Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR)

Join the movement and showcase how cities matter in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals!

What is a Voluntary Local Review (VLR)?

Since 2016, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) of the United Nations has asked member states to submit their reports — the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) — to assess the **state of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). VNRs promote accountability, transparency, and encourage dialogue on shared experiences between countries.

As all of the SDGs have targets directly related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments, **many cities have taken the first steps towards mapping their activities to achieve the SDGs** and using the goals as a comprehensive framework through which to assess their progress.

A Voluntary Local Review (VLR) has no official status at the UN, although the compilation of one underlines the value of the SDGs as a global framework driving local action. Moreover, Local Government Associations (LGA) advocate for including local achievements in VNRs.

The Value of a VLR

Within local government	**Within civil society**	**Within national government**	**Within the global community**
Align to Common framework, highlight the importance of data, update the divisions of labour, and break silos.	Listen to community and promote transparency and accountability, encourage new partnership and leadership.	Affirm the principle of subsidiarity and the role of local governments in achieving national commitments (VNRs).	Engage with the global community, make your effort visible, elevate city priorities to the global conversation.

What information is contained in a VLR?

Refer the SDG in plans and policies

Many cities have tagged actions that demonstrated that they actually already work towards achieving the SDGs thus promoting dialogue between public administration and citizens.

Strategies to meet and to commit extra effort to achieve the SDGs have reshaped the character of large and iconic projects to look at them through a transversal lens.

Data and Indicators

Cities take the responsibility of managing the implementation of the SDGs in order to promote goal-orientation and continued progress.
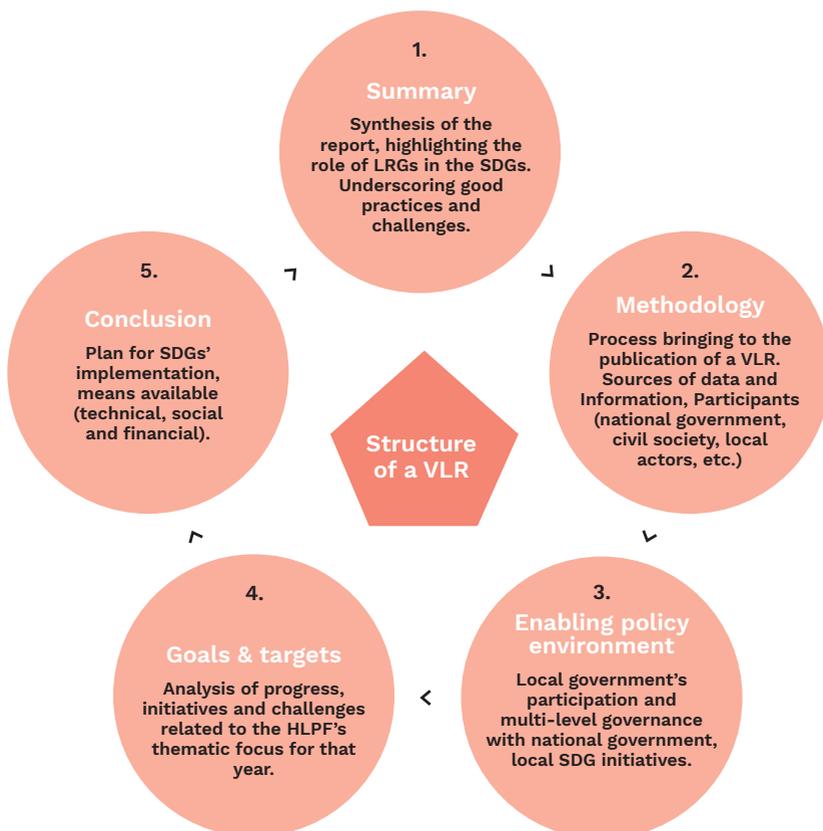
Existing performance indicators are a good basis to confirm the relevance of global indicators on the local level. VLR indicators may be local as well as global.

Local norms

Local norms ensure that reporting becomes a continuous exercise independent of leadership changes.

Structure of a VLR

There is no set template for the drafting of a VLR. Various partners and academia have supported local reporting with guidelines and web resources. UCLG contributes with a global report and learning module to engage in reporting.

1.

Summary

Synthesis of the report, highlighting the role of LRGs in the SDGs. Underscoring good practices and challenges.

5.

Conclusion

Plan for SDGs' implementation, means available (technical, social and financial).

Structure of a VLR

2.

Methodology

Process bringing to the publication of a VLR. Sources of data and Information, Participants (national government, civil society, local actors, etc.)

4.

Goals & targets

Analysis of progress, initiatives and challenges related to the HLPF's thematic focus for that year.

3.

Enabling policy environment

Local government's participation and multi-level governance with national government, local SDG initiatives.

Starting the process

More than a dozen global cities have been developing a VLR and the methodology applied was similar. It mainly followed the following guiding questions:

1. Who starts?
- Ensure political support: Mayor's office and council can support the report and commit to localizing.
- Ensure citizen involvement: A report can help to empower participatory processes.

2. Who is managing?
- Appoint an SDG coordinator or facilitator from municipal staff:
  Advantages: Funding and inter-departmental information sharing.
  Disadvantages: Risk of blocking momentum, decrease in proactiveness.
- Commission or Working Group:
  Advantages: Empowers integration of servants and citizens and new leadership.
  Disadvantages: Difficulty in funding and discontinuity in reporting.

3. Who to learn from?
- Consult the national local government association on their role in VNRs.
- Visit national and global knowledge and research platforms and discover what other cities are doing and how partners and academia can help*

4. Is Data available?
- Difficulty in access of databases.
- Consult budget cycle.
- Map different data along the city space.
- Engage in partnerships to collect and evaluate data with different stakeholders.

5. Keep engaged
- Cities must know their audience and target of the VLR.
- Open consultation at the local level increases accountability between citizens and government.
- Share your lessons and report through Local Government Associations.

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