

14TH TRANCHE OF THE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

UN-Habitat

Voluntary local reviews: evidence for greener, resilient and sustainable urban recovery
in Eastern European and Central Asian countries in transition

Project Document

Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. BACKGROUND	3
2.1 Context	3
2.2 Mandates, comparative advantages and link to the Programme Budget.....	3
Mandate	3
Comparative advantages.....	4
2.3 Country demand and target countries	5
2.4 Link to the SDGs.....	7
2.5 Lessons learned	8
2.6 Innovative aspects	9
3. ANALYSIS	10
3.1 Situation analysis.....	10
3.2 Country level situation analysis.....	13
3.3 Stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment	16
4. PROJECT STRATEGY: OBJECTIVE, OUTCOMES, INDICATORS, OUTPUTS	18
Project objective and outcomes.....	18
Project trigger.....	19
Project approach and dimensions.....	19
SDG localization and VLR methodology	20
Global Urban Monitoring Framework	20
Voluntary Local Reviews.....	21
The SDG Cities Flagship Programme	22
Project implementation, distribution of responsibilities and timeline	22
Technical support to cities.....	22
Normative Development	24

Multilevel Governance	25
Capacity Building for local and national officials.....	25
Regional and Global Advocacy processes.....	25
Timeline	26
4.2 Results Framework.....	27
4.3 Risks and mitigation actions	30
4.4 Sustainability and scaling-up	30
5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION	31
5.1 Monitoring.....	31
5.2 Final Report	32
5.3 Evaluation	32
6. MANAGEMENT, PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION AGREEMENTS.....	33
7. ANNEXES	34
ANNEX 1: RESULT-BASED WORK PLAN AND BUDGET DETAILS	34
ANNEX 2: DETAILED JUSTIFICATION BY CODE	36
ANNEX 3: BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES BY ENTITY AND COST CENTERS	38

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The executive summary provides a brief overview of the project, following the suggested template below.

Project Code and Title:	2225J Voluntary local reviews: evidence for greener, resilient and sustainable urban recovery in Eastern European and Central Asian countries in transition
Start date:	February 2022
End date:	May 2025
Budget:	\$570.000,00
Target countries:	Primary target countries for technical cooperation: Georgia; Kyrgyzstan ; Serbia ; Tajikistan ; Ukraine
Lead Entity:	UN-Habitat
Other UN DA Implementing Entity/Entities:	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) United Nations Economic Commission for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Local 2030 Coalition
Other Collaborating Entities within the UN Secretariat and System:	UN Country Teams in the selected pilot countries: Georgia; Serbia; Tajikistan; Kyrgyzstan; Ukraine

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Context

2.2 Mandates, comparative advantages and link to the Programme Budget

Mandate

UN-Habitat. UN Agency focal point to work with local and regional governments as well as for sustainable urbanization and development at local level. UN-Habitat is also mandated by the UN Chief Executive Board to develop the Global Urban Monitoring Framework – to be approved by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2022 as the UN-wide effort to monitor the local and urban dimensions of sustainable development, in line with the SDGs and the NUA. In addition, UN-Habitat holds the Secretariat and co-chairs the Local 2030 Coalition – the UN initiative on localizing the SDGs, and, as mandated by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (July 2020), it leads the global debate and practices on Voluntary Local Reviews, along with its partners.

UNDESA. By facilitating major intergovernmental negotiations, global conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as mandated by UN Member States, UN DESA assists countries as they find common ground, set norms, and take decisive steps forward. UNDESA serves as the Secretariat of the High-Level

Political Forum on sustainable development, holding central in the support to the preparation and presentation of VNRs. Along with its, it leads debate and capacity building on VLRs, and has created the Global Guiding Elements for VLRs¹, in line with the Secretary-General's common voluntary guidelines for the Voluntary National Reviews. As the think tank of the UN, DESA, generates, analyses and compiles a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and statistics to inform and advise Member States and other stakeholders as they take stock of trends and policy options to tackle common problems. This includes critical knowledge on local public institutions, SDG development plans and COVID-19 related social-economic impacts, among other topics.

UNECE and UNESCAP. The UN Regional Commissions were established to foster economic integration at the subregional and regional levels, to promote the regional implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the SDGs, and to support regional sustainable development. In addition, the Regional commissions organize annually the Regional Sustainable Development Forums, key meetings for the preparations of VNR and that recently have open more and more space for inclusion of local governments and VLRs. In the specific, both UNESCAP and UNECE have developed regional guidelines for VLRs and have been involved in technically supporting local partners to develop their VLRs. In the specific, UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management is the only intergovernmental body addressing the urban challenges of the UNECE region, served as a forum for exchange of best practices and providing a platform for policy formulation and implementation on sustainable housing development, land administration and spatial planning. The UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit (HLMU) is a secretariat to the Committee and the unit responsible for implementation of the ECE sub-programme on housing, land management and population, while also leading the organization of the Forum of Mayors.

Comparative advantages

Reflecting the project's integrated approach, the DA's partners comparative advantages can be grouped as follows: i) Partnership approach; ii) Working methodology and Territorial Approach to Sustainable Development; iii) Regional and global SDG processes.

Partnership approach. UN-Habitat is the UN Agency leading the work and cooperation with local and regional governments and their associations worldwide, uniquely positioned in promoting sustainable urbanization and local development processes. It is also custodian of several SDG indicators, a focal point for advancing SDG11 and other urban-related goals and targets, and a focal point for implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda. As such, UN-Habitat cooperates with a wide network of partners to advance the SDGs at local level – local and national governments; academia and civil society; private sector entities; grassroots groups, etc. This network has been built by adopting a partnership-oriented approach aimed at connecting and coordinating work with key partners working at different levels and across sectors in order to maximize impact and effectiveness of development. The same accounts for the Regional Commissions, UNECE and UNESCAP, and UNDESA both leading their respective Regional Sustainable Development Forums and HLPF and strongly engaged in supporting the preparations of Voluntary National and Local Reviews within their regions. In conclusion, together, UN-Habitat, UNDESA and the UN Regional Commissions are uniquely positioned to reach out, involve and activate a wide number of partners, working at all levels, hence ensuring both multilevel coordination – local; national; regional; and global – as well as horizontal partnerships and exchanges.

Working methodology. Concerning localizing the Global Goals, UN-Habitat has developed an innovative three pronged approach linking all components of the SDG localization process, resting on: i) the Global Urban Monitoring Framework; ii) Voluntary local Reviews; iii) the SDG Cities Programme. This approach is a key comparative advantage as it allows UN-Habitat to accompany local partners throughout the entire spectrum of their localizing efforts, adapting support depending on their needs and positioning along the spectrum itself. In

¹ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/GlobalGuidingElementsforVLRs_FINAL.pdf

addition, the DA implementing partners – UN-Habitat; DESA; ECE; ESCAP – have also developed their respective methodologies and guidelines to support Voluntary Local Reviews², and have already piloted them by technically supporting several localities in the VLR process. This means that technical support to VLRs - central in the present project - is accompanied by concrete and already tested instruments ensuring the quality of the process and final result. Moreover, in an effort to enhance coherence and coordination across the UN system, the project will provide fertile ground to join and unify approaches and methodologies among those already existing – hence strengthening development effectiveness. In this regard, the project aims to provide information and data for the formulation of the Regional Guidelines for Europe, to be jointly developed and released by the implementing partners under the leadership of UNECE. Also, UNECE is leading the UNDA 12th tranche project on innovative financing for sustainable smart cities supporting five pilot cities in the UNECE region.

Regional and global SDG processes. UNDESA serves as the Secretariat to the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development that holds a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through its annual meetings. Thanks to the work of DESA and the support of partners, including UN-Habitat and the Global Task Force of Local and Regional governments, local governments and VLRs have increasingly gained acknowledgement in the HLPF processes, with new space for participation and active engagement. The Regional Commissions organize annually the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development, a key moment in the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (to be presented at HLPF) and to gather Members States around the key issue of local development and SDG localization. At the global level, UN-Habitat coordinates the organization of the World Urban Forum (WUF) – taking place biannually. The 11th edition of the WUF to be held in Katowice (Poland) in June 2022 will be largely dedicated to SDG localization and VLRs – a key moment to kick-start the project’s activities. Last but not least, UN-Habitat holds the Secretariat of, and co-chairs, the Local 2030 Coalition, the UN-wide Initiative on localizing the SDGs and advancing the “local action” dimension of the Decade of Action. Thanks to DA’s implementing partners specific roles and added value, the present project will be able to scale up local action at the national, regional and global level, informing the global debate on localizing, while stimulating policy development, partnerships and exchanges between partners and across levels.

The geographic focus on countries of transition will draw on experience and continuity of several previous and ongoing Development Account projects completed (UNDA10) and underway (UNDA12; UNDA13) in collaboration with UNECE and UNESCAP, including on evidence-based policies on housing and smart city development as part of implementing the New Urban Agenda and urban-related SDGs (UNDA12), and on building urban economic resilience during and after COVID-19 (UNDA13).

2.3 Country demand and target countries

Eastern European and CIS countries have made strides in accelerating implementation of SDGs, with significant achievements in reducing poverty and carbon emissions, among others. At the same time, the urbanization experience of countries across the region is quite unique – centrally-planned system; non-economic factors orienting planning etc. – and affecting sustainability of today’s cities. While cities have been growing rapidly in some countries (in Kazakhstan, for example), other are experiencing a “shrinking” phenomenon (such as cities in eastern Ukraine). Both growing and declining cities face uniquely challenging environments. Growing cities need to adapt their local infrastructure to ensure that the growing population is well-absorbed, while avoiding urban sprawl and balancing urban growth beyond administrative boundaries. Populations are moving from city centers

² UNDESA Global Guiding Elements for VLRs: https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/GlobalGuidingElementsforVLRs_FINAL.pdf

UNESCAP VLR Regional Guidelines: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-regional-guidelines-voluntary-local-reviews>

UN-Habitat-UCLG VLR Guidelines: <https://unhabitat.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews>

towards suburbs, bringing along issues linked to housing provision and/or inefficient land-use. City population decline has important policy implications at both the national and local level, often leading to fiscal imbalances, as the revenue base of cities is eroded³. These challenges have been further aggravated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with disastrous consequences for local economies – local governments are expected to see their revenues reduced by 15 to 20 percent⁴.

The management of cities and planning at local level is hence a key to ensure balanced, equal, inclusive and sustainable development within and across countries in the region. If done through an integrated approach, such process can substantially build local and national governments capacities and resources as well as their internal coordination for better policy coherence and delivery for local communities. This way local governments will be more informed and equipped to advance the localization of the SDGs and to contribute to the national recovery process from the pandemic.

Target countries push towards SDG is demonstrated by the creation of national plans and strategies for SDG implementation – such as Ukraine 2030⁵ – and the establishment of SDG coordination arrangements – as in the case of the Coordination Committee for Adaptation, Implementation and Monitoring of SDGs in the Kyrgyz Republic⁶. In addition, many of the target countries have explicitly or informally expressed their interest and commitment to strengthen their work at local level and advance the localization of the SDGs. This includes Tajikistan that in its 2017 VNR clearly recognized the importance of local governments and local development and urges for a push in the country towards enhancing SDG localization⁷.

In this context, countries and pilot cities were selected through a throughout consultation among implementing partners (UN-Habitat; UNECE; UNESCAP; UNDESA) on the basis of the following criteria:

- Direct request from country partners to support SDG localization and recovery related processes
- Existence of political commitment at both national and local level
- Availability of a minimum level of data and information
- Coherence and coordination with past or ongoing projects to build on existing networks, maximize resources and impact of delivery

Based on the above-mentioned criteria, the project proposes to work in the following countries:

Serbia: Serbian government has expressed interest to advance SDG localization in the country in partnership with the UN. Already in 2019, the Serbian Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure requested support for localization of SDGs to link urban strategy and spatial plan to SDG implementation. Same interest was reiterated to UN-Habitat staff in 2021, with direct request to support development of the first Voluntary Local Review in the country, connecting it to the preparation of the country VNR in 2022. Pilot city to be defined in partnership with government by November 2021, preference for an intermediary and secondary city.

Tajikistan: Discussion and exchanges have been ongoing with UN Resident Coordinator Office since mid-2021 on the country's interest to advance SDG localization, specifically through the development of VLRs as localization

³ World Bank, Cities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: A Story of Urban Growth and Decline, 2017
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/11/30/cities-in-eastern-europe-and-central-asia>

⁴ OECD, The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government,
<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/#section-d1e1175>

⁵ Ukraine 2030 <http://www.ukraine2030.org/en>

⁶ United Nations Statistics Division Statistical Services Branch, Kyrgyzstan, <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/kyrgyzstan/>

⁷ Tajikistan 2017 VNR <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/tajikistan>

acceleration tool. Discussions are currently ongoing with UNRCO for the selection of the pilot city with preference for an intermediary and secondary city. City to be identified by October 2021.

Georgia: Tbilisi is part of the ongoing UNDAT12 project on innovative financing for sustainable smart cities⁸. Cooperation with national counterparts and local government is successful and the city has already a good data basis to help kickstart activities. City authorities have expressed interest to undertake VLRs and kickstart localization.

Kyrgyzstan: engagement in Kyrgyzstan has been consolidated through cooperation with Bishkek city council, with which both UN-Habitat and UNECE have established dialogue and cooperation. UNECE has data available with many ongoing activities. Political commitment is high and excellent local consultants and focal points are also already in place. The city has expressed direct interest to deepen work on data collection and analysis and to start the VLR process.

Ukraine: cooperation in Ukraine is established with the City of Kharkiv that present excellent political commitment, a strong local coordinator and a minimum data availability. In addition, UN-Habitat has received request for support from the City of Lviv, while UNECE received as similar call from the City Government of Zhitomir. Selection of pilot city is currently ongoing, in coordination with UNRCO and will be reached by November 2021.

In addition to the primary target countries and pilot cities that will receive direct technical support from implementing partners, the project aims at creating a regional community of practice to further peer learning, knowledge sharing and stimulate scaling up of project activities at regional level. In this process, projects partners will work closely with Kosovo⁹ as a “knowledge partner” throughout all activities and networking opportunities, where direct interest was expressed by UNDCO in coordination with government and preparatory activities to advance localization have kickstarted in two municipalities; and Poland, as Katowice will host the 11th World urban Forum where VLRs and SDG localization will have a central role.

2.4 Link to the SDGs

By applying an integrated approach linking SDG localization and COVID-19 recovery, the project is related to the whole spectrum of SDGs, particularly contributing to almost all targets related to Goal 11, 16 and 17. Nevertheless, the following SDG targets have the closest links to the project:

SDG 11 (11.3; 11.a; 11.b): The preparation of VLRs and local development plans is anchored on a shared methodology among the implementing partners that emphasizes participatory and inclusive processes that facilitate the engagement of communities and minority groups within prioritization, planning and decision-making processes at the local level. This will in turn inform national planning and policy making, with key insights on the reality of development of territories and communities. In addition, also based on the ongoing cooperation between UN-Habitat and UNECE that led to the creation of a the methodology for the preparation of local urban resilience plans, the project aims at creating medium- to long- term Local Recovery Plans fully integrating resilience to crises, hence substantially increasing the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans anchored on inclusion and resilience.

SDG 16 (16.6; 16.7; 16.8; 16.a): By adopting a territorial approach to sustainable development and anchoring its activities on VLRs, the project will strengthen multilevel governance and horizontal cooperation among territorial partners in view of strengthening SDG implementation and recovery from the pandemic – at all levels. VLRs and

⁸ UNECE, UNDA 12th tranche project on innovative financing for sustainable smart cities,

<https://unece.org/housing/innovativefinancing-sustainablesmartcities>

⁹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Local Plans will be developed through a participatory process directly contributing to achieving target 16.7.

SDG 17 (17.14; 17.17): VLRs are a powerful tool to strengthen policy coherence both vertically, facilitating alignment with national development and recovery plans, as well as horizontally, with the other existing local development strategies. In addition, the project proposes to pilot the Global Urban Monitoring framework to contribute to the development of VLRs and Local development Plans and more broadly to strengthen local and national data, monitoring and evaluation capacities.

2.5 Lessons learned

In relation to the COVID-19 situation, Countries in Eastern Europe and in the CIS are slowly moving towards reopening of most sectors. Field missions and visits are hence possible as well as the delivery of on the work on site support. This of course doesn't exclude the possibility of a resurgence of the virus and the re-imposition of restrictions. Here below some examples of lessons learned on how this issue/risk can be addressed per each of the project's component:

Component	Activities	Lessons Learned
Technical Cooperation	Piloting of UMF and data collection (UMF/other frameworks)	As per the extended experiences of UN-Habitat and the implementing partners, activities of collecting quantitative and qualitative data, as well as the creation of policy-oriented datasets is best conducted in cooperation with the relevant local and national institutions. This is also the case for the preparation of VLRs. Both these processes can be conducted online, or face-to-face, as demonstrated in the experiences of the VLRs of Moscow and Florence, or the UNECE Smart Sustainable City Profiles of Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and Grodno (Belarus). Where possible, the structures used to develop the Smart Sustainable City Profiles (UNDA 12 th tranche) and COVID-response plans (under the UNDA 13 th tranche project) will be used or replicated for the development of Local Recovery Plans.
	Development of VLRs	
	Development of Local Recovery plans	
	UNCT support	
Normative Development	Development VLR-COVID-19 Tool and Regional Guidelines for VLRs in Europe	The development of tools can be done virtually through desk research and online interviews with relevant project's partners and beneficiaries. The same process was applied for the development of the UN-Habitat-UCLG Guidelines for VLRs Vol.1 and Vol.2 ¹⁰ . In addition, all partners involved in the project have developed VLR related tools, hence research methodologies will be applied based on those experiences - including the UNDP rapid response project. This also in relation to the existing networks of partners – local and national – that participated in previous research and will be mobilized in order to gather information feeding into the tool and guidelines development process.
Multilevel Governance	Strengthening multilevel SDG arrangements	This activity could potentially be the most difficult to implement in case of restrictions and limitations as it entails the creation of trust and dialogue with country governments – local and national, hence missions are somehow required at least at the very beginning. Nevertheless, experience tells that coordination with UNCT is critical as the first entry point for engagement with national counterparts. In addition, all partners have developed collaborations with national governments, specifically in relation to SDG reporting and VNR

¹⁰ For more information on the VLR guidelines development process please visit: <https://unhabitat.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews?page=0>

		<p>processes. For instance, UNDESA’s capacity building VLR Series as well as UN-Habitat’s partnership with Finland teaches that enhancing multilevel coordination for SDGs is possible also where: i) coordination arrangements are informal; ii) it is not possible to physically meet; iii) direct funding is not available. In the case of Finland, UN-Habitat coordinated a series of workshops among national government, cities and national association of local government that provided content for the Vol.2 of the second guidelines and that generated new partnership leading to the allocation of national funding for the development of a SDG localization tool in Finland coordinated by cities, and supported by UN-Habitat.</p>
Capacity Building	SDG localization trainings	<p>The project proposes a mixed approach to learning and capacity building, connecting in person opportunities with online tools. As per past experiences, before and during the pandemic, this is the best approach to (i) ensure the highest number possible of participants as well as (ii) the best results in terms of capacities built. Throughout 2020 and 2021, UN-Habitat and partners have organized a large number of trainings on SDG localization, VLRs and COVID-19 recovery. Among others: Live Learning Experience led by UCLG, UN-Habitat and Metropolis¹¹, the VLR Series led by UNDESA and the SDG Localization training modules led by UCLG, UN-Habitat, UNDP and other partners¹². Beyond the mixed methodology, these past experiences tell that also the, to enhance effectiveness of training, a diverse groups of participants should be created and that, for example, the involvement of national associations of local governments is key to ensure multiplication to local governments members, while strengthening the dialogue with national counterparts.</p>
Global and Regional processes	VLR-VNR Studios	<p>The past two years have witnessed the translation of high level regional and international forums from in-person meetings to virtual or mixed formats – without impacting on the quality of the results and in many cases also favoring the participation of a larger number of stakeholders. In addition, increasing importance and support have been given to creating dialogue opportunities between local and national governments, and implementing partners have been on the frontline of these developments. This specifically thanks to their coordination in occasion of key events such as the HLPF and regional forums. One good example of how this can be done are the VLR-VSR Days organized by UN-Habitat in collaboration with UCLG during HLPF 2021 that saw the participation of 474 participants, 68 speakers representing over 29 countries to discuss their experiences and perspectives on VLRs-VSRs and the localization of the SDGs.</p>
	Regional and Global Advocacy (Regional Forums + HLPF)	

2.6 Innovative aspects

The project proposes an integrated approach to sustainable development rooted in the principle of *leaving no one behind*, multilevel governance – connecting local, national, regional and international levels – and data innovation. It aims at fostering national recovery from the pandemic by harnessing the potential of Voluntary Local Reviews to accelerate the local implementation of the SDGs and recovery. To do so, it builds on a capacity building process connecting in-person learning opportunities with e-learning classes, hence strengthening sustainability of project’s mechanisms and activities.

¹¹ UCLG-UN-Habitat-Metropolis Live Learning Experience: <https://www.beyondtheoutbreak.uclg.org/>

¹² Localizing the SDGs training modules: <https://learning.uclg.org/localizing-the-sdgs/>

Data innovation. Mandated by the UN Chief Executive Board, UN-Habitat is coordinating the UN-wide effort to develop a framework to monitor SDG localization and NUA implementation. The Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF) responds to the UN Systemwide Strategy for Sustainable Urban Development and is aimed at providing cities, local and national governments with a common set of indicators to monitor development results at the local level and in line with the global agendas. The UMF constitutes a turning point for SDG monitoring efforts at all levels – an integrated approach and set of indicators that will unify local development monitoring worldwide. UMF fills a gap and challenge that many local and regional governments are facing, specifically those embarking on the development of VLRs where a harmonized set of indicators and guidance was missing to facilitate their work.

Accelerating results. The ultimate goal of the project is to generate transformative changes to advance SDG localization and recovery from the pandemic. To do so, it combines short-term, rapid results with long-term perspectives and processes. The Voluntary Local Reviews are the cornerstone of this approach. VLRs are an innovation by and for the cities, emerging as the privileged *tool* for local and regional governments to monitor SDG achievements; many also integrating analysis of recovery efforts. VLRs are also a *process* that entails political ownership by local leaders, inclusion and participation of communities and vulnerable groups, de-siloing and cooperation across public departments and an effort of policy analysis and coherence. As such, the VLR process is a perfect jumping board to kickstart and accelerate the process of SDG localization, in line with recovery efforts.

Capacity building blended approach.. Building on the experiences of the Asia Pacific Mayors Academy¹³, jointly led by UNESCAP, UN-Habitat and UCLG ASPAC, the SDG localization training modules, developed by UCLG, UN-Habitat and partners¹⁴, and the VLR Journey developed by ESCAP, the project will propose a capacity building process on SDG localization and inclusive recovery. This is with blended in person-online approach, with a tailored learning offer also including self-paced leaning tools. In addition, trainings will put together officials from national and local governments so to facilitate mutual understanding and cooperation – and ultimately multilevel governance.

Scaling-up local innovations. The project aims at supporting the generation of local innovations – from data, to planning and projects. As demonstrated during the pandemic, innovations at local level have the potential to inspire practices and innovation at national and global level. The project, through a multilevel and multi-stakeholder approach, aims at scaling up local innovations to feed into national socio-economic recovery plans and stimulate additional resources for local level development and interventions. Specifically, the VLR experiences have proven successful in accelerating this “broadening effort” by proving a solid but easy-to-use tool connecting local action with national SDG arrangements and processes, in many cases stimulating national and international allocation of new resources - as seen in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Finland and Malaysia for example.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Situation analysis

During the last two decades, Eastern European and CIS countries, and specifically the countries selected for this project, have made significant strides in the areas of development laid out in the 2030 Agenda. Many SDG targets carry forward objectives included in previous national and international development initiatives¹⁵. According to

¹³ For more information on the Mayors Academy: <https://www.asiapacificmayorsacademy.org/>

¹⁴ For more information on the SDG localization training modules: <https://learning.uclg.org/>

¹⁵ UN, 2020 Regional Results Report of the UN System for Europe and Central Asia, <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Europe%20Central%20Asia%20-%20Regional%20Results%20Report%20%28final%2020%20May%202021%29.pdf>

UNECE 2021 report tracking SDG progresses in the UNECE region¹⁶, countries are on track in reducing extreme poverty, undernourishment and malnutrition, and providing access to basic services and adequate housing, and on course to achieve 5 of the 13 health and well-being targets. Concerning the fight to climate change, if the current pace of progress can be maintained, it is likely most countries in the region will reduce fossil fuel subsidies to near zero by 2030.

Nevertheless, despite a positive overview, challenges remain to a successful implementation of the SDGs, exacerbated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences – with direct impacts on local communities and local and national capacities to advance sustainable development and recovery. The COVID-19 emergency constitutes a major setback across multiple SDGs, reversing years of development gains. Emerging evidence points to negative impacts in particular on gender equality (SDG 5) decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and the overall advances on the means of implementation (SDG 17) as national resources were oriented to mitigate the immediate impact of the COVI-19 emergency.

Exacerbated inequalities impacting minorities and vulnerable groups. A common trend across target countries has been increasing inequality, running counter to the ambition of leaving no one behind, and substantially exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. In some cases, the increase in inequality has been accompanied by persistent unemployment, including among young people, and the marginalization of the most vulnerable population groups. For instance, the persistence of gender disparities continues to hold back a faster pace of improvement across multiple goals. In this regard, the share of women among local government representatives is close to gender parity in only a few countries – reaching only 32% in Serbia and 23% on Kazakhstan¹⁷. This trend does not only affect minorities life standards, economic power and inclusion in social dynamics, but also drastically reduce their capacity to participate and influence in decision-making processes. Fighting inequalities, placing communities and minorities at the hearth of strategic planning is hence a priority.

Shrinking economies. The imposed lockdowns, mobility restrictions and sanitary measures caused a dramatic worsening of the socio-economic situation with large implications for household incomes and employment. The GDP decline for the CIS and Georgia is estimated at 3.4% in 2020, with more negative impacts in some CIS countries caused by lower prices for oil and other commodities¹⁸. In Kyrgyzstan, real GDP contracted by 8.6 percent in 2020 while twelve-month inflation rose to 9.7 percent in December (from 3.1 percent a year earlier). In Ukraine, GDP declined by 4.5 percent in 2020, losses counterbalanced by positive developments in 2021 projecting growth of 3.8 percent. Heavily relying on tourism, local and regional governments as well as small local business and enterprises have been dramatically affected. In Georgia for examples, already in first quarter of 2020, income from the international visitors has declined by the 26%. It is anticipated that overall service export will shrink by 55% in 2020 and 2021. Throughout the region restrictions have specifically affected of local and regional government that are expected to see their revenues reduced by a 15 to 20% in the years 2020 and 2021¹⁹.

Limited data and monitoring capacities. A major concern, whose importance has been further underlined as countries are moving towards recovery, is the limited data capacity in target countries and the consequent lack of

¹⁶ UNECE, Is the UNECE region on track for 2030? Assessment, stories and insights, 2021

<https://unece.org/statistics/publications/unece-region-track-2030>

¹⁷ UNECE, Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the UNECE Region,

https://unece.org/DAM/stats/publications/2020/SDG_report_for_web.pdf

¹⁸ UN, 2020 Regional Results Report of the UN System for Europe and Central Asia,

<https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Europe%20Central%20Asia%20-%20Regional%20Results%20Report%20%28final%20%20May%202021%29.pdf>

¹⁹ OECD, The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government,

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/#section-d1e1175>

evidence-based analysis to guide development and recovery policies, crucial for both short and long-term strategic planning. Tajikistan's Voluntary National Review presented at the HLPF in 2017 notes that "[...] for «leaving no one behind», it is suggested in Tajikistan to pay special attention to the system of monitoring and evaluation of disaggregated data and issues of SDGs localization, so as to meet the needs of such groups of the population, like women, children and elderly people, rural communities and people with disabilities"²⁰. In Georgia, the SDG Council and its Working Group member institutions do not employ SDGs related data collection nor have analysis standards. Since both the Council and the Working Groups function as a platform for reviewing the general progress on SDGs, they require strong data collection capacities to deliver on their mandate. Another challenge is that administrative data is singularly used for assessing the majority of targets and alternative data sources such as reports, indexes and assessments of the CSOs are not reflected²¹.

Planning and coordination efforts. Across target countries, national governments have made efforts to develop national strategies for sustainable development and urbanization. In some cases, the SDGs have been included in public national strategies and policies such as the National Development Strategy (2018–2040)²² and the “Unity, Trust, Creation” Program(2018–2022)²³ in Kyrgyzstan or Ukraine 2030, the country’s “doctrine” for sustainable development²⁴. Similar planning efforts concerned the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic as target countries moved towards recovery, such as the Priority Action Plan developed by the Kyrgyz government and the COVID-19 Socio Economic Response plans developed by Serbia with the support of the UN²⁵. While most of the target countries has set up emergency coordination mechanisms for the delivery of responses to the COVID-19 crisis, institutional arrangements have also been created to coordinate governments’ implementation of the SDGs. This has been the case of Kazakhstan that has created the Coordination Council on SDGs under the chairpersonship of the Deputy Prime Minister²⁶. Led by national governments, in most cases, these arrangements do not structurally include local and regional governments or foreseen structural dialogue across spheres of governments. In some limited cases, steps in that direction have been undertaken, such as in Georgia where the updated Statute of the SDGs Council ensured that Mayor or Deputy Mayors should be included as members of the council – following recommendations of the State Audit Office of Georgia in 2019²⁷. This coordination challenges, combined with the limited capacities in collecting and managing data, are affecting countries’ capacities to monitor the implementation of both development recovery plans, affecting formulation of informed policies.

It is clear that, despite general improvements, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused critical sliding backs on progresses made in achieving the SDGs. Target countries have put in place recovery plans to respond and recovery from the crisis along with national sustainable strategies, but still struggling in transforming them into concrete support to local communities. The issue of monitoring, linked to limited data capacities and availability specifically at city level, is central for the majority of the participating countries. In addition, a widespread lack of adequate knowledge and capacities at the level of local and regional governments critically affects countries’ advancements towards the localization of the SDGs.

²⁰ Tajikistan 2017 VNR <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16021Tajikistan.pdf>

²¹ <https://sdgsgeorgiasite.wordpress.com/>

²² Kyrgyzstan National Development Strategy (2018–2040), <http://donors.kg/en/strategy/5174-national-development-strategy-of-the-kyrgyz-republic-for-2018-2040>

²³ Kyrgyzstan “Unity, Trust, Creation” Program (2018–2022)<http://www.donors.kg/en/strategy/4831-development-program-of-kyrgyz-republic-unity-trust-creation>

²⁴ Ukraine 2030 <http://www.ukraine2030.org/en>

²⁵ Serbia Socio-Economic Response Plan <https://serbia.un.org/en/99525-covid-19-socio-economic-response-plan>

²⁶ <https://kazakhstan.un.org/en/sdgs#>

²⁷ State Audit of Georgia, Preparedness for Implementation of the SDGs, 2019

https://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/focus_areas/SDGs_and_SAI/sai_preparedness_audits/SDGs_2019_Georgia_prep_EN.pdf

Based on the above, and as further detailed in section 4, the project proposes a comprehensive approach to SDG localization linking the achievement of the SDGs at local level with the nation-wide recovery processes. Center on creating sustainable capacities for local and national governments, the project will address the central issue of monitoring and planning, focusing on enhancing multilevel governance for better coordination and coherence across level of governance.

3.2 Country level situation analysis

Country	Status of affairs	Outcomes
Serbia	<p>The rapid urban growth mixed with limited capacities at local level and insufficient awareness among Local Self-Governments (LSGs)²⁸ on sustainability have made Serbia one of the most vulnerable country in the region.</p> <p>The Serbian government has taken steps to address this issue. Namely, the Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030 puts forward the inclusive development via increased involvement of LSGs as a goal²⁹. Additionally, the units of LSGs started to prepare and implement local and urban integrated development strategies, which are used for the design of strategic projects³⁰. In addition, the of the Sustainable Development Council was established as the inter-ministerial coordination body to achieve the SDGs. The Council is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integrations, and its members are several ministers and representatives of ministries³¹. To support the steps taken by the government of Serbia, international agencies are aiding to accelerate the process. According to the VNR published in 2019, the Government of Serbia and the World Bank estimate that the country receives between USD 0.5 and 1 billion each year from development partners³².</p>	<p>Increased capacities of LSGs to plan and deliver sustainable development in their territories.</p> <p>Increased participation of LSGs in the Sustainable Development Council mechanism, leading to more policy coherence and alignment.</p> <p>Participation of local communities and minorities is fostered through the preparation of VLRs and Local Development Plans.</p>
Tajikistan	<p>Tajikistan faces many challenges related to economic recession, natural disasters, climate change and demographic expansion, in addition to energy shortages affecting many human settlements³³.</p> <p>With integration of 64% the goals into the national strategic</p>	<p>Increased capacities of local and regional governments to localize the SDGs and to mainstream the SDG into COVID-19 plans and initiatives.</p>

²⁸ Serbia VNR Report, 2019

²⁹ Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure (2018). Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030. Belgrade: Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure.

³⁰ Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure (2018). Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030. Belgrade: Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure.

³¹ The European Sustainable Development Network (2021): https://www.esdn.eu/country-profiles/detail?tx_countryprofile_countryprofile%5Baction%5D=show&tx_countryprofile_countryprofile%5Bcontroller%5D=Country&tx_countryprofile_countryprofile%5Bcountry%5D=32&cHash=34beb10c6472662a927590b6d3b785ea#agendaim_plemetation

³² Serbia VNR Report, 2019

³³ The World Bank in Tajikistan: An Overview: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/overview#1>

	<p>programmes, the government aims to address the issues.³⁴ To monitor the process, the Government of Tajikistan established the National Development Council under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to ensure the inclusion of the Parliament, civil society, and the private sector in planning for the achievement of the Goals. Close coordination and partnership with international development partners, including the UN, is seen in this regard as an essential element³⁵.</p> <p>Specifically, the UN has contributed to achieving the SDGs in Tajikistan in several ways. For instance, UNDP assisted the development of national indicators on SDGs implementation from 2018-2020.³⁶</p> <p>Looking forward, according to the VNR published in 2017, Tajikistan aims to increase the level of participation of civil society and a wider population at both national and regional levels³⁷.</p>	<p>Increased multilevel governance with structural participation of local and regional governments in the National Development Council.</p> <p>Participation of local communities in the preparation of VLRs and Local Development Plans</p> <p>Enhanced coordination across the UNCT on support to SDG implementation.</p>
<p>Georgia</p>	<p>Georgia faces major challenges when it comes to effective local self-governance structures, a balanced regional development and territorial cohesion.</p> <p>The main challenge Georgia is facing currently is the lack of adequate human, material and financial resources, preventing local self-governments to fully and effectively execute their mandate prescribed by the organic law of Georgia.³⁸ In addition, underdeveloped cooperation between municipalities results in low quality of municipal services and failure to maintain cost-effectiveness and consolidate available resources³⁹.</p> <p>To address these issues, the Georgian Government's has established a decentralization strategy for 2020-2025 with the aim to: 1) Increase of powers of local self-government; 2) Build material and financial capacity of local self-government; 3) Develop reliable, accountable, transparent and results oriented self-government⁴⁰. Additionally, a coordinating body for SDG implementation (the SDGs Council) has been created with four working groups (Social Inclusion; Economic Development; Democratic Governance and Sustainable Energy; and Environmental Protection) for Agenda 2030. The Head of the Administration of Government chairs the</p>	<p>Increased capacities of local and regional governments and the adequate allocation of human and financial resources.</p> <p>Increased multilevel governance with structural participation of local and regional governments in the SDG Council.</p> <p>National capacities to implement the Decentralization strategy as strengthened, in line with the SDGs and the recovery from the pandemic.</p>

³⁴ UNESCAP, Implementation of the SDG Agenda until 2030 in the Republic of Tajikistan: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Session4_Tajikistan_SDG_indicators_English.pdf

³⁵ UNESCAP, Implementation of the SDG Agenda until 2030 in the Republic of Tajikistan: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Session4_Tajikistan_SDG_indicators_English.pdf

³⁶ UNESCAP, Implementation of the SDG Agenda until 2030 in the Republic of Tajikistan: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Session4_Tajikistan_SDG_indicators_English.pdf

³⁷ VNR Tajikistan, 2017: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/tajikistan>

³⁸ Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025 Georgia: <https://mrdi.gov.ge/pdf/5e468e292b317.pdf/Decentralization-strategy-ENG.pdf>

³⁹ Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025 Georgia: <https://mrdi.gov.ge/pdf/5e468e292b317.pdf/Decentralization-strategy-ENG.pdf>

⁴⁰ Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025 Georgia: <https://mrdi.gov.ge/pdf/5e468e292b317.pdf/Decentralization-strategy-ENG.pdf>

	<p>Council and UN Resident Coordinator in Georgia performs Council Co-chair functions.⁴¹</p> <p>Additionally, UN support to the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) and local self- governments in line with the national Decentralization Strategy for 2020-2025 remains a priority area for the Country Team⁴².</p> <p>Worth to mention, according to the VNR published in 2020, unprecedented policy measures linked to the onset of Covid-19 pandemic put into sharp focus the need to build resilience and reduce disaster risk. Lastly, structured platforms where knowledge about the governance systems are shared, can be useful for effective implementation of the SDGs.⁴³</p>	
Kyrgyzstan	<p>Kyrgyzstan's VNR identifies a series of challenges for the country development: a lack of sufficiently disaggregated statistical data; persistent urban-rural discrepancies; continued social and gender inequalities; insufficient capacities among central and local authorities, and limited financial and human resources to work on multiple priorities simultaneously⁴⁴.</p> <p>To address the issues, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development for 2018-2040 aims to create a strong economy, ensure high quality of life, develop competitive human capital, and contribute to regional cooperation⁴⁵.</p> <p>Supporting this process, the Coordination Committee for the Achievement of the MDGs has been transformed into the Coordination Committee for Adaptation, Implementation and Monitoring of SDGs in the Kyrgyz Republic until 2030. The committee includes representatives of the Parliament (Jogorku Kenesh), the Government, ministries and departments, academia, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations⁴⁶.</p> <p>Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan stated in its VNR that it is necessary to strengthen the sustainable development policy framework and mobilize further financial, human, and technical support to accelerate progress on the achievement of the SDGs. Key priority SDGs and targets will be included into national budget planning and resource-mobilization strategies cooperation⁴⁷.</p>	<p>Strengthened local capacities to collect and monitor data – through a disaggregated approach</p> <p>Increased multilevel governance with structural participation of local and regional governments in the Coordination Committee.</p> <p>Participation of local communities in the preparation of VLRs and Local Development Plans</p> <p>Strengthen coherent policy framework for the delivery of the Global Goals at local level.</p>

⁴¹ Sustainable Development Goals and Georgia: <https://sdgsgeorgiasite.wordpress.com>

⁴² United Nations in Georgia: <https://georgia.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/UN%20GEORGIA%20RESULTS%20REPORT%20rev.pdf>

⁴³ VNR Georgia, 2020: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26390VNR_2020_Georgia_Report.pdf

⁴⁴ VNR Kyrgyzstan, 2020: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26459VNR_2020_Kyrgyzstan_Report_English.pdf

⁴⁵ VNR Kyrgyzstan, 2020: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26459VNR_2020_Kyrgyzstan_Report_English.pdf

⁴⁶ UNDESA Statistics Division: <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/kyrgyzstan/>

⁴⁷ VNR Kyrgyzstan, 2020: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26459VNR_2020_Kyrgyzstan_Report_English.pdf

Ukraine	<p>The preparation of the VNR has resulted in higher national assessment capacity, public support of the SDGs, and recommendations formulated on further development.</p> <p>According to the 2020 VNR, low capacity of local government official, and unstable planning processes are the main obstacles to the achievement of the SDGs at local level⁴⁸. Situation is also exacerbated by the challenges related to COVID-19.</p> <p>To address the issues, the national strategy for 2030 indicates the development of capacities of local government bodies and the strengthening the interaction between state authorities and local self-government, business and educational institutions⁴⁹ as key priorities.</p> <p>Additionally, the necessity of continuous monitoring of the implementation of SDGs is also highlighted as key as a key for successful SDGs achievement within the decade⁵⁰.</p>	<p>Increased capacities of local and regional governments to plan and deliver on the SDGs.</p> <p>Strengthened coordination among territorial stakeholders and across sectors.</p> <p>Better capacities at national and local level to monitor SDG progresses and plan accordingly.</p>
----------------	---	---

3.3 Stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment

Non-UN Stakeholders	Type and level of involvement in the project	Capacityassets	CapacityGaps	Desired future outcomes	Incentives
National Government	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political ownership Coordination across national departments Coordination of national SDG and COVID-19 recovery arrangements Planning and drafting of Voluntary National Reviews Access to data Facilitation of stakeholders' involvement and participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low levels of coordination across sphere of governance Limited capacities of implementation and monitoring of SDG and recovery plans Access to resources and cutting-edge knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of national development and recovery strategies is increased Voluntary national Reviews are informed by local information and perspective Dialogue with local and regional governments is structurally improved Overall public administrations capacities to deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical response to priorities identified in VNRs and national strategies for sustainable development Participation in key international and regional events Visibility of national efforts at regional and global levels Laying the ground for additional funding from donors and

⁴⁸ VNR Ukraine, 2020: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26295VNR_2020_Ukraine_Report.pdf

⁴⁹ National Strategy 2030: <http://www.ukraine2030.org/en>

⁵⁰ VNR Ukraine, 2020: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26295VNR_2020_Ukraine_Report.pdf

				sustainable development are increased	international community Development of best practices to be potentially scaled up nationally
Local and regional government	High	<p>Political ownership</p> <p>Coordination across municipal departments</p> <p>Leading preparation of VLRs</p> <p>Leading response to pandemic at local level, including provision of basic services</p> <p>Facilitation of territorial stakeholders' mobilization and participation</p>	<p>Limited financial resources</p> <p>Limited monitoring capacities and data availability</p> <p>Limited knowledge and adequate human resources</p> <p>Lack of coordination and coherence with national counterparts and frameworks</p>	<p>Enhanced ownership of SDG and Agedna2030</p> <p>Creation of long term and sustainable capacities to plan, implement and monitor the SDGs</p> <p>Strengthen coordination with national counterparts</p>	<p>Access to resources and knowledge</p> <p>Access to human resources</p> <p>Access to national coordination mechanisms</p> <p>Enhanced visibility and participation in regional and global events and processes</p> <p>Establishment of strategic partnerships</p>
Local Communities	High	<p>Information on reality of local contexts</p> <p>Capacity of orienting political decisions and</p>	<p>Low level of involvement in planning and decision making</p> <p>Inequalities among communities,</p>	<p>Communities, minorities and vulnerable groups are structurally included in decision-making and planning</p>	<p>Increased capacities and opportunities to orient local strategic planning</p> <p>Reflection of</p>

		<p>decision making</p> <p>Access to knowledge and resources</p> <p>Legitimacy and ownership of the project and SDGs</p>	<p>with minorities and most vulnerable underrepresented in national and local development</p>	<p>processes at local level</p>	<p>their priorities in recovery and development processes, including budgeting</p>
Academia & Research	Medium	<p>Access to information and data</p> <p>Analysis capacities</p> <p>Mobilization of knowledge and partners</p>	<p>Limited connection between research and policy development</p> <p>Limited resources</p>	<p>Academia and research institutions are systematically included in policy making and in national arrangements for SDG implementation and recovery</p>	<p>Access to national and local decision making</p> <p>Access to information and case studies</p> <p>Mobilization of resources</p>
Private Sector	Medium	<p>Knowledge and resources</p> <p>Capacity of mobilizing partners and resources</p>	<p>Limited participation in official decision-making processes</p>	<p>Small and medium businesses representative are included in planning and monitoring of development at local level</p>	<p>Opportunities to strengthen public private partnerships and, to mobilize resources and to influence strategic planning and decision making, including allocation of budget</p>

4. PROJECT STRATEGY: OBJECTIVE, OUTCOMES, INDICATORS, OUTPUTS

Project objective and outcomes

Objective

To advance socio-economic recovery and SDG localization in selected Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries in transition by harnessing the potential of Voluntary Local Reviews.

Outcomes

OC1. Strengthened capacities of Local and Regional Governments to develop Voluntary Local Reviews and Local Recovery Plans contributing to the national socio-economic recovery process.

OC2. Enhanced multi-level coordination between cities, national governments, regional and international processes on SDG implementation and COVID-19 recovery.

Project trigger

In 2020, the UN Secretary General launched the **Decade of Action** calling for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges. Specifically, it called on all sectors of society to mobilize expertise and resources towards three levels of intervention, including *local action*. Local Action is hence identified as a key level on action for the achievement of the SDGs and SDG localization as the overall umbrella to advance sustainability and recovery at local level.

In response to this call, the UN has launched the **Local 2030 Coalition** – the UN wide initiative to localize the SDGs within the Decade of Action. The Coalition's secretariat is managed by UN-Habitat that also co-chairs the Coalition along with another UN Agency – UNDP for the first two years. Through the Coalition, the UN aims to mainstream local action and SDG localization in its work at country and global level, by providing a platform for collaboration with all stakeholders involved in advancing the SDGs at local level. In doing so it also identifies VLRs as a key accelerating processes for the achievement of the SDGs, encouraging local governments to embark on the VLR process, national governments to support them and international organization to work on producing knowledge and knowledge exchange opportunities.

In addition, the UN Secretary General Report on **Our Common Agenda** states: “ The role of parliaments, cities and other subnational authorities is particularly being recognized in inclusive approaches, with, for example, voluntary local reviews of Sustainable Development Goal implementation providing a model on which to build. Cities, local authorities and specifically VLRs are key actors and processes to advance sustainable development and inclusive multilateralism⁵¹.

In line with the principles and objectives of the Decade of Action, the UN Secretary General released **the Policy Brief on COVID-19 in an urban world**⁵² describes how cities can manage the pandemic and emerge as the hubs of energy, resilience and innovation that make them such vibrant and appealing places for many to live. It also looks at how the pandemic has exposed deep inequalities in how people live in cities, and how cities serve their residents, with the most vulnerable suffering the most. Ultimately it recommends and calls for: (i) Tackling the inequalities and long-term development deficits; (ii) Strengthening capacities of local governments; (iii) Pursuing a resilient, inclusive, gender-equal and green economic recovery is not only as indispensable step to achieving the SDGs.

Based on these key documents and recommendations, the project proposes a comprehensive approach centered on SDG localization and local urban development, anchored on the principles of multilevel governance and *leave no one behind*, in addition to a partnership component connecting the work and added values of the UN and partners at different levels – local, national, regional, global.

Project approach and dimensions

The project aims to contribute to Member States' national recovery efforts – and the implementation of National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans – by harnessing the potential of the Global Urban Monitoring Framework and Voluntary Local Reviews. This in view of strengthening the link between SDGs and COVID-19 and evidence for the development of Local Recovery Plans.

The project framework and activities are rooted in a comprehensive Territorial Approach to Sustainable

⁵¹ UN Secretary General, Report on our Common Agenda, September 2021 https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

⁵² <https://unhabitat.org/un-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-policy-brief-on-covid-19-in-an-urban-world>

Development anchored on the principles and dimensions of the New Urban Agenda and its core dimensions⁵³:

Leave no one behind	Ownership and sustainability	Multilevel governance	Innovation	Building capacities
Participatory processes and inclusion of minorities and vulnerable/marginalized groups in decision-making processes and development planning – hence strengthening the social contract and a recovery process tailored on communities’ needs and priorities.	Placing communities at the center of development/recovery process to ensure full ownership, engagement and sustainability after the project’s closure.	Enhanced dialogue and coordination for mutual learning and alignment of development and recovery policies. Focus on strengthening the VNR preparatory process by connecting it to VLRs and local governments.	Improvement of data environments at local level through the piloting of the Global Urban Monitoring Framework, the adoption of a spatial approach to data and the collection of non-traditional and qualitative data through participatory processes.	Strengthening the capacities of local and regional governments for the design of evidence-based development strategies and policies for SDG localization and COVID-19 recovery. Also with the objective of ensuring sustainability and through a blended in person-online approach.

The multilevel perspective, connecting the local, national, regional and global dimensions of SDG implementation and the COVID-19 recovery, is the key feature of the project approach. The project hence aim to bring together partners and at connecting actions at different levels, in a coherent and mutually reinforcing manner.

SDG localization and VLR methodology

UN-Habitat has developed a comprehensive approach to SDG localization, connecting all dimension of the SDG implementation chain and resting on three main pillars: (i) Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF); (ii) Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs); (iii) SDG Cities Flagship Programme. In addition, implementing partners have past and ongoing experiences in promoting SDG localization sustainable development at local level ⁵⁴ and have developed respective guidelines to support cities in developing their own Voluntary Local Reviews⁵⁵. The project builds on the experiences and knowledge of the implementing entities and aims facilitating the convergence of methodologies into a single joint approach, hence ensure cooperation and coherence of UN support to both UNCTs and local partners. Such approach will be reflected in the VLR-COVID-19 tool and in the UNECE Regional Guidelines for VLRs to be jointly developed and released by the implementing partners.

Global Urban Monitoring Framework

The project proposes to pilot the UMF in the pilot cities identified as the data and indicators framework of

⁵³ For more detailed information, please see New Urban Agenda illustrated: <https://unhabitat.org/the-new-urban-agenda-illustrated>

⁵⁴ See ESCAP and Habitat project on Localizing the 2030 Agenda in Asia & the Pacific: <https://www.unescap.org/projects/da11>

⁵⁵ UNDESA Global Guiding Elements for VLRs: https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/GlobalGuidingElementsforVLRs_FINAL.pdf

UNESCAP VLR Regional Guidelines: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-regional-guidelines-voluntary-local-reviews>

UN-Habitat-UCLG VLR Guidelines: <https://unhabitat.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews>

reference. The UMF will inform the development of VLRs, that in turn will provide inputs for the piloting and development of the UMF. The UMF roll-out will be a continuous activity to be implemented and adapted along the whole life cycle of the project.

UN-Habitat is mandated by the UNGA and Statistical Commission to lead the development of a harmonized set of indicators to track the progress of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda at the local level⁵⁶. The Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF) harmonizes existing indexes while incorporating rural-urban linkages and the principle of leaving no one behind. It is composed of a core set of global indicators and a series of secondary sets of indicators, to allow for the adaptation and analysis of each locality while aligning with local visions for cities. The framework is a turning point in the international efforts to monitor SDG achievements at local level and useful basis for the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), as well as UN Common Country Assessments.

Voluntary Local Reviews

The progress made through VLRs is a story of transformation from the bottom up, of local innovation and of increased global dialogue. Over the past year, the VLR global movement has grown exponentially, with 69 current VLRs, and about 25 more foreseen for end 2021 and 2022. VLRs have become established as one of the main tools for local and regional governments to monitor and report on SDG progress. Beyond their reporting role, VLRs have proven to be powerful accelerators of the SDG localization process worldwide.

VLRs can enhance data innovation, stakeholder inclusion and participation, policy coherence, strategic planning and multi-level governance. Interaction between the local and national levels is also strengthened through the VLR -VNR interlinkages. UN-Habitat supports cities in developing VLRs with cutting-edge data and insights, as well as through peer learning and has emerged as the global normative and knowledge leader in VLRs, and SDG localization more broadly.

UN-Habitat, in partnership with UCLG, has developed a series of global guidelines on VLRs aimed at analyzing the VLR process and providing local governments guidance on how to address and kickstart the VLR process and national governments on how to integrate it in their VNR preparation. The UN-Habitat-UCLG Guidelines for VLRs (Vol.1 and Vol.2)⁵⁷ constitute the normative basis of the project's work on VLRs, along with the resources and guidance developed by implementing partners. In this regard, the implementing partners – UNDESA; UNESCAP and UNECE – have respectively developed guidelines for VLRs: the Global Guiding Elements for VLRs, by UNDESA⁵⁸; the Regional Guidelines for Asia-Pacific developed by ESCAP⁵⁹; and the Regional guidelines for Europe by UNECE⁶⁰. In addition, UN-Habitat was able to design and consolidate a VLR working methodology thanks to the technical support provides to cities worldwide (Niteroi; Rio de Janeiro; Moscow; Florence; Amman; Madrid etc.)⁶¹. The methodology is articulated around three phases (inception; implementation; finalization) and anchored on three key workstreams (data collection; participatory process; and SDG research), in addition to the underlying principles of multilevel governance and leave no one behind.

Providing coherence, alignment and coordination among the implementing partners methodologies and approaches is one of the key outputs of the project. Implementing partners will work in coordination to jointly define a working methodology to support the development of VLRs and Local Development Plans, hence

⁵⁶ UN Statistical Commission 50 session report, 2019, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/documents/Report-on-the-50th-session-of-the-statistical-commission-E.pdf>

⁵⁷ Guidelines can be found here: <https://unhabitat.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews>

⁵⁸ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/GlobalGuidingElementsforVLRs_FINAL.pdf

⁵⁹ <https://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-regional-guidelines-voluntary-local-reviews>

⁶⁰ UNECE Guidelines have been finalized and are currently under official approval. Publication expected by the end of 2021.

⁶¹ More information: <https://unhabitat.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews>

enhancing effectiveness of UN support to UNCTs and city partners. The joint approach and work will directly inform and lay the ground for the development of the COVID-19-VLR tool and the UNECE regional guidelines.

The SDG Cities Flagship Programme

One of the key requests from local and regional governments is to provide with concrete support beyond planning. That is why, through an incremental and sustainable approach, the project process aims at laying the ground for the application of the SDG cities programme and its supporting cycle.

The SDG Cities Flagship Initiative helps cities achieve SDGs through a value chain that brings together city data and evidence based strategic planning, institutional capacity development, and investment in impact. Each track is supported by online tools and resources and technical backstopping. The Initiative thus strengthens local economic opportunities, improves environmental sustainability, reduces social inequalities, and ultimately improves the quality of life of all residents. As such, the SDG Cities is instrumental for effective implementation of the UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020-2023 across its four Domains of Change.

Despite the SDG Flagship and its process are not directly part of the project's activities and budget, the project aims at laying the foundations to involved cities in the SDG Cities initiatives so to move from the VLR and local plans experience to longer-term planning and project implementation exercise, also in light of mobilizing additional resources and strengthen the stability of interventions.

Project implementation, distribution of responsibilities and timeline

The project objective is to *advance socio-economic recovery and SDG localization in selected Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries in transition by harnessing the potential of Voluntary Local Reviews.*

To achieve this objective, the project is grounded on a Territorial Approach to sustainable development and on the principles of the New Urban Agenda, and articulated around five key components: (i) Technical support to cities; (ii) Normative development ; (iii) Multilevel Governance; (iv) Capacity Building for local and national governments; (v) Regional and Global Advocacy processes.

In order to ensure coherence of approaches and alignment of activities, the project will establish a "coordination team" including all implementing partners.

The lines below provide a breakdown of activities, an overview of how they will be implemented, including timeline, as well as the distribution of responsibilities among partners.

Technical support to cities

The technical support to pilot cities is the central activity of the project. Support will be coordinated by UN-Habitat Head Quarters in full alignment and coordination with the implementing partners: UNDESA; UNECE; UNESCAP. The support to cities is centered around three main outputs:

Piloting of the Global Urban Monitoring Framework and data collection. To be approved in March 2022 by the UN Statistical Commission, the UMF constitutes a turning point for monitoring the SDGs and global agendas at local level. Cities will be accompanied in the adoption of the UMF as the reference framework for monitoring sustainable development within their territories. In addition, they will be supported in producing relevant datasets and in managing and analyzing that data to directly inform the development of VLRs and Local Development Plans. The piloting of the UMF is seen and implemented as a continuous process along the whole period of implementation and will be combined with the collection of data from other frameworks. This specifically in view of stimulating a healthy and mutually beneficial cross fertilization process with the VLRs and Local Plans developments. As such, the UMF piloting experience will further inform the review process of the UMF in the

coming years as well as the development of the VLR-COVID-19 tool and the Regional Guidelines for VLRs in Europe.

Distribution of responsibilities: UN-Habitat will lead the piloting of the UMF and the collection of data at city level, in close coordination with the already ongoing activities and data processes, such as the ones led by UNECE.

Development of Voluntary Local Reviews. Cities will be technically supported to develop their own voluntary local review. The piloting of the UMF represents the main VLR data track to be combined with different data sources as the UMF is being piloted. This to be further connected with the results of the participatory process aimed at involving communities and minority groups and at collecting non-traditional and qualitative data – in addition to foster participation and ownership of the process. Support will be coordinated by UN-Habitat in complete coordination and agreement with implementing partners, adopting a jointly agreed methodology based on the guidelines and methodologies developed by the implementing partners. Coordination will be ensured also in the selection of local consultants and personnel. The VLR process and its mechanism of coordination – both internal to the local administration as well as external with local communities will be further used for the development of the Local Recovery Plans.

Distribution of responsibilities: UN-Habitat will coordinate the overall VLR development and drafting process including (i) data collection and analysis (UMF); (ii) Participatory process; (iii) SDG Research and integration⁶². This work will be mainly led by local consultants, with the support of the regional expert and under the overall coordination and guidance of UN-Habitat and implementing partners. In addition, UNRECs and UNDESA will facilitate connection between the VLR and VNR processes, in coordination with UNRCOs. This to be achieved through direct engagement with national counterparts as well as through the implementation of VLR-VNR studios and the regional and global processes (Regional Forums of Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum).

Development of Local Recovery Plans. Through the data elaborated by the UMF and the gaps and priorities identified by the VLR, the implementing partners will provide direct technical assistance to the production of Local Recovery Plans. Following the mechanisms established through the VLR tool, Local Recovery Plans will be developed through a participatory and inclusive approach. In addition, methodology for the recovery plans will be drawn from the methodology that UNECE and UN-Habitat have created for the preparation of Local Urban Resilience Plans – also finance by UNDA. Specific attention will be given to the issue of policy coherence and to the alignment with the National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans that the Local Plans ultimately aim at contributing to.

Distribution of responsibilities: UN-Habitat will coordinate the overall development and drafting of Local Recovery Plans. Local consultants will mainly take care of coordination at local level, under the advisory support of the regional consultant and the overall coordination of UN-Habitat, and implementing partners. Methodology is drawn from the VLR experience and from UN-Habitat-UNECE methodology for Local Urban Resilience Plans. In addition, implementing partners, will work to connect the Local Recovery Plans to the National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans with relevant national counterparts and in close collaboration with UNRCOs.

Support to UN Country Teams programming. The data and processes generated by the piloting of the UMF, the

⁶² These workstreams are based on UN-Habitat VLR methodology. This to be further discussed and adjusted with the implementing partners.

elaboration of the VLRs and of the Local Recovery Plans will inform the work of the UN Country Team. This specifically in view of the development of Common Country Analysis as the basis of the UNSDF as well as at the ongoing UNCT's support to VNR elaboration.

Distribution of responsibilities: coordination with UNRCOs will be ensured by the project leading entity with the key role/support of UNDESA. Coordination and support to UNCTs is a responsibility and requirement for all implementing partners.

The project's coordination team will ensure that all activities are agreed and aligned among implementing partners. Specifically, the delivery of technical cooperation will be supported as follows:

- **City level:** a team of local consultants will be hired in order to coordinate and deliver activities at city level. Experts will be mobilized and selected based on previous successful experiences.
- **Regional level:** one regional expert will provide overall advisory support to local consultants in the implementation of activities, with specific attention to ensure coherence and coordination with other ongoing activities, including UNDA projects.
- **Global level:** one development expert will support the global coordination and administrative requirements of the project.

Consultants – local; regional; global – will work under the overall guidance of UN-Habitat's project coordinator, in close coordination and partnership with the implementing partners.

Normative Development

VLR-COVID-19 Tool Development. The project will ensure that the methodology developed for VLRs and the subsequent Local Recovery Plans is monitored, reported and systematized. This with the aim to scale-up the project approach at national level and replicate it in other cities within and across countries in the Region. The idea is to develop a practical tool to help local and regional governments to (i) mainstream recovery from the pandemic in VLR preparation and related processes, and (ii) based on the VLR, mainstream SDGs in their recovery plans, policies and initiatives. The overall objective of the tool is to strengthen the linkage between recovery and SDGs. Given the immediate need for such a tool, a first draft will be developed and released in 2022, to be updated along with the evolution of the project activities.

Distribution of responsibilities: the development of the COVID-19-VLR tool will be led by UNDESA, in coordination with the implementing partners.

Regional VLR Guidelines for Europe. The project activities will provide key information for the development of Regional Guidelines for VLRs in Europe. Under the leadership of UNECE, implementing partners will work together to develop the regional guidelines that will be based on the results of the project's technical cooperation experiences and specifically on the joint approach and methodology designed and applied by the implementing partners. In addition, the guidelines will be directly informed by the capacity building and advocacy efforts implemented at global and regional level, including the VLR-VRN Studios.

Distribution of responsibilities: the development of the VLR Regional Guidelines will be led by UNECE, in coordination with the UNDA implementing partners

Multilevel Governance

Establishment of multi-level governance arrangements in each selected country. In coordination with the respective national governments, UN-Habitat and implementing partners will assess and strengthen existing coordination arrangements for SDGs and, where not present, facilitate the creation of new ones (e.g. through the establishment of National Coordination Committees). This with the objective of strengthening multilevel governance, dialogue and coordination between national and local governments on issues related to SDGs and post-pandemic recovery. The mechanism will be an entry point for connecting VLRs to the VNR process and will also oversee the elaboration of the VLR-COVID-19 Tool so to facilitate its nation-wide scale-up following the pilot phase.

Distribution of responsibilities: strengthening/establishment of SDG multilevel mechanisms is coordinated by UN-Habitat, in close collaboration with all implementing partners and specifically UNRCOs/UNCTs in the respective countries.

Capacity Building for local and national officials

Training of public officials in each selected country. National and local public officials will be trained on the concepts of SDG localization and multi-level coordination. In person workshops will be accompanied by virtual sessions based on innovative digital approaches and tools – including self-paced classes. Trainings will target members of the national coordination mechanisms, pilot cities, but will also be open to other local governments representatives and stakeholder to join.

Distribution of responsibilities: Trainings will be coordinated by UN-Habitat, involving the implementing partners and in close collaboration with the national associations of local governments and UCLG. Trainings will be based on the SDG localization training modules, developed by UCLG, UN-Habitat, UNDP, the *Diputacio* of Barcelona and Platforma⁶³.

Regional and Global Advocacy processes

VNR-VLRs Studios. With the leading support of the implementing partners (UNDESA, UNECE and UNESCAP), the project will organize VNRs-VLRs Studios to foster connection between local and national governments in the preparatory process of their respective reviews. Beyond strengthen multilevel articulation and the development of VNRs, the VLR-VNR studios aim to inform the official high-level events on SDGs, including the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development and HLPF.

Distribution of responsibilities: The organization of Regional VLR-VNR Studios will be coordinated by UNECE and UNESCAP, while Global VLR-VNR Studios will be coordinated by UNDESA. UCLG and the GTF will also be involved to ensure coherence and collaboration with the Voluntary Subnational Reviews.

Global and Regional advocacy. Implementing partners will facilitate the connection of the project activities with the main UN-led and intergovernmental processes for SDGs and COVID-19 recovery, such as the High-Level Political Forum and the World Urban Forum with the aim of scaling up the lesson learned and results of the project, while exposing local and national representatives to global debates and processes.

⁶³ For more information visit <https://learning.uclg.org/localizing-the-sdgs/>

Distribution of responsibilities: Implementing partners will be coordinating scale up and inclusion of the project’s partners and results in the regional/global processes they respectively lead: UNDESA/High Level Political Forum; UNRECs/Regional Forums for Sustainable Development; UN-Habitat/World urban Forum.

Timeline

Implementation of activities will follow the tentative timeline below. The latter might be subject to changes due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the diversity of contexts in which the project intends to operate.

		Year 1 2022				Year 2 2023				Year 3 2024				Year 4 2025	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Technical Cooperation	Piloting of UMF and data collection (UMF/other frameworks)														
	Development of VLRs														
	Development of Local Recovery plans														
	UNCT support														
Normative Development	VLR-COVID-19 Tool														
	Regional VLR Guidelines for Europe														
Multilevel Governance	Multilevel SDG arrangements														
Capacity Building	SDG localization trainings														

Global and Regional	VLR-VNR Studios															
	Global Advocacy															

4.2 Results Framework

Project Objective		
To advance socio-economic recovery and SDG localization in selected Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries in transition by harnessing the potential of Voluntary Local Reviews.		
Intervention logic	Indicators	Means of verification
Outcome 1 Strengthened capacities of Local and Regional Governments to develop Voluntary Local Reviews and Local Recovery Plans contributing to the national socio-economic recovery process.	IA 1.1 At least all five pilot cities use the VLR tool to monitor and report on SDG progress.	VLR document released Action Plan/ implementation documents on SDG localization.
	IA 1.2 At least all five pilot cities adopt the Global Urban Monitoring Framework as reference data framework to monitor SDG progresses.	Datasets developed UMF piloting reports VLRs released
	IA 1.3 At least all five pilot cities develop Local Recovery Plans.	Local Recovery Plans published Action Plan/ implementation documents that specify how to implement COVID-19 recovery policies through the SDGs
	IA1.4 One tool to facilitate connection between VLR-COVID-19 recovery is developed based on the experience of the pilot cities.	VLR-COVID-19 tool released VLR released Local Recovery Plans publishes Regional events and workshops on VLRs reports
	IA1.5 One Regional Guideline for Europe on Voluntary Local Reviews is developed and released.	Regional Guidelines for VLRs in Europe released Regional events and workshops on VLRs reports
	IA1.6 CCAs are informed by VLRs and Local Recovery plans in all target countries	CCA released Preparatory workshops' agendas and reports
	IA1.7 The SDGs and related targets are adopted as reference framework for monitoring the implementation of post-pandemic recovery plans in each participating city.	Local Recovery Plans and implementation reports National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans and implementation reports Voluntary National Reviews Events and workshops reports
	IA1.8 Communities, minorities and marginalized groups have more opportunities of engaging in decision-making processes at local level in each participating country, compared to the standards measured at the beginning of the project	VLRs released Local recovery plans released Actions plan and strategic planning documents on development and recovery (local and national) National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans implementation reports Voluntary National Reviews Events and workshops reports

<p>OP1.1 Piloting the Global Urban Monitoring Framework in each pilot city. To be approved in March 2022 by the UN Statistical Commission, the UMF constitutes a turning point for monitoring the SDGs and global agendas at local level. Cities will be accompanied in the adoption of the UMF as the reference framework for monitoring sustainable development within their territories. In addition, they will be supported in producing relevant datasets and in managing and analyzing that data in view of the development of the VLR and Local Development Plans. The UMF piloting experience will further inform the review process of the UMF, the development of the VLR-COVID-19 tool and of the UN-Habitat-UCLG Guidelines Vol.3 on data and indicators.</p>		
<p>OP1.2 Elaboration of Voluntary Local Reviews in each pilot city. Cities will be technical supported to develop their own voluntary local review. The piloting of the UMF represents the VLR data track to be combined with the results of the participatory process aimed at involving communities and minority groups and at collecting non-traditional and qualitative data, in addition to foster participation and ownership of the process. Support will coordinated by UN-Habitat be provided following the methodology outlined above, keeping into consideration the necessary flexibility from local context to another and the coordination among guidelines and methodologies developed by the implementing partners: DESA; ECE; ESCAP. The VLR process and its mechanism of coordination – both internal to the local administration as well as external with local communities will be further used for the development of the Local Recovery Plans.</p>		
<p>OP1.3 Elaboration of the Local Recovery Plans in each pilot city. Through the data elaborated by the UMF and the gaps and priorities identified by the VLR, the implementing partners will provide direct technical assistance to the production of Local Recovery Plans. Following the mechanisms established though the VLR tool, Local Recovery Plans will be developed through a participatory. Specific attention will be given to the issue pf policy coherence and to the alignment with the National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans that the Local Plans ultimately aim at contributing to.</p>		
<p>OP1.4 Support to UN Country Teams. The data and processes generated by the piloting of the UMF, the elaboration of the VLRs and of the Local Recovery Plans will inform the work of the UN Country Team. This specifically in view of the development of Common Country Analysis as the basis of the UNSDF as well as at the ongoing UNCT’s support to VNR elaboration.</p>		
<p>OP1.5 VLR-COVID-19 Tool Development. The project will ensure that the methodology developed for VLRs and the subsequent Local Recovery Plans is monitored, reported and systematized. This with the aim to scale-up the project approach at national level and replicate it in other cities within and across countries in the Region. A normative tool to feed into the implementing partners series of VLR publications will be hence developed and disseminated.</p>		
<p>OP1.6 Regional VLR Guidelines for Europe. As one of the key outputs, the project will develop the Regional Guidelines for VLRs in Europe. Under the leadership of UNECE, implementing partners will work together to develop the regional guidelines that will be based on the results of the project’s technical cooperation experiences and specifically on the joint approach and methodology designed and applied by the implementing partner.</p>		
<p>Outcome 2 Enhanced multi-level coordination between cities, national governments, regional and international processes on SDG implementation and COVID-19 recovery.</p>	<p>IA 2.1 National arrangements for SDG implementation are strengthened or created in each of the participating countries</p>	<p>Meetings’ agendas and outcome documents Governance and implementation documents Voluntary National Reviews HLPF reports VLR-VNR Studios reports</p>
	<p>IA 2.2 Number of participating cities with institutionalized mechanisms for inclusive participation of civil society in urban planning and management.</p>	<p>Institutional arrangement documents and reports</p>

	IA 2.3 At least 20 local and national officials are trained on SDGs localization in each participating country.	Trainings agendas and participants' list Training reports
	IA2.4 Local officials from at least all five pilot cities participate in VLR-VNR Studios.	VLR-VNR Studios agendas and reports VLR released by pilot cities VNRs released by participating countries
	IA2.5 Local official from at least all five pilot cities are involved in regional and global events	Regional Sustainable Development Forum Agendas and outcome documents High Level Political Forum meetings' agendas and reports World Urban Forum workshops' agendas and reports
	IA2.5 Number of VNRs informed and strengthen by connecting with VLRs.	VNR released by participating countries VNR preparatory workshops agendas and reports
	IA2.6 Multilevel governance in each selected country is strengthened for the implementation and monitoring of SDGs and COVID-19 recovery plans, compared to the standards measured at the beginning of the project.	Implementation reports of National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans and Local Recovery Plans National SDG arrangements governance documents and meetings' reports Voluntary National Reviews released by participating countries
	IA2.7 Cities in the region (Eastern Europe Central Asia) establish partnerships at the regional and global level to support their recovery process and implement the SDGs.	Regional and global events and workshops' agendas and reports VLR released Local recovery plans released
<p>OP2.1 Establishment of SDG multi-level governance arrangements in each selected country. coordination with the respective national governments, UN-Habitat and implementing partners will assess and strengthen existing coordination arrangements for SDGs and, were not present, facilitate the creation of new ones (e.g. through the establishment of National Coordination Committees). This with the objective of strengthening multilevel governance, dialogue and coordination between national and local governments on issues related to SDGs and post-pandemic recovery. The mechanism will be an entry point for connecting VLRs to the VNR process and will also oversee the elaboration of the VLR-COVID-19 Tool so to facilitate its nation-wide scale-up following the pilot phase.</p>		
<p>OP2.2 Training of public officials in each selected country. National and local public officials will be trained on the concepts of SDG localization and multi-level coordination. In person workshops will be accompanied by virtual sessions based on innovative digital approaches and tools – including self-paced classes. Trainings will target members of the national coordination mechanisms, pilot cities, but will also be open to other local governments representatives and stakeholder to join. Trainings will be organized in collaboration with the national associations of local governments and with UCLG, and will be based to the structure and format of the SDG localization training modules, developed by UCLG, UN-Habitat, UNDP, the Diputacio of Barcelona and Plataforma⁶⁴.</p>		

⁶⁴ For more information visit <https://learning.uclg.org/localizing-the-sdgs/>

<p>OP2.3 Regional and global VNR-VLRs Studios.</p> <p>With key role and support of the implementing partners (UNDESA, UNECE and UNESCAP), UN-Habitat will support and strengthen the organization of VNRs-VLRs Studios in preparation to the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development and HLPF. This with the aim of strengthening the SDG-COVID-19 link and facilitate the integration for the VLR and Local Recovery Plans process within VNRs.</p>
<p>OP2.4 Global and regional advocacy.</p> <p>Implementing partners will facilitate the connection of the project activities with the main UN-led and intergovernmental processes for SDGs and COVID-19 recovery, such as the High-Level Political Forum and the World Urban Forum with the aim of scaling up the lesson learned and results of the project, while exposing local and national representatives to global debates and processes.</p>

4.3 Risks and mitigation actions

Risks and mitigation actions		
<p>R1. Limitation of in person activities and travel due to COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Despite countries in the region are going towards reopening, the pandemic is still ongoing and there is a high risk that restrictions might continue/re-applied.</p>	<p>M1. The project foreseen a blended approach combining in person with online activities and support.</p> <p>In case limitations will be present, almost all activities foreseen can be advance in distance</p>
<p>R2. Limited data availability</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Project’s activities are based on the collection and management of data. In some cases, this might not be available and/or disaggregated at local level.</p>	<p>M2. UN-Habitat and implementing partners have experience in the region in creating datasets and collaborating with national institutions for the creation of data. In addition, the participatory process will generate nontraditional and qualitative data to combine and strengthen the hard quantitative data. Data collection and analysis can be done in distance/online</p>
<p>R3. Disengagement of selected pilot cities/countries</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>Due to the impact of the pandemic and/or other reasons such as political changes or administrative obstacles, countries/cities might disengage from the project’s process</p>	<p>M3. Countries and pilot cities are selected based on a manifestation of interest and/or past or ongoing experiences of the implementing partners. The selection is hence aimed at ensuring that cities can and will engage and complete the project’s cycle. This also in view of scaling up experiences, inspiring partner cities and generate sustainable processes following the closing of the project.</p>

4.4 Sustainability and scaling-up

Sustainability is a key component of the project and fully embedded in the territorial approach at the basis of its activities. Sustainability can be observed from both the project’s levels of intervention as well as its thematic angles.

Sustainability in pilot cities. The project proposes the development of voluntary local reviews and local development plans as the basis for long-term structural changes and recovery that will persist after the end of the project. Through

the UMF, cities will be able to strengthen their data environment to monitor their SDG progress (and report this through VLRs) on a regular basis, and on their own. This will in turn inform and support their development and recovery plans, enhance their capacities to mainstream the SDGs and implement efforts to achieve them beyond the availability of external resources. Moreover, activities in selected cities will be based on a participatory and inclusive approach involving all urban residents, especially minorities and marginalized groups, in decision-making processes – hence strengthening the social contract in the long term as well as local ownership of the project and of the localization process. In addition, the project aims to build the capacities of local officials localizing the SDGs, specifically connecting them with national counterparts and SDG mechanisms for increasing and expanding long-term structural cooperation across spheres of government.

Sustainability in pilot countries. The project promotes structural changes in the way that national governments dialogue and coordinate with local authorities through the adoption of a multi-level governance perspective, ultimately aimed at supporting the implementation of national socio-economic recovery plans. To do so, the implementing partners, in partnership with national focal points and UNRCOs will strengthen (or facilitate the creation of) the existing SDG arrangements. This with the objective of creating room for dialogue with local and regional governments and their associations and incrementally include their participation in a structural manner. The experience of the pilot cities will be central. These strengthened multilevel arrangements for SDG implementation will also function as one of the key entry points for connecting VLRs to VNRs, strengthening VNR preparation and submission, while feeding into national recovery plans. These arrangements will remain valid and consolidated following the project's closure.

Sustainability through regional partnerships and community of practices: the project is embedded into a regional perspective aimed at connecting city experiences with the regional and global development partners, processes and debates. Activities will be specifically oriented at informing regional sustainable development forums and the HLPF process, and at creating a regional community of practices connecting cities and countries across the region. Capacity building activities as well as the VLR-VNR Studios will be targeting pilot cities/countries, but will be also open to stakeholders from the country and region to expand engagement and mobilize additional partners to join the project's process – also beyond its deadline.

Sustainability across the UN systems: The project will bring together UN-Habitat, the UN Commissions (UNESCAP; UNECE) and UNDESA as implementing partners, while ensuring constant coordination with the UN Resident Coordinators Offices. This with the aim of harmonizing approaches and connecting all phases and levels of intervention of the UN support to territories, within countries. The information produced by the project will feed into the CCA development, so to structurally promote inclusion of local governments perspectives within the UN work at country level – with the perspective of strengthening that cooperation even further in a structural and continuous manner.

Laying the ground for long term SDG localization processes and additional funding: the activities of the project are aimed at setting the scene to kick start and accelerate SDG localization in the pilot cities and more broadly at country level, while contributing to the regional efforts to achieve the Global Goals. In doing so, UN-Habitat and partners will work to mobilize additional resources through the SDG Cities flagship programme, and the city investment facility (CIF) by attracting donors and innovative private public partnerships. Such effort will also be backed by the Local 2030 Coalition, mobilizing funds and partners to support the follow up and expansion of the project scope and activities, specifically looking at applying the SDG cities localization cycle.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1 Monitoring

Monitoring of the project will mainly be coordinated and undertaken by UN-Habitat in collaboration with the implementing partners (UNDESA; UNECE and UNESCAP) as leaders of specific activities within the project. The implementing partners will review the implementation strategy and progress to ensure the project generates

outputs in accordance with related outcomes. This will include:

- Regular team progress meetings at least every two months among project management and implementing partners. This will provide a regular opportunity to gather performance information and compare plans with actual activities and budget execution.
- Project management information and communication system will be used among all implementing partners to ensure all relevant information is shared in a timely fashion with all partners.

Implementing partners as well as beneficiary countries and cities will also share the progress of project implementation and the results of activities and events. Additionally, UN-Habitat urban data platform will serve as a source of information for the project indicators.

The annual progress reports and final reports will be submitted as guided by UNDA Secretariat

Given that in the first year of the project priorities will be set and a plan of work developed in conjunction with the counterparts in each of the target country, these action plans will be used to revise the proposed indicators to make them more specific for each of the regions. These country level action plans and any proposal to further refine the indicators of achievement will be included in the first progress report to be submitted in January 2023.

All evaluations will be conducted in accordance with the DA Evaluation Guidelines and UN-Habitat regulations. An internal Evaluation Committee will be established at the to oversee the project evaluation and need for the formation of an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be considered during the initial stages of the project.

5.2 Final Report

Based on the monitoring exercise and as continuation of the annual report, a project's final report will be prepared by **31 March 2026**. The final report will be coordinated by the leading entity (UN-Habitat), in coordination with the project's partners (UNECE; UNESCAP and UNDESA). The Final project report will directly feed the project evaluation (self-evaluation or terminal evaluation is required by UNDA).

5.3 Evaluation

Evaluation of the project is based on UNDA requirements and on UN-Habitat's Evaluation Policy and the Revised Evaluation Framework as the main documents that set forth the principles and organizational framework for evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up in UN-Habitat. Self-evaluation of closing projects is required by management of all projects of value between USD300,000 and under USD1 million. End of project evaluation is optional. In case final evaluation is required, decentralized evaluation can be applied. Decentralized evaluations are conducted of projects by independent external evaluators but managed by the project manager in the branch, regional office or country office. Decentralized evaluations are conducted in consultation with the Evaluation Unit. The Programme Division coordinates and manages the self-evaluations that is prepared. The self-evaluation is prepared by project managers or the project implementing office at global, regional and country levels in coordination with the Evaluation Unit. Cost estimate of self-evaluations is based on the involvement of the Evaluation Unit and includes the following cost items: i) conduct of evaluation; ii) indirect costs for evaluation unit; iii) capacity building costs; iv) communication costs. For the present project the estimated evaluation cost is 25.000USD, the equivalent of the 4% of the total project budget (which is also the same amount required by UNDA in case the project is selected for a terminal

evaluation conducted by an external evaluator)⁶⁵.

6. MANAGEMENT, PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION AGREEMENTS

The project will be built and implemented through a Delivering as One approach. UN-Habitat, the lead implementing entity, and the project’s implementing partners (UNECE; UNESCAP and UNDESA) will work in concert and coordination for the planning and delivering of each activity. All activities will be jointly discussed and agreed to ensure full coherence and coordination, including the selection of personnel and consultants. In addition project’s partners will work in close collaboration with the United Nations Country Teams and the Resident Coordinator Offices, in order to: (i) ensure coherence, alignment with and increase the effectiveness of the UN work at country level; (ii) link VLRs and Local Recovery Plans to the preparation of the Country Common Analysis (CCA) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) programming; (iii) promote and facilitate connection and involvement of local governments and their VLRs in the VNR preparatory process; (iv) strengthen the implementation of National Socio-Economic Recovery Plans.

A team of consultants will be established in order to deliver technical cooperation at country level in pilot cities, as well as to ensure regional coherence and global coordination.

Implementing partners have agreed to distribute responsibilities as follows:

Component	Activities	Breakdown of activities	Distribution of responsibilities (leading entity per activity)
Technical Cooperation	Pilot UMF and data collection	Development and analysis of datasets	UN-Habitat
	Development VLRs	Coordination and drafting	UN-Habitat
		Data track (UMF)	UN-Habitat
		Participatory process	UN-Habitat
		SDG research and policy papers	UN-Habitat
		VLR-VNR connection	UNDESA+UNRECs
	Development Local Recovery plans	Coordination and drafting	UN-Habitat
		Data track	
		Participatory process	
	UNCT support	Coordination and information sharing	All partners
Normative Development	Development VLR-COVID-19 Tool	Systematization, research and drafting	UNDESA

⁶⁵ For more information on UN-Habitat evaluation principles and requirements please visit : <https://unhabitat.org/evaluation>

	Regional VLR Guidelines for Europe	Research, analysis and drafting	UNECE
Multilevel Governance	Strengthening multilevel SDG arrangements	Coordination with UNRCOs and national counterparts	UN-Habitat
Capacity Building	SDG localization trainings	Development and coordination of trainings	UN-Habitat
Global and Regional processes	Regional VLR-VNR Studios	Development and implementation of Studios	UNECE (and UNESCAP)
	Global VLR-VNR Studios		UNDESA
	Regional Advocacy (RFSD)	Workshops, advocacy sessions, events	UNECE (and UNESCAP)
	Global Advocacy (HLPF; WUF)		UNDESA
Programme Coordination support	Evaluation	Overall programme coordination	UN-Habitat

Collaboration between implementing partners (UN-Habitat; UNECE; UNESCAP; UNDESA) aims at supporting the multi-level connection between local interventions, national recovery effort, and the regional and international processes related to the SDGs and recovery.

Moreover, since the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda, UN-Habitat has built a close alliance with UCLG (world secretariat and its regional sections) on SDG localization. Among other results, the alliance produced two key processes relevant for the present project: (i) the SDG Localization training modules, including 4 modules on SDG localization; (ii) the VLR Series, including two volumes of the global guidelines on VLRs and many capacity building/advocacy activities at international level. UCLG will be hence brought in as partner in some of the activities of the project (mainly the trainings and events), also in view of facilitating and stimulating the key engagement of the national association of local and regional governments in the respective countries.

7. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: RESULT-BASED WORK PLAN AND BUDGET DETAILS

Table 1.1 – Results based work plan and budget

Outcome	Output #	Timeframe by output		Budget class and Code (Please use the budget classes listed in the table above.)	Amount (USD)	Total (USD)
		Year (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025)	Quarter (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4)			
OC1	OP1.1 Piloting the Global Urban Monitoring	2022 2023	2022 Q1 to 2023 Q2	Travel of Staff	115	8,397.00
						60,597.00

	Framework in each pilot city.			Consultants and Experts	105	52,200.00	
	OP1.2 Elaboration of Voluntary Local Reviews in each pilot city.	2022 2023	2022 Q3 to 2023 Q2	Consultants and Experts	105	112,200.00	188,082
GTA				015	7,500.00		
Travel of Staff				115	31,192.00		
General Operating Expense				125	2,150		
Contractual Services				120	35,040.00		
	OP1.3 Elaboration of the Local Recovery Plans in each pilot city.	2022 2023	2023 Q2 to 2024 Q1	Consultants and Experts	105	83,625.00	115,376
GTA				015	6,000.00		
General Operating Expense				125	2,231		
Contractual Services				120	23,520.00		
	OP1.4 Support to UN Country Teams.	2022 2023 2024 2025	2022 Q1 to 2025 Q2	Consultants and Experts	105	7,590.00	7,590.00
	OP1.5 VLR-COVID-19 Tool Development.	2022 2024	2022 Q3 to 2023 Q2	Contractual Services	120	20,669.27	20,669
	OP1.6 Regional VLR Guidelines for Europe.	2022 2023	2022 Q4 2023 Q3	/	/	/	/
OC 2	OP2.1 Establishment of SDG multi-level governance arrangements in each selected country.	2022 2025	2022 Q1 to 2025 Q2	Consultants and Experts	105	7,590.00	10,590.00
				GTA	015	3,000.00	
	OP2.2 Training of public officials in each selected country.	2023 2024	2023 Q2 2024 Q4	Consultants and Experts	105	7,820.00	30,320.00
				GTA	015	3,000.00	
				General operating expenses	125	1,500.00	
				Grants and Contributions	145	18,000.00	
	OP2.3 Regional and global VNR-VLRs Studios.	2023 2025	2023 Q1 2025 Q1	Contractual Services	120	35,724.00	40,224.00
General operating expenses				125	1,500.00		

				GTA	015	3000	
	OP2.4 Global and regional advocacy.	2022 2025	2022 Q2 2025 Q2	Contractual Services	120	22,376.00	73,752.00
				Consultants and Experts	105	13,800.00	
				Travel of Staff	115	29,376.00	
				General operating expenses	125	2,200	
				GTA	015	6,000.00	
	Evaluation	2024 2025	2024 Q4 2025 Q1-Q2	Consultants and Experts	105	22,800.00	22,800.00

Table 1.2 – Planned annual budget expenditure and cumulative financial implementation rate

Year	Planned annual budget expenditure	Cumulative financial implementation rate
Year 1 Q1 2022 – Q4 2022	\$ 204,929.33	36%
Year 2 Q1 2023 – Q4 2024	\$ 194,944.83	34%
Year 3 Q1 2024 – Q2 2025	\$ 170,125.83	30%
Total	\$ 570,000.00	100%

ANNEX 2: DETAILED JUSTIFICATION BY CODE

1. Other staff costs - GTA (015) \$ 28,500 (Total)

Temporary assistance to perform the tasks of project support, coordination, technical advice, recruitment, procurement, reporting and amount other tasks in support of outputs:

OP1.2 (2.5 months) x (\$3000 per work month) = \$ 7500.

OP1.3 (2 months) x (\$3000 per work month) = \$ 6000.

OP2.1 (1 months) x (\$3000 per work month) = \$ 3000

OP2.2 (1 months) x (\$3000 per work month) = \$ 3000

OP2.3 (1 months) x (\$3000 per work month) = \$ 3000

OP2.4 (2 months) x (\$3000 per work month) = \$ 6000

Total: 9.5months / 28.5000USD

2. Consultants and Experts (105): \$ 307,625 (Total)

(a) International consultants

International consultant for the task of supporting work of local consultants in rolling out the Global Urban Monitoring Framework and in analyzing the data collected to inform the development of VLRs in support of outputs: OP1.1 (27days x 5cities) x (\$ 240 per day) = \$ 32,400.

International consultant for the tasks of delivering on technical cooperation activities along with local and regional consultants, coordination with UNRCOs and national counterparts and the supporting the delivering of the SDG localization trainings in support of outputs:

OP1.2 (120 days), OP1.3 (120 days), OP1.4 (33 days), and OP2.1 (33 days), OP2.2 (34 days), OP2.4 (60 days) x (\$ 230 per day) = \$ 92000.

In support of the evaluation of the project: 4% project budget (4% \$ 570.000) = \$ 22,800.00.

(b) National / Regional consultants

National consultants for the tasks of delivering technical cooperation activities at country level including the rolling-out of the UMF, the development of VLRs and of the Local Recovery Plans in support of outputs OP1.1 (44 days x 5 cities), OP1.2 (188 days x 5 cities) and OP1.3 (125 days x 5 cities) x (\$ 90 per day) = \$160,425.00.

3. Travel of Staff (115): \$ 68,965 (Total)

(a) UN Staff from the lead entity

23 missions by UN staff for the purpose of coordinating technical cooperation activities in the 5 pilot countries (Serbia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Georgia) and participating in the key regional and global events (Geneva and New York), in support of outputs OP1.1 (3 missions), OP1.2 (8 missions) and OP2.4 (12 missions):

OP1.1: \$ 2,799.00 4 days mission x 3

OP1.2: \$ 3,899.00 7 days mission x 8

OP2.4: \$ 2,448.00 4 days mission x 12

= \$ 68,965

4. Contractual services (120): \$ 137,329 (Total)

A provision of \$ 100,002 is required for UNECE's services in support of advisory support to local consultants in delivery technical cooperation, connecting activities with ongoing regional processes and supporting the VLR-VNR Studios and the regional advocacy, in support of outputs: OP1.2, OP1.3, OP2.3 and OP2.4. Activities will take mainly take place at regional level, across the whole duration of the project. Breakdown of costs as follows:

- Regional Consultant in support of OP1.2 (146 days) + OP1.3 (98 days) + OP2.3 (66 days) + OP2.4 (66 days) x (240USD x day) = \$90,000
- Regional VLR-VNR Studios in support of OP2.3. 2 workshops per year per three years (6 workshops in total). Each workshop is budgeted 1,667.00USD x 6 workshops = \$ 10,002

A provision of \$ 37,327 is required for UNDESA's services in support of the development of the VLR-COVID-19 Tool, the VLR-VNR Studios and the global advocacy processes, in support of outputs: OP1.5, OP2.3 and OP2.4. Activities will take place at global level, across the whole project duration.

Breakdown of costs as follows:

- Lump sum for an international consultant in support of OP1.5 budgeted \$20,669
- Global VLR-VNR Studios in support of OP2.3. 2 workshops per year per three years (6 workshops in total). Each workshop is budgeted 1,667. x 6 workshops = \$ 10,002

5. General operating expenses (125): \$ 9,653 (Total)

(a) *Printing services*

In support of OP 2.2. and OP 2.3 = \$ 3,000

(b) *Other general operating expenses*

In support of OP1.2, 1.3, 2.4 = \$ 6,580.73

6. Grants and Contributions (145): \$18.000 (Total)

(a) *Workshops, seminars & Expert Group Meetings**

Trainings on SDG Localization taking place online, in support of OP2.5. Duration of workshop: 2 days of training x 3 workshops per year x 3 years. Each workshop is budgeted 3000USD (18000USD total)

ANNEX 3: BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES BY ENTITY AND COST CENTERS

Entity	Cost Centre	Functional Area	WBSE	Amount
UN-Habitat	11376	45AC0008 45AC0009 45AC0010 45AC0011	SB-017948	432,671
UNDESA	12831	S9AC0003		37,327
UNECE	13831	20AC0008	As per advice of our Executive Office, "DESA should only need the funded programme SB-017948 at this stage to make the allocation in Umoja. A separate WBSE will be created, will send you later	100,002.00
TOTAL				570.000