

Localizing SDG16+: Working with local and regional authorities

Local and regional authorities are critical for turning the global vision for peaceful, just and inclusive societies into a local reality

Overview

“Localizing” SDG16+ refers to the process of adapting, implementing, monitoring and reporting on SDG16+ targets at the local level. Localization relates both to how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs through action from the bottom up, as well as how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy.⁷² It is a process that seeks “to empower all local stakeholders, aimed at making development more responsive and therefore, relevant to local needs and aspirations.”⁷³

In relation to SDG16+, local and regional authorities comprise those individuals and institutions that are responsible for delivering SDG16+ targets at a local or regional level. While local and regional authorities will vary by context, they generally include a combination of:

- **Elected officials** – e.g. mayors, local councils, committees, boards, etc.;
- **Appointed officials** – e.g. district officers, finance officers, police chiefs, prosecutors, etc.;
- **Civil servants** – e.g. technical experts such as health, education or water officers; and
- **Service providers** – e.g. teachers, doctors, nurses, childcare workers, etc.⁷⁴

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In some contexts, local and regional authorities may also include Indigenous groups and elders, as well as faith-based and religious leaders.

Local and regional authorities, with strong, democratic and accountable institutions, are critical for turning the global vision for peaceful, just and inclusive societies into a local reality.⁷⁵ All of the SDGs – including SDG 16 – have targets directly related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments, especially in their role in delivering key public and basic services. Local and regional authorities can also play an important role in representing the interests of local communities at the national level, providing localized data on SDG progress and facilitating the kind of inclusive and participatory public decision-making processes envisioned by SDG16+.⁷⁶

The role of local and regional authorities in implementing SDG16+ will depend, in part, on the extent to which they have the power to make decisions to advance peace, justice and inclusion. Where local and regional actors enjoy substantial autonomy or independence from national governments, or where they are directly supported by national governments to engage in SDG16+ implementation – both politically and financially – their potential contribution to peace, justice and inclusion will be greater.⁷⁷ However, where these authorities operate within a highly centralized country or require formal legal authority to work on SDG16+ targets,⁷⁸ their ability to contribute to SDG16+ implementation will be more limited.

⁷² Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP and UN-Habitat (2017). *Trainer’s Guide for Localizing the SDGs: Learning Module 1*, p. 18. Available at: <https://www.local2030.org/library/view/348>

⁷³ Local 2030, cited in: The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2020). *Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 41. Available at: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive>

⁷⁴ For a more detailed description of local authorities, see: Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2018). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, pp. 29-30. Available at: <https://sdgaccountability.org/>

⁷⁵ The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2020). *Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 38. Available at: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive>

⁷⁶ The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (2019). *Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+: Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion*, p. 63. Available at: <https://www.un-globalalliance.org/sdg16-report>

⁷⁷ For a short discussion on the differences between decentralized and centralized governance approaches, see: Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2018). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, pp. 29-30. Available at: <https://sdgaccountability.org/>

⁷⁸ The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (2019). *Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+: Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion*, p. 62. Available at: <https://www.un-globalalliance.org/sdg16-report>

Putting it into practice

While there is no single blueprint for translating SDG16+ into action at the local level,⁷⁹ you can help to mobilize and support local and regional authorities to engage in SDG16+ implementation through the following actions:

1. **Analyze the governance arrangements for SDG16+ implementation** – As a first step, you should determine what the governance arrangements are to implement SDG16+ targets at the local level, including which government entity is responsible for what service function, what budget supports these functions and whether that budget has been received or not.⁸⁰
2. **Raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and SDG16+ among local and regional authorities** – Some authorities may not be aware of SDG16+ or its relationship to the rest of the SDGs. You can provide briefings for local and regional government officials on the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and SDG16+.⁸¹ You can also offer to help local authorities raise awareness of the SDGs and SDG16+ in order to promote local engagement in SDG16+ implementation.
3. **Urge local and regional authorities to adopt and tailor the SDGs to local contexts** – Some local and regional governments have already integrated the SDGs into their local planning and strategies. For those that haven't, you can urge them to formally adopt the SDGs and align their existing plans with them. You can also offer technical assistance to local and regional authorities to translate SDG16+ commitments into new or existing policies, strategies, plans and initiatives, which are linked to national development plans.
4. **Support local and regional authorities in relation to data on SDG16+** – Localized data on SDG16+ is key to ensuring that no one is left behind. You can assist local and regional authorities in developing localized indicators for SDG16+, collecting disaggregated data on SDG16+ targets and monitoring progress on SDG16+ implementation at sub-national levels.
5. **Help to bridge the gap between national and sub-national governments** – While local approaches to achieve the SDGs should inform national priority-setting,⁸² this is not always the case. You can help to bridge the divide that often exists between national and sub-national government officials by bringing local voices, priorities and perspectives on SDG16+ to the attention of national decision-makers.⁸³ For example, you can advocate for sub-national representation on national SDG bodies. You can also facilitate engagement and discussion between local authorities and national government officials through hosting events, conferences and workshops on SDG16+ implementation.
6. **Encourage local authorities to embrace open government principles and practices** – In line with the Open Government Declaration,⁸⁴ you can encourage local authorities to be more transparent, responsive, inclusive and accountable in their engagement with citizens. See the OGP Local Initiative for more information.
7. **Participate and support communities to participate in local and regional processes to advance peaceful, just and inclusive societies** – You can engage with, and facilitate communities to engage with, local and regional authorities by participating in:
 - a. **Formal or “invited” spaces** such as city, village and town council meetings, service-specific meetings (e.g. school management or child protection committees), grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) and participatory budgeting mechanisms; and
 - b. **Informal or “claimed” spaces** such as citizen-led consultations on SDG16+ implementation and citizen audits of local-level services and programs.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Saferworld (2019). “Time to invest: how to support action on SDG 16+”, p. 7. Available at: <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1224-time-to-invest-how-to-support-action-on-sdg16>

⁸⁰ Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2018). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, pp. 29-30. Available at: <https://sdgaccountability.org/>

⁸¹ Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2016). *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit: A practical guide for stakeholders for national-level advocacy around Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 24. Available at: <https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit/>

⁸² The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (2019). *Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+: Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion*, p. 32. Available at: <https://www.un-globalalliance.org/sdg16-report>

⁸³ Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2016). *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit: A practical guide for stakeholders for national-level advocacy around Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 24. Available at: <https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit/>

⁸⁴ Open Government Partnership. *Open Government Declaration*. Available at: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/joining-ogp/open-government-declaration/>

⁸⁵ For more detailed information on formal or informal spaces for engagement with local authorities, see: Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2018). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 30. Available at: <https://sdgaccountability.org/>

8. **Encourage local and regional authorities to participate in SDG follow-up and review processes** – This is essential to expand local and regional governments’ involvement in the localization process and to accelerate implementation, including for SDG16+.⁸⁶ In particular, you can encourage sub-national governments to participate in a ‘Voluntary Local Review’ (VNR) or ‘Voluntary State Review’ (VSR), which are modeled on the global level Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).⁸⁷

CASE STUDY:



Localization Through a Whole-of-Society and Whole-of-Government Approach Led by Civil Society⁸⁸

Somaliland SDG16+ Coalition

“Our process was about the locals; it was about ownership; it brought many people together and their involvement was the key. It was about helping new plants grow in the soil that was already there, rather than bringing in new soil.”
 – Guleid Jama, Founder and Board Member, Human Rights Centre Somaliland

Through an extensive and consultative process, the Somaliland SDG16+ Coalition – a network of civil society working on SDG16+ in Somaliland – has helped to support and drive SDG16+ localization, generating buy-in across civil society and national and local government, and using its 2019 baseline report to measure progress and maintain focus on reaching SDG16+ targets. While it has endorsed the 2030 Agenda and integrated the SDGs into its NDP, Somaliland has never presented a VNR largely due to its unrecognized status. Civil society actors decided to fill this gap and lead the process themselves, producing the ‘Somaliland SDG16+ Civil Society Progress Report’ in 2019.⁸⁹ Over two years (2017-2018), civil society carried out a detailed review of progress made in achieving SDG16+ priority targets and related processes, holding workshops throughout Somaliland with 55 different CSOs representing women’s groups, youth groups, those focusing on minority rights, disability groups and others.

To read the full-length version of this case study, visit www.sdg16toolkit.org/case-studies

Key TAP Network resources:


<p>Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive societies (Global Alliance and TAP Network, 2020)</p>	<p>This resource provides policy guidance, case studies and good practices on advancing SDG 16 at national and subnational levels by more effectively leveraging the Voluntary National Review (VNR) and post-VNR processes. It contains a chapter on ‘Localizing VNR Findings through Subnational and Local Governments and Other Stakeholders.’</p> <p>Available at: https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive</p>	
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⁸⁶ The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2020). *Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 43. Available at: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive>

⁸⁷ The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2020). *Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 44. Available at: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive>

⁸⁸ This case study draws on interviews with the Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition. TAP Network 2030 (2019). SDG Accountability Handbook. Section: ‘Localizing VNR Findings through Subnational and Local Governments and Other Stakeholders’ pg. 39.

⁸⁹ Somaliland Civil Society SDG16+ Coalition (2019). Somaliland SDG16+ Progress Report. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24270Somaliland_SDG16_Progress_Report.pdf

<p>SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society (TAP Network, 2018)</p>	<p>This handbook provides guidance on various approaches and steps that can be taken by civil society to ensure national government accountability for the SDGs. It includes a chapter on ‘Engaging with Local Authorities.’</p> <p>Available at: https://sdgaccountability.org/</p>	
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Key resources:

<p>Local 2030: Localizing the SDGs</p>	<p>This network and online platform supports the on-the-ground delivery of the SDGs, with a focus on those furthest behind. An extensive range of resources, tools and information to support SDG localization are provided. Available in English, French and Spanish.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.local2030.org/</p>
<p>The Sustainable Development Goals: What Local Governments Need to Know (United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), 2015)</p>	<p>This short publication explains how each of the 17 SDGs relates to the daily work of local and regional governments. It lists the most relevant targets of each Goal to local governments and highlights the relationship between the Goals and other international agendas, such as climate change and Habitat III. Available in English, French and Spanish.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.local2030.org/library/view/40</p>
<p>Agenda 2030 in my municipality – A handbook for practitioners for localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2019)</p>	<p>This handbook aims to help practitioners at a municipal level improve their knowledge and understanding of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and build their capacity to promote the SDGs and sensitize other stakeholders. It includes chapters on the impact of the SDGs in municipalities, raising awareness on the SDGs, establishing a local SDG agenda and the role of Local Government Associations (LGAs) and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS) in mobilizing municipalities to achieve the SDGs. Tools and examples from various countries are provided.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Handbook_Agenda%202030.pdf</p>
<p>Trainer’s Guide for Localizing the SDGs (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP and UN-Habitat, multiple years)</p>	<p>This guide provides information on the SDGs to local and regional governments – and their organizations or networks – and equips them with a series of strategies, skills and knowledge to localize the Goals. The material is provided in the framework of learning sessions in order to encourage participatory and group work and promote the exchange of ideas and experiences. Available in English, Spanish and/or Portuguese.</p> <p>Available at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● https://www.local2030.org/library/view/348 (Learning Module 1, 2017) ● https://www.local2030.org/library/view/595 (Learning Module 2: Territorial planning to achieve the SDGs, 2019) ● https://www.local2030.org/library/view/712 (Learning Module 3: Reporting to national and local review, 2019)

<p>Towards the Localization of the SDGs (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), multiple years)</p>	<p>This series of annual reports to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) reviews the state of localization around the world.</p> <p>Available at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/report_localization_hlpf_2020.pdf (2020) • https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/towards_the_localization_of_the_sdgs_0.pdf (2019) • https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Towards_the_Localization_of_the_SDGs.pdf (2018) • https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/localgov_report_localizations-dg_hlpf.pdf (2017)
<p>The OGP Local initiative (Open Government Partnership)</p>	<p>This initiative provides a platform for local governments and civil society partners across the world to come together to make their governments more open, inclusive and responsive, modeling the values and principles of the Open Government Declaration and processes.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-local/</p>
<p>Online Voluntary Local Review (VLR) Lab (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES))</p>	<p>This online platform provides a range of information on cities and regions taking a lead on Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).</p> <p>Available at: https://www.iges.or.jp/en/projects/vlr</p>
<p>Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). An Indigenous peoples' right and a good practice for local communities (FAO, 2019)</p>	<p>This e-learning course focuses on how to practically operationalize Indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent throughout all stages of a project cycle. It is primarily intended for professionals directly engaged in the development and implementation of projects involving Indigenous peoples. Available in English, French and Spanish.</p> <p>Available at: https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=500</p>

