



Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals: Advancing Subsidiarity in Practice

9-11 September 2025

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Overview

A Capacity Development Workshop on “**Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals: Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals: Advancing Subsidiarity in Practice**” to be held in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 9 to 11 September 2025 is being jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that many of the transformations needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will take place at the local level. Local governments are not only at the frontline of service delivery but are also uniquely positioned to translate national commitments into concrete results. When the SDGs are embedded in local plans, budgets, and institutions, and when local stakeholders are empowered and resourced to take ownership, progress on the achievement of the SDGs accelerates and no one is left behind.

Localization of the SDGs strengthens the relevance of development planning, enhances accountability, and promotes innovation and public engagement. Effective localization also supports greater coherence between national and local policies and ensures that investments and interventions reflect the priorities of those they are intended to serve.

The workshop is supported by the Government of Italy as part of a regional initiative entitled “Strengthening Local and National Government Capacities for SDG Localization in Africa”, implemented by UN-DESA. The project aims to enhance the institutional capacities of local and national governments to accelerate SDG implementation and to deepen the quality and impact of local planning, budgeting, and service delivery. The national workshop will be convened to



support national and local stakeholders in Sierra Leone in translating the SDGs into actionable local development strategies.

Sierra Leone is part of this initiative given its continued efforts to localize the SDGs and strengthen multilevel governance. The country's experience with Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in three municipalities also offers a strong entry point for scaling up action, promoting inclusive planning, and aligning local development with national priorities and global commitments.

Objectives

The workshop will focus on strengthening the application of the principle of subsidiarity, one of the 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development which was developed by the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by ECOSOC in 2018. Subsidiarity emphasizes the importance of assigning responsibilities to the lowest effective level of government and ensuring coherence across governance levels.

Through a mix of presentations, small group work, peer learning and discussion, the workshop will support participants to:

- Deepen their understanding of the Voluntary Local Review (VLR) process and its potential to guide local SDG planning and stocktaking.
- Apply the subsidiarity principle to clarify roles and responsibilities across levels of government.
- Strengthen the integration of the SDGs into local development plans and budgets and align them with national frameworks.
- Explore strategies for improving municipal finance and intergovernmental fiscal transfers, including reforms to enhance predictability and equality.
- Promote better urban governance and service delivery aligned with sustainable development objectives.
- Identify practical ways to build local capacity for managing external shocks and risks through resilience planning and early warning systems.
- Strengthen local monitoring and evaluation systems to improve accountability and support national reporting.
- Enhance partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and the UN system for more inclusive and effective localization.



A self-assessment exercise based on the CEPA subsidiarity guidance notes will help participants reflect on current practices, identify gaps, and develop concrete steps for improving SDG implementation.

Target Audience

- Municipalities that have previously conducted VLRs as well as new local governments interested in initiating the process
- Line ministries, Parliament, the Ministry of Finance
- Development partners
- UN Agencies, African Union
- African youth, women, representatives of civil society, and other major groups

Expected Accomplishments

1. Greater awareness and application of the subsidiarity principle in SDG implementation and the VLRs.
2. Strengthened national-local coordination mechanisms and increased alignment of development plans across levels.
3. Enhanced local capacity to plan, finance, implement and monitor the SDGs.
4. Improved service delivery and resilience planning through strengthened governance and infrastructure asset management.

