

**Voluntary Subnational Reviews: Regions Voice in UN reporting**  
**Accountability and transparency: citizens engagement and participatory mechanisms**  
*The case of Makueni County & Council of Governors*

Community of Practice Regions4SDGs

Wednesday 23 March 2022

8:00-9:30 am (EDT) | 1:00-2:30 pm (CET) | 3:00-4:30 pm (EAT) | Check your time [here](#)

[Register here](#)

**Concept Note**

**Background**

The [2020-2030 United Nations Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) calls for accelerated economic, social, and environmental transformation in the ten years left to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Regional governments have played a crucial role in localizing the SDGs and successfully implementing them on the ground.

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) are a new modality of reporting that aim to report and monitor progress at the local and territorial level, following the example of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).<sup>1</sup> Reporting progress helps to understand if we are on the track to achieving the SDGs, and monitoring progress can improve policy efficiency, inclusiveness, and decision making in the territories.

As VLRs and VSRs have increasingly been prepared worldwide, there is a variety of methodologies and approaches for elaborating them. They reflect the diversity of circumstances and objectives of governments: define SDGs priorities, engage with stakeholders, build indicator frameworks, align national and subnational monitoring, foster peer-learning based on a common framework, among others.

This session will take place as part of the [Community of Practice Regions4SDGs](#) and its series of in-depth webinars analyzing VSRs experiences and the role of regional governments in UN reporting. It will address the experience of the **Makueni County & Council of Governors** in Kenya in engaging communities and citizens and promoting participatory mechanisms that ensure accountability and transparency.

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<sup>1</sup> The VNRs are part of the mechanisms to follow-up and review the 2030 Agenda. Member States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven. These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) every year in July. As stipulated in the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

### **Citizens engagement and participatory mechanisms**

Stakeholder engagement is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda calls for “participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people” and the SDGs themselves are the result of not only negotiations between UN Member States but of intensive public consultations and engagement with stakeholders around the world.

Local and regional authorities have a dual role: 1) as stand-alone stakeholders of national SDG design and implementation and 2) duty-bearers responsible for engaging stakeholders in their own SDG efforts.

Regional governments are encouraged to include a wide variety of stakeholders in all stages of the VLR/VSR process. By ensuring citizen involvement and community active listening, governments are empowering participatory processes, promoting transparency and accountability, and encouraging new partnership and leadership.

The [UN DESA Global Guiding Elements for Voluntary Local Reviews](#) recommends that cities and regions give adequate focus to stakeholder engagement in their reviews. The VLRs/VSRs can showcase the efforts made to mobilize all stakeholders in the VLR/VSR process and SDG implementation at large, describing steps taken to identify, select, engage, and support different groups and what innovative measures were used to ensure the inclusiveness of the process. It is also suggested to note any challenges encountered and ways of improving such inclusive processes in the future. The review could also present interesting examples of SDG implementation actions by different stakeholders, such as CSOs, private sector, local parliamentarians, community associations, academia, youth groups and schools.

Promoting citizens engagement and participatory mechanisms during the VLR/VSR process can serve as a catalyst for increased and institutionalized long-term engagement with different stakeholder groups. It can be incrementally built to stimulate more open, inclusive, and effective policymaking and foster the work towards the principle of Leave no One Behind.

**Makueni County** and the **Council of Governors** in Kenya have been examples of nurturing SDG mainstreaming in local planning frameworks. Their work is based on consultations with a broad range of actors and improved mechanisms of coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders. Their experience can provide helpful insights for the SDGs work of other subnational governments.

## Agenda

### 8:00 Welcoming remarks

- **Ivy Moraes, Sustainable Development Programme Manager, Regions4**

- Presentation of the Community of Practice Regions4SDGs and the series Regions Voice in UN Reporting

### 8:10 Stakeholder engagement in County Governments in Kenya

- **Ken Oluoch, Technical Lead SDGs, Council of Governors Kenya**

*Guiding questions:*

- How can stakeholder involvement contribute to a robust subnational review?
- In what ways can stakeholders be involved in the VLR/VSR preparatory process?
- How is the CoG encouraging County Governments to foster participatory mechanisms in their VLRs/VSRs?
- What type of capacity building and support is advisable to ensure that communities are empowered and equipped to implement the SDGs?

### 8:20 The case of Makueni County (Kenya)

- **Boniface Mutua and Stanlus Matheka, Makueni County, Kenya**

*Guiding questions:*

- What modalities did you use for stakeholder engagement, what worked, what did not work and why?
- How to prepare a stakeholder engagement strategy? How to identify the stakeholders you wish to engage? How to open space for reaching citizens that do not participate in traditional groups? How did you work to manage the priorities and different perspectives of stakeholders?
- Did the VLR/VSR create a shared language for governments to communicate with the citizens?
- How to make the VLR/VSR meaningful to citizens and embedded into daily business? How to improve the quality and continuity of stakeholder engagement after the VLR/VSR publication?

### 8:45 Discussion: questions, challenges, and lessons learned

- **Respondent: Martha Hannus, Vice-president of the Development and Sustainability Council of Åland**

*Guiding questions:*

- It is recommended that civil society engagement be institutionalized and harnessed to help build awareness and ownership of the 2030 Agenda and ramp up implementation. How did you develop your “infrastructure” for stakeholder engagement?
- How can a VLR/VSR process enhance inclusion and non-discrimination? How do we ensure that disadvantaged and marginalized groups can contribute to SDG planning and VLR/VSR processes?

**- Open floor to all attendees**

*Guiding questions:*

- Does your region have SDG participatory mechanisms?
- How existing participatory mechanisms can be adapted to support VLR/VSR efforts?
- What are the successes, challenges, gaps and lessons learned from engaging citizens on SDG planning and VLR/VSR process?
- What are some of the good practices for awareness-raising? How do you manage to bring community together around the SDGs?
- The COVID-19 pandemic had made stakeholder engagement particularly challenging, how are you overcoming the new barriers of mobility restrictions and in-person gatherings in the VLR/VSR preparation processes? Is digital participation a challenge or solution for accessibility?

**9:30 Closing**

**Registration**

This session will be online and open to Regions4 members only. Please note it will be recorded and conducted in English. [Register here](#) by 22 March. Registered attendees will receive the instructions on how to connect.

**Supporting materials**

Attendees can prepare for the discussion by reading:

- Regions4 article [The Council of Governors in Kenya's VNR - Inclusive subnational participation in Voluntary National Reviews](#)
- [Localization of SDGs in County Governments in Kenya](#)
- [Kenya's Guidelines of Good Practices in SDG implementation](#), developed through a process in which the Council of Governors and other stakeholders were involved.
- UN DESA's [Global Guiding Elements for Voluntary Local Reviews](#) (available in [English](#), [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Russian](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#))
- UN DESA's [Multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation: A review of VNR Reports \(2016-2019\)](#)
- UN DESA's Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide (available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [French](#))
- UNDESA and UNITAR's Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) [Strengthening stakeholder engagement for the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda](#)

We invite you to reflect how your region' experience differs from the chosen case and bring questions and comments.

### Community of Practice Regions4SDGs

The Community of Practice Regions4SDGs is a Regions4 collective and participatory project to support SDGs localization in regional governments. Based on peer-review, it acts as a platform for region-to-region exchange of experiences, mutual support, capacity building, and alignment of statements both at technical and political levels. It aims to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and strengthen territorial approaches, scaling-up regional pathways from isolated good practices to collective modalities of implementation, ultimately influencing more ambitious results in the national and international frameworks.

For further information, please contact:

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