



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**Strengthening local and national government capacities for SDG
localization in Africa**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Project Summary)

Project Title:	Strengthening local and national government capacities for SDG localization in Africa
Start date:	<i>16 December 2024</i>
End date:	<i>31 March 2027</i>
SDG(s) addressed by the project	By working on SDGs localization, monitoring, reporting, and promoting the CEPA principle on subsidiarity, the project touches upon the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs spectrum, particularly supporting almost all targets related to SDGs 11, 16 and 17.
Target countries/groups:	Southern Africa: Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia West Africa: Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sierra Leone
Executing Entity:	UN DESA: The Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) The Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)
Co-operating Entities within the UN system:	DESA partners: Financing for Sustainable Development Office (FSDO), Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) and Statistics Division (SD) Other UN System partners: UNECA, UN-Habitat, UNDP, Local2030 Coalition, RCOs/UNCTs in target countries.
Other partners	AU, EU, OECD APRM, UCLG, ICLEI, ARCO institute, selected UNPAN Members (including, AAPAM, global and regional networks of schools of public administration).

Project Summary

With 65 per cent of SDG targets estimated to be linked to the work of local and regional governments, effective localization is a pre-condition for achieving SDGs. In recent years, the role of local governments has gained prominence and visibility at the international level, recognized by Member States in General Assembly resolutions and HLPF Political Declarations, and by the Secretary-General in his reports "Our Common Agenda" and "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet 2023".

In the face of multiple global crises that have slowed, and in some cases, reversed progress on SDG implementation, localization has become more important than ever and local governments from all regions have been "rising to the occasion," increasingly seizing upon the 2030 Agenda and working to make it a reality in their

local contexts. One of the ways that local governments have been doing this is through the process of preparing sub-national reviews of their SDG implementation (voluntary local reviews) to reinforce vertical and horizontal policy coherence and complement voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

At the same time, local and regional governments particularly, as detailed below, in the Africa region, face significant challenges in delivering on the 2030 Agenda. The present project will support both national and local governments in selected African countries to accelerate inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda through strengthening local and national government capacities for localization of the SDGs. It will do so by building on the successful implementation of the Italian funded project on *Improved local and national government capacities for localizing SDGs progress through Voluntary Local Reviews (2022-2024)*, providing continued support for review and reporting on SDG implementation and further supporting national and local governments to address financing challenges for SDG delivery by local governments and to strengthen planning for SDG achievement.

1. Project Background

1.1. Context

SDG localization is the process of adapting and customizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and translating them into local development plans and strategies that fit the needs, context and priorities of a particular region or locality, in coherence with national frameworks. With 65 per cent of SDG targets estimated to be linked to the work of local and regional governments, effective localization is a pre-condition for achieving SDGs. In recent years, the role of local governments has gained prominence and visibility at the international level, recognized by Member States in General Assembly resolutions and HLPF Political Declarations, and by the Secretary-General in his reports *“Our Common Agenda”* and *“Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet 2023”*. Local and regional governments are increasingly engaging in sub-national reviews of their SDG implementation (voluntary local reviews) to reinforce vertical and horizontal policy coherence and complement voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

In the face of multiple global crises that have slowed, and in some cases, reversed progress on SDG implementation, localization has become more important than ever. It was therefore identified, in the context of the 2023 SDG Summit, as one of the high impact initiatives that can drive SDG progress. Following the Summit, the Secretary-General launched a UN Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments, underscoring the vital role of local leaders can play to contribute to global solutions emphasizing, for example, that “[t]he fight against climate breakdown will be lost or won in cities.” The work of the Advisory Group will consider how local and regional government dimensions can be taken into account in the preparatory processes of the Summit of the Future and in the work of the UN more broadly. To further underscore the attention being given to SDG localization, paragraph 87(e) of The Pact for the Future also “Request the Secretary-General to provide recommendations on ways to strengthen the engagement of local and regional authorities at the United Nations by the end of the seventy-ninth session for Member States’ consideration, including on how United Nations’ engagement with local and regional authorities can contribute to the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals in line with national legislation and policies.”

The Secretary-General further has requested that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) enhance its contribution to SDG localization. In response, a DESA network on Localization of the 2030 Agenda has been formed to facilitate collaboration, coordination, and coherence in mobilizing action at the local level for SDG achievement. The work of the network in this regard is guided by a Framework for a DESA-wide approach to advancing localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, finalized in December 2023. DESA's objective, as set out in the Framework, is *to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda through localization of the SDGs, including by mobilizing action at the local level and supporting the six key transitions identified in the context of the 2023 SDG Summit*.¹

The proposed project would be carried out in the context of the new DESA Framework, focusing especially on its proposed outcomes: 1) supporting accountable and inclusive institutions; 2) integration of the SDGs into national and local sustainable development planning and implementation; and 3) Mobilization and increased access to long-term financing for local government; and 4) development of robust monitoring, reviewing and reporting frameworks that enhance vertical and horizontal coherence.

In 2024, in line with the new DESA Framework, DESA spearheaded the publication of an inter-agency policy brief on *Accelerating SDG Localization to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*², prepared in partnership with UN Habitat and UNDP, in close collaboration with the Global Task force of Local and Regional Governments and UCLG, and with inputs from the five UN Regional Commissions. The policy brief contained a recommended action plan for national governments, subnational governments, and UN entities on SDG localization. The proposed project would further support implementation of a range of action items for national and local governments included in the plan, including those relating to creation of enabling environments for SDG localization; ensuring adequate funding for SDG localization and reporting at all levels; supporting SDG integration in local development plans, monitoring, evaluation and reporting at all levels and linking VNRs and VLRs with planning, budgeting and policy development; investment in capacity building; creating opportunities to strengthen alignment and coordination of local with national frameworks; strengthening synergies with local and regional government associations and networks; committing to inclusive governance; creating opportunities for participation by all constituents; and strengthening the generation and accessibility of data at both national and local levels. Moreover, the project aligns with recommendations included in the Action Plan for the United Nations and other international organizations, including in relation to supporting SDG localization as a precondition to achieving the 2030 Agenda; mainstreaming multi-level approaches; providing capacity building support to strengthen reporting at all levels; carrying out of analytical research on effective and innovative financing for SDG achievement; and strengthening collaboration and coordination among development partners and UN agencies.

The proposed project will further draw upon and utilize key frameworks, particularly the UN Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development, which were developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), and including the principle of subsidiarity³, as well key training and guidance

¹ DESA's objectives will be achieved through the following outcomes, all of which will be achieved taking into account the "leave no one behind" principle: 1) Accountable and inclusive institutions (DPIDG, DSDG, UNPOG, DISD); 2) Integration of the SDGs into national and local sustainable development planning, implementation, monitoring, review, and reporting (DSDG, UNOSD, DISD, UNFF, UNCRD); 3) Mobilization and increased access to long-term financing for local governments (FSDO); 4) Increased availability of disaggregated data at the local level to monitor SDG implementation and support evidence-based planning (SD); 5) Development of robust monitoring and reporting frameworks (SD, DSDG, UNFF).

² <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/inter-agency-policy-brief-accelerating-sdg-localization-deliver-promise-2030-agenda>

³ The 11 principles of effective governance, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2018/12, highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve SDGs. One of these is the principle of subsidiarity: *To promote government that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all people, central authorities should perform*

materials prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The latter includes DESA's Global Guiding Elements for Voluntary Local Reviews⁴ and toolkits contained in the UN DESA Handbook on infrastructure asset management. "Managing Infrastructure Assets for Sustainable Development: A Handbook for Local and National Governments."

The project will be enhanced by use of the Curriculum on Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals which aims to promote critical understanding of sustainable development issues, enhance governance capacity, and strengthen public servants' awareness of their active role in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. It aims at developing the knowledge and capacities required to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and support concrete outcomes and lasting impact. The Curriculum, developed by DPIDG/DESA, provides a holistic and integrated framework for capacity development in the area of governance and public institutions. It aims to promote critical understanding of sustainable development issues, enhance governance capacity, and strengthen public servants' awareness of their active role in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Two toolkits on effective national to local governance for SDG implementation, and the local government e-toolkit will be particularly useful for this project. Learning outcomes for the training toolkits are designed around the challenge of strengthening national to local government coordination and institutional effectiveness for the SDGs, strengthening local government implementation, including fostering more effective understanding of the Local Online Services Index (LOSI).

The project will focus on the Africa region, which has made significant strides in advancing sustainable development over the last two decades. However, challenges to achieving the 2030 Agenda within its timeframe have increased significantly due to the multiple crises facing the region and the world, including those relating to a cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation, a worsening debt crisis⁵, and the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and the ongoing impacts of enduring and new conflicts. Emerging evidence points to challenges particularly in relation to education (SDG 4); gender equality (5); inequalities (SDG10) and overall advances on the means of implementation for the SDGs (SDG 17). At the halfway point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Africa is off track for meeting most targets of the SDGs and has even

only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more intermediate or local level. CEPA has identified five commonly used strategies for promoting subsidiarity, namely: (1) fiscal federalism and decentralization; (2) strengthening urban governance; (3) strengthening municipal finance and local finance systems; (4) enhancement of local capacity for prevention, adaptation and mitigation of external shocks; and (5) multilevel governance. DESA's Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) has produced a set of [strategy guidance notes](#) to support operationalization of the principle of subsidiarity and localization of the SDGs.

⁴ DESA/DSDG has been supporting countries in sub-national reviews of their SDG implementation – i.e., voluntary local reviews (VLRs) and their linkages to voluntary national reviews (VNRs), through the provision of advisory and policy guidance, including through its Global Guiding Elements for the VLRs, and through capacity development, including workshops at international, regional, national and sub-national levels. DESA/DSDG developed in 2020 'Global Guiding Elements for Voluntary Local Reviews, a guidance document that aims at supporting local governments conducting their reviews. The Global Guiding Elements draw from the Secretary-General's common voluntary guidelines for VNRs, also developed by DESA, and aim at enhancing dialogue and sharing of results and experiences between the national and local authorities responsible for the preparations of VNRs and VLRs. DESA/DSDG has also been providing since 2020, a series of online capacity building workshops and peer learning opportunities to local and regional governments interested in the VLRs and making their reports available on a dedicated website. In recent years, DESA has received and responded to requests for capacity building support on SDG localization from several African countries that include Eswatini, The Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Additional countries have informally expressed interest in such cooperation.

⁵ According to the African Development Bank Group, Africa's total external debt as \$1.152 trillion by the end of 2023 and, in 2024, Africa would pay out \$163 billion to service debts, up sharply from \$61 billion in 2010. See <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/annual-meetings-2024-old-debt-resolution-african-countries-cornerstone-reforming-global-financial-architecture-70791#:~:text=The%20Bank%20Group%20estimates%20that,%241.152%20trillion%20by%20end%2D2023.>

regressed on some. The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in Africa (58.0 percent) is nearly double the global average. At 20,4 percent, Africa is the region with the largest percentage of the population facing hunger, with 53 percent of the global population facing hunger concentrated in Africa by 2030.

Africa's rapid demographic growth, coupled with its rapid urbanization, underscore the need for responsive and decentralized governance structures. The significant development challenges facing the region, many of which can only be overcome with the engagement and participation of local actors, point to the need for advancing multilevel approaches to achieving sustainable development and to the localization of the SDGs.. Many African countries are actively pursuing decentralization as a strategy to enhance governance, improve service delivery, and address local needs more effectively, making Africa an important region for examining how decentralization impacts SDG implementation and for the identification of good practices. This approach will be aligned with the call made by the Addis Ababa declaration on the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and to eradicate poverty in times of multiple crises to “strengthen and ensure evidence-based voluntary national and subnational reviews of the implementation and follow-up of global and regional sustainable development frameworks, so as to enhance their effective adaptation to local settings with the inclusion of context-specific priorities, strengthen wide stakeholder engagement and channel finance and promote accountability.”⁶

The project’s overarching goal is to create inclusive, resilient and adaptive strategies that can ensure that the localization of the SDGs occurs through a people-centered approach and that it effectively addresses local challenges and ensures that the benefits of the SDGs are realized at all levels. The project will explore how ensuring adequate funding for, and empowering local governments to manage resources and services can improve infrastructure and delivery of services, including education, and healthcare – all important in the African context. By focusing on promoting the development and implementation of decentralized governance models, the project aims to strengthen local capacities and resilience, contributing to the broader success of the SDGs.

1.2. Link to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other frameworks

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) of all countries were analyzed for their commitments to decentralized planning and SDG implementation at the local level. Sierra Leone’s UNSDCF outlines as one of its priorities local governance and rural development, drawn from the Medium-Term National Development Plan, and notes the importance of well-resourced local government institutions. In South Africa, the UNSDCF aims to provide support to the District Service Delivery Model (DSDM) launched in 2019, which forms the basis for implementation at the local level, with the capacity of institutions and communities to advance sustainability at the local level being a focus. In Zambia, planned actions of the UNSDCF include local government reforms to enhance financial management, revenue generation and undertake investments for effective delivery of socio-economic development services, with the result being decentralization to achieve full devolution of functions and resources to sub-national levels. One of Ghana’s priorities in the UNSDCF is strengthening governance, decentralization, local delivery and accountability mechanisms, and strengthening of the decentralization efforts and resource flows to regions and districts through District Assemblies Common Fund allocations as well as increased capacity for local domestic resource generation and transparent utilization. The UNSDCF of Mozambique highlights the participation of the

⁶ ECA/RFSD/2024/12

Government of Mozambique and the UN in the SDG Localization Programme, noting that the goals were used as a bridge to link national policies to integrated local strategies and solutions, supporting local authorities in the development of strategic plans that align both provincial and municipal priorities with national programmes. The UNSDCF advances further decentralization reforms, creating spaces of dialogue between national and local governments to connect and enable greater coordination. The UNSDCF for Côte d'Ivoire highlights the importance of adapting development interventions to the local context, ensuring that solutions are designed with a thorough understanding of regional needs.

By focusing on SDG localization, the project aims at ensuring that actions towards the SDGs are accelerated and scaled up, contributing to the realization of the whole spectrum of the SDGs, particularly supporting almost all targets related to SDGs 11, 16 and 17 of the project will also facilitate a better understanding of challenges and opportunities in relation to SDGs 5 and 10. The project will also be implemented in a manner consistent with AU Agenda 2063, *the Africa We Want*.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

By supporting partner countries and local governments to monitor and report on SDG implementation and, in doing so, establish baselines, and to subsequently advance SDG implementation through planning, budgeting and governance, the proposed activities will contribute to implementation of SDG5, including targets 5.1 (End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere); 5.2 (Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres).

Project activities focused on SDG planning, budgeting and implementation, in line with the CEPA principles, at national and local level will further support implementation of SDG 5, particularly targets 5.5 (Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life) and 5.c. (Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels).

SDG 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

By carrying out participatory assessments and review of the development outcomes, challenges, priorities and opportunities of participating local and regional governments, the project particularly supports the local and national level attainment of target 10.2. (by 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status).

SDG 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

In line with DESA's Global Guiding Elements for the VLRs, the project supports a participatory approach for formulating inclusive policies, planning and implementation and aims at institutionalizing engagement with various stakeholders within and outside local and regional governments. Hence, a VLR process can directly contribute to achieving targets 11.3 and 11.b. on urban planning and management. The project will also support multilevel governance and vertical coordination within the country and aim at enhancing the capacities of secondary cities and local governments with weaker development outcomes, thus contributing directly to the attainment of target 11.a (Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning).

SDG 16, Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The proposed project will particularly contribute to targets 16.6. on effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and 16.7. on inclusive and participatory decision-making at all levels by enhancing the capacities of target countries and local governments for effective governance, including through stakeholder participation in VLR preparations and by enhancing local governments' participation in national processes. It will also enhance capacities for effective and inclusive public service delivery, including through digital government transformation.

SDG 17, Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Project activities will particularly contribute to targets 17.14 and 17.17 on policy coherence and effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, respectively, through enhanced multilevel governance and dialogue and through institutionalizing stakeholder engagement in localizing the SDGs. The VLR process can be an effective mechanism for ensuring both vertical and horizontal coordination, planning and sharing of information, thus enhancing policy coherence and integrated planning.

Beyond these highlighted SDGs, VLR processes will further help local authorities monitor their progress and develop new strategies and plans in relation to the priority issues and goals identified by each as well as foster linkages with national level planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of progress, gaps and challenges faced implementing the SDGs.

1.3 Mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues

This project will advance gender equality and human rights by ensuring that local strategies and policies are inclusive and address the specific needs of marginalized groups. By embedding SDGs into regional and community-level frameworks, the project will create targeted interventions that directly tackle gender disparities and promote the rights of vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities. For instance, localizing SDG 5 on gender equality can lead to the development of community-specific programmes that prevent violence against women, provide economic empowerment opportunities, and support women's participation in decision-making processes.

The project will promote social inclusion and equality in several ways. Firstly, it will establish mechanisms for active community participation, including the involvement of women's groups, disability organizations, and other civil society actors in the planning and implementation phases. This participatory approach will ensure that the voices of all community members are heard and contribute towards their needs being addressed. Secondly, the project will incorporate gender and disability audits into its results framework to monitor progress and impact on these specific groups. By setting clear, measurable indicators related to gender equality and social inclusion, and integrating these into regular assessments and reporting, the project will track improvements and identify and address gaps.

2. Analysis

Africa has made significant strides in advancing sustainable development over the last two decades. However, challenges to achieving the 2030 Agenda within its timeframe have increased significantly due to the multiple crises facing the region and the world, including those relating to a cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation, worsening debt, and the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and the ongoing impacts of enduring and new conflicts. Emerging evidence points to challenges particularly in relation to education (SDG 4); gender equality (5); inequalities (SDG10) and overall advances on the means of implementation for the SDGs (SDG 17). At the halfway point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Africa is off track for meeting most targets of the SDGs and has even regressed on some. The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in Africa (58.0 percent) is nearly double the global average. At 20,4 percent, Africa is the region with the largest percentage of the population facing hunger, with 53 percent of the global population facing hunger concentrated in Africa by 2030.

Specific sustainable development challenges that the present project will address include the following:

Lack of awareness regarding the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals: The achievement of the SDGs depends on the ability of local governments to promote integrated, inclusive and sustainable territorial development. However, knowledge and awareness of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs is often low within local government structures, which hinders the process of SDG localization. The project activities will build the capacity of participants from local and regional governments to understand their role in pursuing the global goals and incorporation of them into to national and local development plans, infused with local-level data, and decentralized planning systems.

Lack of evidence-based local development plans and strategies: While most national governments have aligned national development plans and strategies with the 2030 Agenda, there is still a need for local governments to improve development outcomes through the review and alignment of their own approaches and frameworks, based on evidence.

Limited data and monitoring and evaluation capacities: A major challenge consistently identified by both national and local authorities is the limited availability and/or accessibility of data in the target countries, which diminishes the ability of local authorities to carrying out evidence-based development planning and also can leave the situation of specific localities “invisible,” hidden within national averages. Local governments often lack capacity and resources to collect and analyze data to monitor and evaluate progress or to benefit from data that may be collected by non-governmental stakeholders that are also engaged in initiatives that may relate to sustainable development.

High levels of inequalities impacting women, minorities and groups in vulnerable situations: Globally, while inequalities between countries have been shrinking, inequalities within countries have been growing, with wealth increasingly concentrated among a small group of people at the top.³ This trend is contrary to the 2030 Agenda’s central promise to “leave no one behind.” In many developing countries in Africa, urban areas are growing rapidly, with large sections of the population living in informal settlements. Gender inequalities are deep-rooted in every society; women for example suffer from lack of access to basic education and health care

and are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

Good Governance: Well-managed cities and local authorities can act as engines of growth and provide inhabitants with better job opportunities and improved healthcare, housing, safety, and social development. Further, local areas can contribute to national growth through increased revenue generation, political stability, and post-conflict reconciliation. Managing urban growth is one of the most formidable challenges facing governments globally, with the growing need for improved urban governance, management, and development of urban areas becoming more evident. At the same time the rural population comprises about 60-70 percent of the population in low- and middle-income countries, and the SDGs cannot be achieved without progress in rural development.

Fiscal Federalism and Decentralisation: Adequate provision of revenue and financing powers to subnational governments is key to enable subnational governments to play an appropriate, meaningful, and effective fiscal role in the public sector. Each level of government should have certain clear functions and bear some responsibility for financing them. Policy, administrative and capacity constraints limit the ability of local governments to generate sufficient own source revenues as well as borrow in a sound and sustainable way.

Enhancement of local capacity for prevention, adaptation and mitigation of external shocks: Many of the processes that lead to disaster risk are locally generated and therefore often within the scope of local governments to control. Studies have shown that local capacity to prevent, adapt and mitigate external shocks reduces the incidence of larger scale hazards, and helps enhance local multi-hazard early warning mechanisms. External shocks to localities the world over can only be brought under control if local capacities exist to reduce the specific underlying drivers of disaster risk.

3. Project Strategy: Objective, Outcomes, Outputs & Indicators

3.1. Project Strategy & Logical Framework Narrative

The project seeks to improve local and national government capacities in selected countries in the Africa region to accelerate and scale up SDG implementation and localization through two distinct objectives, both of which will be implemented with maximum stakeholder participation and in line with the principle of leaving no one behind:

1) The project's **first objective** will be to provide support for the development of new VLRs by local governments in the six project countries and ensure that the process of undertaking a review is rigorous and based on evidence, accurate and disaggregated data, and promotes the close involvement and input of national and local stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, young people and other relevant groups. Through the engagement of multiple stakeholders on the ground, voluntary local reviews have the potential to reach a grass-roots audience, which can, in turn, inform sustainable development processes, policies and strategies, and move them forward. Building upon lessons learned from the XB (Italy) project on *Improved local and national government capacities for localizing SDGs progress through Voluntary Local Reviews*, project activities will seek efficient, effective, and sustainable approaches to supporting SDG review and reporting via the preparation of additional VLRs.

- As a first step under OP1, the project envisages the carrying out of a regional workshop, bringing together the three southern African countries from the initial XB (Italy) project on *Improved local and national government capacities for localizing SDGs progress through Voluntary Local Reviews*. The workshop will enable the exchange of experiences and distillation of lessons learned from the VLR processes of South Africa and Zimbabwe, which are now complete, and the nascent experience of Mozambique, which is in an earlier stage of development. Lessons from the workshop will inform approaches taken in the present project.
- Over the course of the project, online and in-person capacity building (the latter in conjunction with national/local workshops carried out under OP2) will be offered to select local governments from the six project countries.
- Two in-person regional workshops will be offered during the project, bringing together national government officials and local officials that have progressed on their VLRs together, as part of their learning experience.

2) The project's **second objective** will focus on capacity building focused on producing concrete changes on the ground through SDG planning, budgeting and implementation, fostering symbiotic relations between relevant national and local processes to ensure coherence and synergies and to maximize impact in six selected countries for: 1) **national governments**, to support inclusion of multilevel governance and SDG localization in national approaches to SDG implementation, including through the principle of subsidiarity; and 2) **local governments** (2 per project country) to take forward SDG localization by (a) integrating the SDGs into local sustainable development planning, budgeting and implementation processes; and (b) embedding new practices within local and national governance frameworks by strengthening implementation of the CEPA principles of effective governance for sustainable development, particularly the principle of subsidiarity, and improving approaches to local finance for sustainable development, including through infrastructure asset management. The project will also contribute to strengthening the generation and accessibility of localized, disaggregated and user-friendly data and indicators, particularly for underrepresented groups, and rural and remote areas. Further, the project will also encourage local and subnational governments to mainstream gender and human rights in all aspects of development planning, implementation, monitoring and review, as that would assist in identifying vulnerable groups and ensuring that rights holders received adequate services from local governments.

- As a first step, national consultants will be engaged for each of the project countries to carrying out an **analysis of national and relevant local development instruments and the status of their implementation**, including a gap analysis informed by the principle of subsidiarity. Analyses of national governments will further focus on the extent to which they include elements related to multilevel governance for sustainable development and coordination with subnational governments, as well as their alignment with the 5 strategy guidance notes for the principle of subsidiarity. Analyses of local governments will focus on the extent to which the SDGs have been included in local planning instruments, as well as analyses of current approaches to financing for sustainable development and to national asset management policy.
- Two **national/local capacity development workshops** per project country will then take place guided by the results of the analysis undertaken in each participating country:
 1. The first workshop in each project country will be delivered during the first year of the project, and will focus on: 1) approaches to multi-level governance and localization for SDG implementation; 2) evidence-based planning, budgeting and policy development with a focus on the 5 strategy guidance notes for the principle of subsidiarity and, as relevant, findings from

previous VNR and VLR processes; and 3) financing for sustainable development at local level;

2. The second workshop in each project country will be delivered during the second year of the project and will focus on finalizing or presenting evidence-based policy outcomes supported by the present project, in line with project objectives.

Both workshops will present opportunities for coordination and alignment between national and local frameworks, strategies and policies to achieve the SDGs; to foster synergies with local and regional government associations and networks, as relevant; and for stakeholder participation.

- **Virtual support**, including through webinars or workshops, will then follow, providing support for the formulation and implementation of development plans and budgets in line with the SDGs, including implementation of the principle of subsidiarity and the curriculum for governance for sustainable development.
- The later phase of the project will include, in partnership with the UN Economic Commission for Africa, preparation of **analytical materials, good practices and guides** for the development of national programmes for SDG localization and for integration of SDGs into local level development planning and budgeting, including implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.
- One **regional workshop with APRM** focusing on implementation of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development and, in particular, the principle of subsidiarity, in targeted African countries, drawing on some of the emerging lessons from this project.
- Design and production of **communications materials** to raise awareness on the importance of SDG localization, and to share good and inspiring practices.

3.2. Logical Framework Matrix

<u>Logic Intervention</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Means of verification</u>
Objective: Accelerate inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda in selected African countries through strengthening local and national government capacities for localization of the SDGs.		
Outcome - OC1 Strengthened capacity of local, regional and national government officials and relevant stakeholders to assess SDG implementation by reporting, monitoring and evaluating progress, and identifying gaps, challenges and opportunities.	IA 1.1 A minimum of 12 action-oriented voluntary local reviews prepared by participating local governments	Action-oriented voluntary local reviews, submitted to the Division for Sustainable Development Goals, including VLRs prepared with support of DESA as well as VLR prepared independently following DESA and/or ECA's guidance materials.
Output		

OP 1.1 Sub-regional workshop to share experiences among African countries on SDG localization with a focus on VLRs and next steps (Q4 2024).

OP 1.2
Online and in-person capacity-building support offered for the development of new VLRs in selected local governments, advocating for integration of VLR findings into local governance frameworks and development planning.

OP 1.3 Two in-person regional workshops, bringing together national government officials and local officials to provide a platform for the sharing of knowledge and experiences gained in the project countries/local governments.

<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Enhanced capacity of national and local government officials to implement the 2030 Agenda at the local level, leading to the development and operationalization of SDG-related policies and governance frameworks.</p>	<p>IA 2.1</p> <p>At least two specific local planning instruments be prepared and operationalized, including an implementation and budget plan, to advance SDG implementation per partner country.</p>	<p>Local planning instrument (for example, local development policy, strategy, action plan, vision paper roadmap or local infrastructure asset management action plans (AMAPS) in line with the principle of subsidiarity) and their implementation plans shared with DESA.</p>
	<p>IA 2.2</p> <p>At least two specific national planning instruments be prepared and operationalized, including an implementation and budget plan, to advance SDG localization.</p>	<p>National planning instrument (for example, development policy, strategy, action plan, vision paper roadmap or institutional mechanism in line with the CEPA principle of subsidiarity) shared with DESA .</p>

Output

OP 2.1 Analysis of national and local development instruments and the status of their implementation in each partner country, including as a gap analysis in relation to the CEPA principles, with a focus on the 5 strategy guidance notes for the principle of subsidiarity

OP 2.2 One **national/local** capacity building workshop per partner country, resulting in policy recommendations for SDG implementation, on: 1) national approaches to multi-level governance and localization for SDG implementation; 2) Inclusion of SDGs and/or findings from previous VLR processes, as relevant into local development approaches; 3) development planning with a focus on the 5 strategy guidance notes for the principle of subsidiarity; and 4) financing for sustainable development at local level, with a focus on infrastructure asset management.

<p>OP 2.3. One national/local validation workshop per partner country, focusing on operationalization of new or revised planning and budgetary instruments.</p> <p>** OP 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 to be organized and carried out in a coordinated and coherent manner.</p>
<p>OP 2.4 Virtual workshops/remote support for formulation of post-VLR development plans and budgets, including implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.</p>
<p>OP 2.5. Preparation, in partnership with ECA, of analytical materials, toolkit of case studies, good practices and guides for the development of national programmes for SDG localization and for integration of SDGs into local level development planning and budgeting, including implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.</p>
<p>OP 2.6 One regional workshop with APRM focusing on implementation of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development in targeted African countries.</p>
<p>OP 2.7 Design and production of communications materials to raise awareness on the importance of SDG localization, and to share good and inspiring practices.</p>

3.3 Monitoring And Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation process will be carried out in alignment with the “Guidelines on the Planning and Management of Capacity Development Project Evaluations in DESA.” Data will be gathered at regular intervals against the indicators of achievement outlined in the results framework. This process will include the preparation of annual progress reports at the end of 2025 and 2026, and the submission of a final report at the conclusion of the project in 2026. The final report will summarize the project's outcomes, lessons learned, and good practices developed during the project. In addition, an external terminal evaluation will be conducted in 2026 to assess the project's achievements and inform future capacity development efforts.

Throughout the implementation of the project, DSDG and DPIDG/DESA, in collaboration with implementation partners, will regularly collect and maintain key documents and information to support monitoring and evaluation efforts. This will include:

- Lists of workshop participants, including names, gender, and contact information;
- Workshop agendas and activity reports;
- Survey results from workshops and other project activities;
- Guidelines, methodologies, and tools developed as part of the project;
- Publications, research, and studies produced by the project;
- Policies and strategies created or influenced by the project;
- Documentation of feedback from users of guidelines and advisory services;
- Information related to project websites, including visitor demographics and user interactions;
- Meeting minutes from steering committee meetings, where relevant;
- Lists of project focal points and counterparts in target countries, partner organizations, and donors;
- Reports on supplementary funding, including both financial and in-kind contributions; and
- Estimates of staff time dedicated to the project.

These documents will inform the preparation of the annual progress reports and the final report. In addition,

regular team meetings between DESA and the implementation partners will be held at least once every two months to review progress, address challenges, and adjust strategies as needed to ensure successful implementation of the project. DSDG will also ensure that adequate resources are allocated for evaluation activities, following the standard DESA practice that all multi-year projects with a budget of at least \$300,000 require a terminal evaluation.

All collected documents will be made available to the external evaluator to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the project's performance.

3.4. Project Governance and Coordination Arrangements

UNDESA will be the lead implementing entity and the project's UN implementing partners will include UNECA and UN-Habitat.

At the national level, the project will be implemented in partnership with RCOs/UNCTs to ensure coherence, alignment with and increase the effectiveness of the UN work at country level; link the results of VLRs to the preparation of VNRs, Country Common Assessments, and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) programming and promote and facilitate the involvement of local and regional governments in national processes. This will entail promoting linkages between VLRs and VNR preparatory process.