

A New Generation of
Voluntary Local Reviews

UN-Habitat's comprehensive approach and methodology to VLRs and SDG localization

Draft Concept Note

Voluntary Local Reviews have been widely adopted by local and regional governments as the main to review and report on SDG progress in their territory. To date, 168 VLRs have been published, 37 from Asia, 69 in Europe, 38 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 11 in North America, and 2 in Oceania. In addition to their reporting task, VLRs have proven to be a successful tool and process for local and regional governments to improve data environments at the local level, enhance vertical and horizontal policy coherence, strengthen multilevel governance and mainstream the SDGs into strategic planning.

Based on the experiences of cities and local governments around the globe as well as on the existing guidelines developed by partners, UN-Habitat proposes a comprehensive approach and methodology to VLRs to harness their full potential as powerful tool and process to accelerate the local implementation of the SDGs.

Objective of the VLR

Reporting tool vs. planning process

Preconditions for a meaningful VLR



Political buy-in. It is essential that the VLR tool is owned and endorsed at the political level by the city council (and the Mayor). This ensures that the cooperation between city departments is facilitated and the VLR processes is not blocked along the way. As the VLR proposes strategic priorities for development and investments within the city, these are issues that directly impact the political sphere of city management, hence political support from the very beginning of the VLR process is essential.



Access to (a minimal amount of) reliable data: one of the most widespread difficulties for many local and regional governments embarking on the VLR process is the lack of data to measure progress. This is even more problematic as data should be disaggregated – by neighborhood; demographics; gender etc. Access to quality and updated data is therefore essential to ensure a quality VLR that is able to inform strategic planning. The combination of quantitative and qualitative non-traditional data is also important as much as the capacity to interact with national/sub-national statistical offices that in most cases are the custodian of city data.



Institutional support to engage communities, partners and stakeholders: the VLR, to be truly transformative, needs to be based on a wide participatory process where communities and territorial stakeholders are continuously involved. Consultations can have different purposes and happen at different stages of the VLR process: endorsement and definition of indicators; collection of qualitative data;

validation of VLR draft etc. A robust participatory process often entails the creation of ad-hoc consultation mechanisms through which qualitative information is extracted, validated, and shared.

The present methodology contains Phases and Tracks to follow throughout the VLR process. The **Phases** establish a guiding timeline under which several Tracks fall. The **Tracks** represent the different domains that a VLR integrates, not all the reports necessarily integrate all the tracks, therefore a prioritization should be done based on the “Inception Questionnaire”, the objective of the VLR and existing capacities.

PHASES

The phases provide a guiding timeline of the VLR process. Different tracks interact under each phase. The Inception and Finalization phases present a description of activities as they are not integrated in the Tracks.



Key Tracks

Data Track. *Pilot of the Global Urban Monitoring Framework*

- Selection of indicators from UMF Domains cross-referenced with SDGs
- Integration of the framework with additional spin-off indicators
- Identification and quality check of data sources
- Data collection
- Data cleaning
- Data analysis
- Map-based analysis (spatial SWOT)

 **Global Urban Monitoring Framework Report**

Stakeholders Track. *Inclusion and participation of stakeholders*

- Stakeholder mapping and engagement plan
- Situation Analysis Phases → prioritization of goals and targets; collection of qualitative data; review of map-based analysis and data collected
- Visioning Phase → review of the SDG Discussion Papers; definition of the vision and strategic objectives of the city
- Strategy Development Phase → definition of policy recommendations; identification of key projects and action plan
- VLR Finalization Phase → validation of the advanced VLR draft

 **Stakeholders Engagement Plan**



SDG Research Track. *Review of SDG progress*

	Review data collected				1st Stakeholders Forum						
	Spatial SWOT and UMF review and prioritization of key issues						2nd Stakeholders Forum				
	Review SDG Discussion Papers								3rd Stakeholders Forum		
	Visioning and identification of strategic projects								3rd Stakeholders Forum		
	VLR Validation									Validation by Municipal Council	