's Republic of China. Best Practices from Cities Taking Action on Climate Change" (Manila, 2018).
- 171 See: <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/our-cities/> From India (e.g. Rajkot, Surat, Nagpur, Patna and small cities such as Panaji, Shimla), Bangladesh (Dhaka South, Barisal, Maradipur, Singra), Bhutan (Thimphu), Nepal (Kathmandu) Sri Lanka (Matale) and Pakistan (Karachi).
- 172 See example of Ahmedabad: <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/anjali-jaiswal/new-cool-roof-programs-india-ahmedabad-part-2> and <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/vijay-limaye/new-monitoring-air-quality-ahmedabad-protects-health>.
- 173 Brisbane City Council (BCC) is certified as a carbon neutral organisation under the Australian Government's Carbon Neutral Programme. Melbourne has incorporated SDGs in many strategies and plans, including Zero Net Emissions Strategy 2020; Council Carbon Neutral Strategy 2012-2020; and Emissions Reduction Plan 2016 – 2021. The city is also pursuing an Urban Forest Strategy in support of SDG 15. The Sydney Environmental Action 2016-2021 has identified five key interventions: low-carbon city, water sensitive city, climate resilient city, zero waste city, active and connected city, green and cool city.
- 174 LGNZ, "Local Government Position Statement on Climate Change," 2017.
- 175 See: www.weforum.org.

- 176 UN-ESCAP, "Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: Progress Report 2019," 2019, 18.
- 177 Ruben Carlo Asuncion and Minsoo Lee, "Impacts of Sea Level Rise on Economic Growth in Developing Asia" (Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines, 2017).
- 178 See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=31784> and <https://www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/cities>.
- 179 More information on 100 Resilient Cities, an initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation, available at: <http://www.100resilientcities.org/>.
- 180 Indonesia, "Indonesia Voluntary National Review 2019."
- 181 The Philippines, "The Philippines Voluntary National Review 2019," 31–32.
- 182 Citynet, "City Voices," *City Voices*, n.d.
- 183 See: http://www.urbansdgplatform.org/profile/profile_caseView_detail.msc?no_case=220.
- 184 ICLEI, Global Green Growth Institute, and National Institute of Urban Affairs, "Urban Green Growth Strategies for Indian Cities" (New Delhi, 2015).
- 185 Asian Development Bank, "Meeting Asia's Infrastructure Needs."
- 186 Many cities face vulnerabilities due to outdated water supply systems and inadequate capture and storage capacity, which will exacerbate water shortages in both large and medium-sized cities. UN-ESCAP, "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2019."
- 187 In Indonesia, only 14% of wastewater is treated, while it is only 10% in the Philippines, 9% cent in India and 4% in Viet Nam.
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- 189 Hannah Lee and Thai Pin Tan, "Singapore's Experience with Reclaimed Water: NEWater," *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 32, no. 4 (2016): 611–21; Singapore, "Singapore Voluntary National Review 2018," 2018, 84.
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- 7 Tajikistan, “Tajikistan Voluntary National Review 2017,” 2017, 31.
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- 12 Further details available at: <http://ac.gov.ru/projects/otherprojects/021373.html>.
- 13 See also: bit.ly/2oloowp.
- 14 The functional balance of Eurasian intermediary cities has been described in UCLG (2016) GOLD IV pp181-185.
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- 16 OECD and UCLG, “World Observatory on Sub-National Governments’ Finance and Investment. Country Profiles.”
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- 18 In Belarus, local taxes include only a tax on dog owners, resort fees and fees on collection of wild plants and mushrooms. In Russia, regional governments are assigned with collection of business property tax and vehicle tax. In Armenia, vehicle tax is also a local tax. In Azerbaijan, local taxes of Nakhchivan autonomous republic include the mining tax on construction materials of local importance, and corporate income tax on municipally owned enterprises. In Uzbekistan, gasoline tax is also established as a local tax. In a number of countries, municipalities can also collect charges on street advertisements, disposal of municipal property, mobile businesses, and hotels and parking. Lastly, it is expected that in Kazakhstan local taxes will be established in 2020.
- 19 The most popular sharing tax is PIT. However, in Belarus, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan local governments also receive shares of CIT and even VAT. It is worth mentioning that assignment of CIT and VAT to local governments makes them dependent on the volatility of these taxes during the economic cycle. It is nearly impossible to make a reliable and accurate forecast of CIT and VAT for district and local levels of government, which makes their revenues even less predictable and places them at risk of underfunding.
- 20 Russian Federation Treasury data.
- 21 Tajikistan Ministry of Finance data.
- 22 In Russia during the last five years most sub-national governments started to use market borrowing instruments very actively for the purposes of balancing current expenditures, which started to increase first because of the aforementioned mandated wage growth in the government sector. As a result, the indebtedness (the debt load) of local governments rose sharply and the debt service costs became very tangible.
- 23 Russian Federation Treasury data; Kazakhstan, Ministry of National Economy data.
- 24 The reports are available on the Habitat III archive of national reports: <http://habitat3.org/documents-and-archive/preparatory-documents/national-reports/>.
- 25 For more information, see: <https://iep.ru/en/features-of-regional-development-in-russia.html>.
- 26 The competition awards the best strategies developed in both urban and rural municipalities. More information on the programme is available at the competition’s website (in Russian): <http://forumstrategov.ru/rus/239.html>.
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- 28 Visit: bit.ly/2OKmq4.
- 29 UCLG, *Basic Services for All in an Urbanizing World*.
- 30 Brian Evans et al., “Towards a City-Focused, People-Centred and Integrated Approach to the New Urban Agenda” (UNECE, 2016).
- 31 For more information on the Association of Small Towns of Ukraine, go to: <http://ammu.com.ua/>.
- 32 More information regarding the all-Russian Congress of Municipalities available at: <http://www.okmo.news/>.
- 33 More details on the Russian Council of Local Self-Government can be found at: <http://www.vsmsinfo.ru>.
- 34 The Union of Russian Cities’ website may be accessed at: <http://www.urc.ru>.
- 35 More details on the the Union of Small Cities at: <http://smgrf.ru>.
- 36 Further information regarding the Association of Small and Medium Cities of Russia available at: <http://www.amsg.ru>.
- 37 The Joint statement by the heads of Russian cities on energy efficiency and sustainable development can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/30xAuWt>.
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- 39 More information can be found at: <http://xn--80akhbbgbeelgx0ajmyo2c.xn--p1ai/ru/news/klimaticheskij-forum-gorodov-rossii-obedinil-sem-tysacekspertov-i-ucastnikov-iz-semnadcatistran-mira/>.
- 40 For further details, visit: <https://bit.ly/2m2LzQs>.
- 41 More information available at: <https://www.eumayors.eu/about/covenant-initiative/covenant-in-figures.html>.
- 42 For details on the High level Conference “Municipalities for Sustainable Growth”, go to: <https://bit.ly/2YV7kQL>.
- 43 More information can be found at: <https://bit.ly/2kZK1GD>.
- 44 Further details are available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/-/national-associations-of-local-authorities-in-georgia-moldova-and-ukraine-strengthen-their-co-operation>.
- 45 For more information on the CBA, visit: <http://www.eaptc.eu/>.
- 46 See also: <https://bit.ly/2kYrSZY>.
- 47 For more information: <https://www.100resilientcities.org/cities/tbilisi/>.
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- 49 See: <https://minsk.gov.by/ru/normdoc/1080/>.
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- 61 Visit: <http://womennet.am/en/dianagasparyan/>.
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- 63 For more information, see: <https://www.100resilientcities.org/cities/tbilisi/>.
- 64 For further details, also see: <https://www.100resilientcities.org/cities/tbilisi/>.
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- 66 For more information, visit: <https://unhabitat.org/books/trends-in-urban-resilience-2017/>.
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- 68 More information at: <http://zupar.code-warrior.org/kg/news/90-shkol-respubliki-uluchshili-usloviya-sanitarii-i-gigiyeny/>.
- 69 For more information, see: http://www.urbansdgplatform.org/profile/profile_caseView_detail.msc?no_case=183.
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- 74 Visit: <http://www.az.undp.org/content/azerbaijan/en/home/projects/sustainable-land-and-forest-management-in-the-greater-caucasus-l.html>.
- 75 See also: <https://knews.kg/2017/05/06/v-bishkeke-realizovali-proekt-po-ozeleneniyu-stolitsy-green-bishkek/>.
- 76 For more information, see: <https://tmsnr.rs/2StKFHA>.
- 77 A list of signatories of the Covenant of Mayors is available at: https://www.eumayors.eu/about/covenant-community/signatories/key-actions.html?scity_id=1898.
- 78 Tbilisi's Sustainable Energy Action Plan may be accessed on: http://mycovenant.eumayors.eu/docs/seap/1537_1520_1303144302.pdf.
- 79 See also <https://www.eumayors.eu/about/covenant-community/signatories.html>.
- 80 For more information, see: <https://docplayer.ru/60943935-Plan-deystviy-po-ustoychivomu-energeticheskomu-razvitiyu-gorod-rustavi.html>.
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- 3 Eurostat, "Sustainable Development in the European Union. Overview of Progress towards the SDGs in an EU Context" (Brussels, 2017).
- 4 Countries that presented their VNRs in 2016: Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Montenegro, Norway, and Switzerland. In 2017: Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, and Sweden. In 2018: Albania, Andorra, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain, and Switzerland (for the second time); and in 2019: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Serbia, and United Kingdom.

- 5 United Cities and Local Governments, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs," LRGs' Report to the HLPF (Barcelona, 2018), https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Towards_the_Localization_of_the_SDGs.pdf; United Cities and Local Governments, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs," LRGs' Report to the HLPF (Barcelona, 2019), https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Localization2019_EN.pdf; United Cities and Local Governments, "National and Sub-National Governments on the Way towards the Localization of the SDGs," LRGs' Report to the HLPF (Barcelona, 2017), https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/UCLG_GTF_LocalizationSDG.pdf; and the international surveys conducted among UCLG members and partners for each report.
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- 7 European Parliament, "Europe's Approach to Implementing the SDGs: Good Practices and the Way Forward" (2019).
- 8 UCLG and GTF, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs 2019."
- 9 OECD, "Making Decentralisation Work. A Handbook for Policy-Makers," OECD Multi-Level Governance Studies (Paris, 2019); UNDESA, "2016 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report" (New York, 2016); UNDESA, "2017 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report" (New York, 2017); UNDESA, "2018 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report" (New York, 2018).
- 10 European Commission, "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030," Reflection Papers (Brussels, 2018).
- 11 European Council, Conclusions of European Council Meeting, 18 October 2018. The European multi-stakeholders Platform on the SDGs, created by the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions, has raised a similar request, asking for 'a territorial approach for the delivery of the SDGs'. Committee of the Regions, "SDGs: A Basis for a Long-Term EU Strategy for Sustainable Europe by 2030," ECON-VI/044 (Brussels, 2019) and also Committee of the Regions, "Europe Moving toward a Sustainable Future" (Brussels, 2018). The objective of the Platform is to "support and advise the European Commission and all stakeholders involved on the implementation of the SDGs at EU level", gathering representatives from EU institutions, Member States, LRG organizations, NGOs, civil society coalitions, business sector, academia, trade unions, youth, etc. See https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/eu-and-sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs_en.
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- 15 UCLG and GTF, "Towards the Localization of the SDGs 2019."
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- 30 OECD, 55.
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- 55 For information on these organizations see Section 3.1.
- 56 See: <https://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/2165>.
- 57 The Committee of the Regions has 350 members representing LRGs from all 28 EU Countries. See: <http://www.cor.europa.eu>.
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- 85 OECD, *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-Operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*, 40; Fernández de Losada, "Shaping a New Generation of Decentralised Cooperation."
- 86 Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and, in lesser measure, Baltic countries, Czech Republic, France, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom (English cities and Scotland). The VNR of Serbia also stresses the important role of LRGs.
- 87 For a complete mapping of LRGs and their associations in Europe, see also CEMR-CCRE's website: <https://www.ccre.org/en/pays/map>.

- 88 Created in 1951, CEMR brings together 60 national associations of LRGs from 41 European countries and represents, through them, all levels of territories – local, intermediate and regional. Visit their website for more information: <https://www.ccre.org/>.
- 89 Created in 2008, PLATFORMA is a pan-European coalition of 30 LRGs acting on EU international cooperation. For more information, visit their website at: <http://platforma-dev.eu/about-us/>.
- 90 The topic was part of the debate in the CEMR's Task Force meeting on 'Implementing the SDGs at the local level'.
- 91 Founded in 1986, Eurocities brings together 140 of Europe's largest cities from 39 countries. For more information, visit: <http://www.eurocities.eu/>.
- 92 See: http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/calendar/events_list/SDG-summer-deals-WSPO-AZ2GZT.
- 93 For example, during the European Week of Regions and Cities (October 2018) and in April 2019, a joint event on the localization of the SDGs in Brussels with concrete examples from different LRGs. See: http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/calendar/events_list/Delivering-Sustainable-Development-Goals-at-regional-and-local-level-WSPO-B2KQGY.
- 94 Created in 1971, with 100 members (European border and cross-border regions) from 39 countries, the AEBR makes the voice of the border and cross-border regions heard at the European level. For more information: <https://www.aebr.eu/en/index.php>.
- 95 The Assembly of European Regions (AER), created in 1985, gathers 47 regions from 35 countries – from Norway to Turkey and from Russia to Portugal. For more information, visit: <https://aer.eu/>.
- 96 The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, created in 1973, brings together some 160 regions from 25 states from the European Union and beyond. For more information, visit: <https://cpmr.org/who-we-are/>.
- 97 Created in 1990, Climate Alliance is a network of 1,700 cities and municipalities from 26 countries. For more information, see: <http://www.climatealliance.org/>.
- 98 Created in 1990, Energy Cities represents 1,000 towns and cities across 30 countries. For more information, visit: <http://www.energy-cities.eu/>.
- 99 More information on all these networks is available on the website of the Global Taskforce: <https://www.global-taskforce.org/>.
- 100 All information about the EU Urban Agenda is available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en>.
- 101 Air quality, housing, urban poverty, migrant and refugee integration, circular economy, digital transition, urban mobility, jobs and skills in the local economy, energy transition, climate adaptation, innovative and responsible public procurement, and sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions (as of March 2019). See also: http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/working_groups/Urban-Agenda-for-the-EU&tpl=home.
- 102 For more information: <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/en/>.
- 103 See also: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/cohesion-alliance.aspx>.
- 104 See CEMR updates in this regard: <http://ccre.org/en/actualites/view/3519>; <http://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/3804>.
- 105 The 2019 survey was also co-organized with UCLG. For an infographic summary of the 2019 survey: https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/PLT_19_13_infographics_SDGs_EN.pdf.
- 106 See also the press release 'Great interest from municipalities and regions for Agenda 2030' by UNA Sweden. Available online (in Swedish only) at this link: <https://fn.se/aktuellt/pressmeddelanden/stort-intresse-fran-kommuner-och-regioner-for-agenda-2030/>.
- 107 AICCCE organized several training sessions at local level and one at national level with more than 100 mayors involved in 2018 and planned a new training action for June 2019. An international meeting in Venice in November 2018, 'Venice City Solutions 2030', was held in partnership with UN-Habitat, UNDP and UNCDF: See: <https://www.aiccre.it/sdg-2030/> and <https://www.aiccre.it/vcs2030/>.
- 108 The Czech LGA, SMO (in cooperation with the Caritas Czech Republic NGO), implemented a project called 'Sustainable Cities and Municipalities for Development' (2016-2017) focusing on awareness-raising (outputs are available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_26SC3scs5). Other activities for students and publications were also undertaken.
- 109 Since 2016, the Latvian LGA LALRG has been working on the project, 'Working together towards empowering local and regional governments for effective development outcomes in EU partner countries' with the support of Plaforma, to develop a multi-stakeholder approach to the SDGs and held various workshops in 2017 (in Jaunpils and Kuldīga). It also developed cartoons on the topic of the SDGs in cooperation with an animation studio in the Jaunpils region.
- 110 For example, the Department of Gironde, or the Regional Governments of Nouvelle Aquitaine and Normandie (AFCCRE response to CEMR/Platforma survey).
- 111 For more information, see also: <http://www.rgre.de>.
- 112 This is based on SNCT's answer to the survey. SNCT is responsible for the implementation of the second pillar of the project to coordinate local public policies and the elaboration of LRGs' Development Plans in accordance with the Law on Planning System (in five pilot municipalities).
- 113 Based on the 2019 VNR of the United Kingdom and LGAs' replies to the CEMR/Platforma survey.
- 114 See: http://www.nalas.eu/News/SDGs_Handbook.
- 115 CEMR-CCRE and Platforma, "#LocalizingSDGs: How Associations of Towns and Regions Are Drivers for Change."
- 116 Strong involvement: LGAs from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Spain and Sweden. Weak involvement: the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Lithuania, and Serbia. Three associations have not been informed (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro) and the Moldovan association was not aware of the process.
- 117 CEMR-CCRE and Platforma, "#LocalizingSDGs: How Associations of Towns and Regions Are Drivers for Change." These percentages are a bit different from the percentages shown in Section 2.1, which take into consideration all European countries that reported to the HLPF or that created coordination mechanisms for the follow-up of the SDGs, and not just the LGAs that responded to the survey.
- 118 For more information, see: https://www.agenda2030.gob.es/sites/default/files/INFORME_DE_GOBERNANZA_AC_2030_1.pdf.
- 119 In the case of Albania, the VNR mentions the involvement of local governments in the preparation of the VNRs, but the Association of Albanian Municipalities was not consulted.
- 120 In France, LRGs are invited to produce a regular report on their sustainable development policies that can be translated into a regular overarching SDG report, e.g. Région Bourgogne Franche Comté, "Région Bourgogne Franche Comté, Le Développement Durable. Une Priorité Pour La Région, Rapport 2017-2018" (Besançon, 2018).
- 121 The survey has been answered by 39% of municipalities (6% of big cities), 17% of regions, 9% of intermediary entities (e.g. counties or provinces), 10% other local and regional bodies and 26% from academia, NGOs or public bodies. The results of the survey are available through the following link: https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/SDGs_survey.aspx; See: Committee of the Regions and OECD, "Survey Results Note. The Key Contribution of Regions and Cities to Sustainable Development" (Brussels, 2019).

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- 122 Committee of the Regions and OECD, 7. Participation in the VNR process is 21%, but higher between regions (38%) and intermediary bodies (29%) and lower for small municipalities (11%). In the CEMR/Platforma survey, the percentage is 26% for participation in the VNRs.
- 123 For northern countries see the responses to the UCLG survey and also Nora Sánchez Gassen, Oskar Penje, and Elin Slätmo, "Global Goals for Local Priorities: The 2030 Agenda at Local Level," Nordregio Report 2018:2 (Stockholm, 2018).
- 124 For example, cities such as Amiens, Besançon, Bonn, Bristol, Canterbury, Ghent, Freiburg, Haarlem, Hannover, Harelbeke, Helsinki, Malmö, Mannheim, Poznan, Oss, Strasbourg, Utrecht; departments or provincial governments such as Córdoba, Barcelona, Gironde; and regional governments such as Brussels, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Kronoberg, Lombardy, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Normandie, Nouvelle Aquitaine, Scotland, Västra-Götaland, and Wales, among others.
- 125 For more information, see: <http://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/3555>. See also the guidelines developed by Flanders' VVSG: "Integrating the SDGs into your context analysis: how to start?"; accessible at: <http://localizingthesdgs.org/library/431/Integrating-the-SDGs-into-policy-planning-context-analysis.pdf>.
- 126 More information available at: <https://www.diba.cat/web/ods/que-son-els-ods>.
- 127 More information at: https://www.regensburg.de/sixcms/media.php/280/STADT_RGBG_MANAGEMENTPLAN_WELTERBE_GB_screen.pdf.
- 128 For more detail see: https://www.mannheim.de/sites/default/files/institution/13085/broschu_re_strategische_ziele_englisch.pdf.
- 129 For more information, visit: http://www.nalas.eu/News/SDGs_Handbook.
- 130 Sánchez Gassen, Penje, and Slätmo, "Global Goals for Local Priorities: The 2030 Agenda at Local Level."
- 131 More information at: <https://www.asker.kommune.no/nye-asker-kommune/barekraft/the-new-asker-municipality-is-based-on-the-un-sustainable-development-goals/>.
- 132 For more information, visit: <http://developpementdurable.wallonie.be/actualite/en-route-vers-2030>.
- 133 More details available at: <http://www.cooperaciovalenciana.gva.es/es/agenda-2030>.
- 134 More details available at: http://cads.gencat.cat/en/Agenda_2030/index.html.
- 135 See also: Great interest from municipalities and regions for Agenda 2030' by UNA Sweden. Available online (in Swedish only) at: <https://fn.se/aktuellt/pressmeddelanden/stort-intresse-fran-kommuner-och-regioner-for-agenda-2030/>.
- 136 See: <https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/insight-german-municipalities-begin-localize-sdgs>.
- 137 See: <https://www.diba.cat/en/web/ods/la-diputacio-amb-els-ods>.
- 138 Ville de Besançon, "Rapport Annuel Développement Durable 2017" (Besançon, 2017).
- 139 City of Bristol, University of Bristol, and Bristol Green Capital Partnership, "Driving the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda at City Level in Bristol," Bristol Method+ (Bristol, 2018).
- 140 For more information, see: <https://www.harelbeke.be/sdgs>.
- 141 For more information, see: <https://www.stadt-muenster.de/umwelt/nachhaltigkeit.html>.
- 142 Deppy Keranidou et al., "Utrecht: A Global Goals City. Utrecht's Approach to Localising the UN Sustainable Development Goals" (Utrecht, 2018).
- 143 See also: <http://www.telos.nl/894864.aspx?t=Prototype+voor+een+lokale+SDG-monitor+voor+Nederland> (Dutch only).
- 144 See also: <https://rheden4globalgoals.nl>.
- 145 See also: <https://rheden4globalgoals.nl>.
- 146 For more details, visit: <http://www.agenda21france.org/agenda-21-derritoire/index.html>.
- 147 CEMR-CCRE and Platforma, "#LocalizingSDGs: How Associations of Towns and Regions Are Drivers for Change."
- 148 For more information, visit: <https://ciudadesiberoamericanas.org/nuevo-impulso-a-la-cooperacion-internacional-con-la-inauguracion-del-foro-madrid-solidario/>.
- 149 See also: Visit: <https://decide.madrid.es/>.
- 150 More details available at: <http://www.amb.cat/ca/web/amb/actualitat/sala-de-premsa/notes-de-premsa/detall/-/notaprensa/primer-informe-anual-de-l-observatori-metropolita-de-l-habitatge--o-hb/6783666/11696>.
- 151 For more information, see: <https://ppj-eu.coe.int/en/web/coyote-magazine/somos>.
- 152 Committee of the Regions and OECD, "Survey Results Note. The Key Contribution of Regions and Cities to Sustainable Development," 5. Among all respondents who use indicators, the most common answer was for local indicators (26%) followed by national indicators (19%). Fewer than 15% of respondents used EU or UN-level indicators.
- 153 For more information, visit: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>.
- 154 In 2018, these indicators were: overcrowding rate; population living in households suffering from exposure to noise; exposure to air pollution by particulate matter; population living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundations, or rot in window frames of floor; population reporting occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in their area; difficulty in accessing public transport; people killed in road accidents; share of buses and trains in total passenger transport; recycling rate of municipal waste; population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment; and artificial land cover per capita.
- 155 European Economic and Social Committee, "Exposing EU Policy Gaps to Address the Sustainable Development Goals."
- 156 Visit also: <https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/studien/pdf/b008486d.pdf>.
- 157 See: <http://www.rfsc.eu>. Following the adoption of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities in 2007, France initiated the tool, which was then developed in an inclusive process with representatives of the relevant ministries, CEMR and other relevant stakeholders, and supported by the European Commission.
- 158 See also: <http://localizingthesdgs.org/library/447/Localising-the-SDGs-in-Utrecht-.pdf>. Other cities such as Oss have developed their own indicators. More information at: <http://telos.nl/894864.aspx?t=Prototype+voor+een+lokale+SDG-monitor+voor+Nederland>.
- 159 For more information, see: [https://www.vvsg.be/Internationaal/SDG-pagina/documents in foreign languages/Local_SDGindicators.xlsx](https://www.vvsg.be/Internationaal/SDG-pagina/documents%20in%20foreign%20languages/Local_SDGindicators.xlsx). Additionally, a manual is available in English at: bit.ly/2MENkgf.
- 160 Dirk Assmann et al., "SDG Indicators for Municipalities. Indicators for Mapping Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations in German Municipalities" (Gütersloh, 2018).
- 161 See: <http://reds-sdsn.es/comunicado-lanzamiento-informe-ods-ciudades>.
- 162 See: http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RPT_021_2018_SDG_City.pdf.
- 163 More information available at: localizingthesdgs.org/library/536/Sustainable-Development-Index-at-the-municipal-level.pdf.
- 164 The Joint Research Centre with the support of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy is developing a European Handbook for the preparation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).

- 165 Futureagenda, "Future of Cities. Insights from Multiple Expert Discussions around the World." (London, 2017). GDP growth since 2000 was 50% faster in cities than in other areas.
- 166 Some countries have surpassed or are close to the levels of employment rates defined in the European 2020 Strategy (75% of employment rate of people aged 20-64) – e.g. Sweden, Germany, Denmark, UK, Estonia and Netherlands; in other countries, employment rates did not increase (particularly in transition regions) or, even if they have increased, they remain high (e.g. Southern European countries). Lewis Dijkstra, ed., "My Region, My Europe, Our Future. Seventh Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion" (Brussels, 2017).
- 167 Dijkstra. The following countries have a majority of regions classified as 'less developed': Eastern European countries, Baltic and Balkan Countries, Czech Republic, Greece, Southern Italy, Western Spain and Portugal. The following countries include regions considered 'transition regions': Malta, Southern Spain, Belgium's Wallonia, and several areas of Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Bulgaria.
- 168 For more information, see: t.ly/b10OA.
- 169 Dijkstra, "My Region, My Europe, Our Future."
- 170 Visit also: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/-/ljubljanastart-up-ecosystem-and-the-technology-park-ljubljanaslovenia-?inheritRedirect=true>.
- 171 See also: <https://maastrichtlab.nl/>.
- 172 For more information, see: <https://smarterlabs.uni-graz.at/en/project-overview/living-lab-experiment-graz/>.
- 173 For more information, see: <https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/project/urbexp/>.
- 174 Dijkstra, "My Region, My Europe, Our Future." For initiatives in the Basque country, see also: http://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/7071/es_2333/adjuntos/Resumen%20Impacto%20%20BONO%20SOSTENIBLE%202018%20%20INGL%C3%89S%2030_05.pdf.
- 175 For more information, see: https://www.ilcittadinomb.it/stories/Economia/imprese-sostegno-allo-sviluppo-delle-pmi-in-un-incontro-in-assolombarda_1305052_11/.
- 176 For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/2019-06-14_bucharest_declaration_en.pdf.
- 177 Dijkstra, "My Region, My Europe, Our Future."
- 178 See also the proceedings of the conference on the 'Vitality of Smaller Cities in Europe', held in Barcelona on 25 October 2018 and co-organized by URBACT and the European Commission.
- 179 See also: bit.ly/35yXfNb.
- 180 See: <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/-/how-the-project-s3-4alclusters-supports-the-implementation-of-s3-?inheritRedirect=true>.
- 181 For more information: <https://wifi4eu.ec.europa.eu>.
- 182 For more information: <http://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/3808>.
- 183 See: nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/The_role_of_cities_in_promoting_social_entrepreneurship.pdf.
- 184 European Commission, "The Future of Cities. Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward" (Brussels, 2019).
- 185 See: <https://urbact.eu/incredibol-creative-innovation>.
- 186 V. Montalto et al., "The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor. 2017 Edition." (Brussels, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.2760/58643>.
- 187 More information available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/peseta-ii>.
- 188 For more information, see: t.ly/DKw3Y.
- 189 For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2050_en.
- 190 For more information, see: <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/>.
- 191 Visit: <https://energy-cities.eu/publication/local-energy-ownership-in-europe/>.
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05 Latin America and the Caribbean — Notes

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- 14 UCLG-GTF Surveys (conducted between 2016 and 2018) of national associations of municipalities. Federation of Argentine Municipalities, Association of Bolivian Municipalities, Association of Chilean Municipalities, Federation of Colombian Municipalities, Corporation of Municipalities of the Republic of El Salvador and Paraguayan Municipal Cooperation Organization (OPACI). In the case of Venezuela, the VNR mentions the Presidential Councils of People's Power installed in the territories (Law N°. 40818, 29 December 2015) and the communal councils and communes as part of public consultation of the SDGs and Plan de Patria 2013-2019. The report does not mention the elected municipal authorities still in power.
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- 24 The data on sub-national government financing presented in this section has been taken from OECD and UCLG, "World Observatory on Sub-National Governments' Finance and Investment. Country Profiles."
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- 27 Own revenue in Bolivia, Chile and Guatemala represents between 31% and 47% of budgets. Own revenue in Ecuador, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Peru represents less than 20% of local budgets. Own revenue in Costa Rica, Paraguay and Uruguay is high (above 70%), but the role of municipalities is economically among the lowest in the region.
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- 40 Colombia, "Colombia Voluntary National Review 2016," 2016; CONPES, "Inclusión de Los ODS En Los Planes de Desarrollo Territoriales 2016-2019."
- 41 The Plan Contracts have been promoted since 2011 as an essential tool for building a new model of multilevel governance. Inspired by the French experience of defining objectives and priorities of concerted investment, the Colombian model appears to be evolving towards a more vertical model. Colombia, "Colombia Voluntary National Review 2018," 2018, 72–73. See also: <https://www.dnp.gov.co/Contratos-Plan/Paginas/ContratosPlan.aspx>.
- 42 The Federation of Colombian Municipalities believes that 'excessive control over the disbursement of resources of the General System of Royalties is a major obstacle that local authorities must overcome in order to achieve financial resources that can help them to generate plans, strategies and execute projects that favor compliance with the SDGs'. In 2018, it similarly rallied against the Collegiate Body for Administration and Decisions (Órgano Colegiado de Administración y Decisión - OCAD) as it considered it to be an obstacle to accessing development project resources. As a result, on 27 April 2018, the national government adopted resolution n°. 1084, which enabled other entities, including some 550 municipalities, to directly define the investment projects supporting the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building Peace.
- 43 UCLG-GTF Surveys (conducted between 2016 and 2018) with responses from the Federation of Colombian Municipalities, Medellín, indicated that they were not consulted in the preparation of the VNR 2018. Bogotá notes that it was consulted through surveys.
- 44 The municipalities with the least resources (category 6) represent 86% of sub-national governments. Colombia, "Colombia Voluntary National Review 2018," 69.
- 45 The three levels are: 1) territorial coordination (territorial strategy, zonal agendas and planning councils of decentralized autonomous governments), 2) intersectoral coordination (sectoral public policy councils, national equality councils and sectoral agendas) and 3) degree of institutional coordination (institutional policy planning). There are also national councils on gender equality, intergenerational gaps, disability, human mobility, peoples and nationalities. See: <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/es/sistemas-planificacion/sistema-nacional-descentralizado-de-planificacion-participativa-de-ecuador>.
- 46 SENPLADES, "National Development Plan 2017-2021," 2017, 122.
- 47 For example, when it comes to water, municipalities are responsible for providing drinking water; provincial governments are in charge of providing irrigation water; SENAGUA has the stewardship of the resource; the Water Regulation and Control Agency (ARCA) controls it, as its name indicates, and there are also water boards set up in each municipality. This often generates confusion as regards the competences of each body.
- 48 Marcela Morales, Mireya Villacís Taco, and Vanessa Gutiérrez Reyes Juan José Herrera, "National Level Implications of SDGs Implementation in Ecuador," *Southern Voice, Occasional Paper Series* 35 (2016): 7. The aforementioned report by the Latin American and Caribbean Supreme Audit Institutions (OLACEFS) also believes coordination with sub-national governments to be one of the main challenges.
- 49 UCLG-GTF Surveys, responses received in 2018 and 2019.
- 50 UN-ECLAC "Quadrennial Report on Regional Progress and Challenges in Relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean," 2019, 53.
- 51 See: <https://ciudades.cepal.org/2018/en>.
- 52 See: <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/44159-proposal-latin-american-and-caribbean-urban-and-cities-platform>.
- 53 In the framework of the 3rd Forum, 24 April 2019, a special session on the 'Implementation of the Agenda 2030 at sub-national level' was organized with representatives of national, regional and local governments of Argentina, Guatemala, Peru, Mexico City, city of Asunción (on behalf of Mercociudades) and the Association of Municipalities of Bolivia (on behalf of FLACMA). A preparatory meeting took place in Puerto Mont the day before to prepare LRGs' position. In 2018, a side event was organized with the participation of the Mayor of Rosario (on behalf UCLG). See: <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2019/en>.
- 54 FLACMA brings together most municipal associations in the region (20 countries). Hemispheric Summits held in Mexico in August 2017, in Montevideo in August 2018 and in Chile in March 2019. It has an SDG working group that aims to strengthen the development of initiatives for the localization of the SDGs. See: www.flacma.com.
- 55 Summits in Santa Fe, Argentina, in 2016; in Córdoba, Argentina, in 2017; and in La Paz, Bolivia, in 2018. Mercociudades brings together 349 member cities from Mercosur countries and observers: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela. See: <https://mercociudades.org/>.
- 56 For more information on the Twelfth Summit (2017), organized by the Ibero-American Union of Municipalists, see: <https://congresocaldas.eventosuiim.org/>; See also: Caldas Declaration.
- 57 Organized in November 2018 by the UCCL, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, the Madrid City Council and SEGIB, signing the Madrid Commitment to implement the Agenda. See: <https://diario.madrid.es/blog/notas-de-prensa/apuesta-de-los-gobiernos-locales-iberoamericanos-por-la-autonomia-la-participacion-y-la-educacion/>.

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- 58 See: <https://ipmcscs.fiu.edu/conferencia-alcaldes/antiores/>.
- 59 See: <https://www.regions4.org/> and <http://regionsunies-fogar.org/en/>. Both bring together intermediary and regional government organizations, such as several states in Brazil and Mexico, CONGOPE (Consortium of Provincial Autonomous Governments of Ecuador), Congress of Mayors of Uruguay and representatives of Paraguayan departments.
- 60 For example in April 2017, the workshop on Local Implementation of Global Sustainability Agendas (April 2017) organized for 16 Colombian mayors by ICLEI South America, Mayor's Office of Medellín, Metropolitan Area of Valle de Aburrá, ICA Medellín (<http://sams.iclei.org/es/noticias/noticias/archivo-de-noticias/2017/resultados-taller-implementacion-local-de-agendas-globales-de-sustentabilidad-en-colombia-i.html>); June 2017, a workshop organized by UCLG and FLACMA in Cochabamba (Bolivia) as part of Second Regional Forum on Local Economic Development for Latin America and the Caribbean, (<http://www.flacma.lat/taller-de-formacion-de-formadores-cochabamba-bolivia-jun2017/>); various meetings in 2018: FLACMA again in Chile (<https://www.achm.cl/index.php/noticias/item/949-autoridades-locales-de-america-latina-participan-en-taller-de-objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible>); Mercociudades in Córdoba, Argentina (<https://mercociudades.org/taller-en-cordoba-avanza-en-localizacion-de-los-ods/>); UCCI in San José de Costa Rica (<https://ciudadesiberioamericanas.org/san-jose-prepara-la-xviii-asamblea-general-de-la-ucci>). CORDIAL promoted the virtual course 'Cities, External Action and Cooperation within the Framework of the Objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)' in coordination with Andalusian cooperation (Spain) (<http://portal.mercociudades.net/node/6990>).
- 61 Local Economic Development and Gender Initiative (DELGEN) promoted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Ibero-American Union of Municipalists (UIM), We Effect organization, Research Centre of the University of Florence (ARCO Lab), Basque Institute for Women (Emakunde), Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean (UDUAL) and UNDP, cited by ECLAC (2019), p. 59.
- 62 Jointly organized by FLACMA/Mercociudades/CORDIAL and Confederation of Brazilian Municipalities, with the support of UCLG.
- 63 See: <http://ods.cnm.org.br/parcerias#faseDois>.
- 64 See: <http://ods.cnm.org.br/>. The training was attended by 100 municipal secretaries from 70 municipalities. See also: <http://cnmqualifica.cnm.org.br/>; For the Guide to the Integration of the SDGs in Brazilian Municipalities, see: <https://www.cnm.org.br/biblioteca/exibe/2855>; The guide was developed with the support of UNDP ART in 2017. It offers methodological resources aimed at facilitating the alignment of municipal plans 2018-2021 with the Agenda 2030. It is a tool aimed primarily at municipal managers. See also: Mobilidade Urbana e os ODS, Os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável e a Nova Agenda Urbana.
- 65 Interview with Ary Jose Banazzi, Mayor of Sao Leopoldo and President of ABM, conducted on 14 February 2019.
- 66 See: <http://ungl.or.cr/comunicados/costa-rica-primer-pais-del-mundo-en-firmar-pacto-nacional-por-los-objetivos-de>.
- 67 Information taken from the UCLG-GTF Survey completed by UNGL.
- 68 They also organized workshops: in April 2018 on SDG 11; and in December 2018 on 'Democracy, development and territory: the strategic contribution from the local to the Agenda 2030'. See: <http://fundaciondemuca.com/index.php/actualidad/publicacion/foro-organizado-por-demuca-analiza-contribucion-estrategica-desde-lo-loc>.
- 69 More information on the activities of the association are available online: <https://www.conferenciademunicipios.mx/>.
- 70 See for more information: <https://amevirtualcapacitacion.gob.ec/eva/>.
- 71 See: <https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/amazonian-municipalities-sdg-15-life-land>.
- 72 More details at: <http://fedomu.org.do/2018/01/31/fedomu-participa-en-bureau-ejecutivo-flacma-celebrado-en-chile/>.
- 73 See also: <https://www.achm.cl/index.php/capacitaciones/item/1166-escuelas-de-capacitacion-municipal-verano-2019-municipios-ciudadania-y-desarrollo-local-arica-puerto-varas-ancud-puerto-natales-y-santiago-21-al-25-de-enero-2019>.
- 74 See: <http://anam.org.gt/LAIP/anam/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ANAM-5-2018-POA.pdf>.
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- 76 Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de Políticas Sociales, "Informe ODS de Provincias 2017, Proceso de Adaptación" (Buenos Aires, 2017).
- 77 OECD, First OECD Roundtable on Cities and Regions for the SDGs, 7 March 2019, Issue Notes. See: <http://prensa.cba.gov.ar/informacion-general/cordoba-presento-su-modelo-de-gestion-comprometido-con-objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>.
- 78 See: <https://www.santafe.gov.ar/index.php/web/content/view/full/205735>.
- 79 See also: <http://www.mx.undp.org/content/mexico/es/home/presscenter/articles/2019/03/localizacion-de-la-agenda-2030-en-el-ambito-subnacional-.html>.
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- 82 Espacio de Articulación de la Sociedad Civil para el Seguimiento de la Agenda 2030 en Mexico, "Informe Luz Del Espacio de Articulación de La Sociedad Civil Para El Seguimiento de La Agenda 2030 En México.83 See: <http://odsterritorioecuador.ec/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2da-reunión-Grupo-de-Pensamiento-Estratégico-Nacional-sobre-ODS.pdf> and <https://odsterritorioecuador.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CONGOPE.pdf>.
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The Localization of the Global Agendas

How local action is transforming territories and communities

In July 2019, at the end of the first quadrennial cycle of SDG implementation, the review of the 2030 Agenda stressed that there currently exists a 'gap between rhetoric and action'. Assessments underline that at the current pace, none of the SDGs will be reached by 2030. In its fifth edition, the Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD V) examines in detail the assessments of the implementation of the global agendas in the 142 countries (representing 86% of the world's population) that have presented at least one Voluntary National Review since 2016.

To complement these assessments, GOLD V provides an up-to-date global mapping of the processes of localization of the global agendas, and in particular how decentralization and multilevel governance contribute to these processes. The GOLD V Report highlights how, within the current institutional frameworks, the involvement of local and regional governments in coordination mechanisms and monitoring and reporting processes is essential to creating a sense of collective responsibility for the achievement of more equitable, fair and sustainable societies.

GOLD V shows how the core elements of the global agendas are interlinked at the local level. It underlines the role of cities and territories as critical pillars for a more sustainable social, economic, environmental and cultural development. As such, local governments must co-own and be accountable for the localization process. In a context of increasing inequalities, endangerment of ecosystems and protracted tensions that are threatening human solidarity, the GOLD V Report states that the global agendas must either be local or they simply will not be.

The report demonstrates that the sustainable goals require fully territorialized strategic policy design, enabling institutional environments and political roadmaps. Localized policies and actions are strengthening the involvement of local stakeholders to take full advantage of local potentialities. With the support of peers worldwide, these policies can help improve and upscale the emerging territorial push for SDG implementation.

The report carries a hopeful message about the impact of well-resourced localization as a fundamental part of a new vision of sustainability for our societies. It presents a unique perspective on the immediate challenges that need to be solved to foster, monitor and scale-up local initiatives by strengthening inclusive and participatory local governance. It also reinforces the pledge of the world constituency of local and regional governments, their networks and associations, to contribute to policy responses to catalyse change. Cities and regions are mindful of their role in delivering efficient, inclusive and sustainable public institutions and policies, advancing a firm rights-based approach to relaunch the social contract and strengthen citizen's trust in public action.



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